Italian Cultural Representation of the Eastern Adriatic: A Postcolonial Perspective (1910 – 1943)

DALMAZZO, PIETRO

Italian Cultural Representation of the Eastern Adriatic, a Postcolonial Perspective

(1910 – 1943)

Abstract: This work aims to scrutinize the Italian cultural discourse concerning the Adriatic region during a period marked by rapid Italian expansion in that geographical area. The specified time-frame under consideration spans from 1910 to 1943, encapsulating pivotal Italian political endeavours aimed at establishing an empire in the Balkans. The thesis examines a diverse array of primary sources, including travelogues, autobiographies, novels and materials from colonial fairs. It analyses how the region was discursively constructed in Italian culture, and how the relationship between the two shores of the Adriatic was imagined and portrayed in Italian sources. The analysis is conducted through a thalassological perspective focusing on the Adriatic, employing a range of postcolonial concepts and methodologies in the study of primary sources. The thesis posits that Italians employed an imperialistic lens when characterizing the eastern Adriatic region. This involved articulating an unequal relationship between themselves, perceived as part of a Metropolitan collective, and the non-Italian inhabitants of the area, who were depicted as subalterns. The thesis underscores how these representations substantiated a discourse regarding Italian identity and expansionism by crafting a framework of images and narratives that endorsed the Italian occupation of the region. Furthermore, it investigates the role played by the Fascist regime in shaping and disseminating this Italian discourse on the Adriatic, highlighting how Fascism surfaces from this analysis, as a productive ideology, which deeply influenced this discourse.

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

Italian Cultural Representation of the Eastern Adriatic: A Postcolonial Perspective (1910 – 1943)

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisors: Professor Katrin Wehling-Giorgi, Professor Charles Burdett

Pietro Dalmazzo

College of St Hild & St Bede

December 2023

Table of Contents

Figures

Acknowledgements

The development and completion of this work have been made possible through the invaluable support, both professionally and emotionally, of numerous individuals and institutions, to whom I owe profound gratitude.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Northern Bridge Consortium for having funded my research, allowing me to broaden my expertise beyond academia, and providing me with the tools to find my professional path. During my research, thanks to the Northern Bridge, I had the opportunity to spend six months in Rome, working on the collections of the Former Italian Colonial Museum. This experience was very educational and enlightening, allowing me to expand my knowledge and skills on both an academic and professional level. For this, I want to thank Gaia Delpino and Rosa Anna Di Lella, who taught me a lot on a human and professional level, supporting me during this journey and thanks also to the Museo delle Civiltà, which hosted me for this experience. In Rome, I also worked in the archives related to the Italian administration of Albania, and I want to thank the people working in the *Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale*. They have always been professional and helpful, greatly facilitating my archival research.

During my research I could count on the support and presence of my supervisors, Prof. Charles Burdett and Prof. Katrin Wehling-Giorgi, from the first to the last day. Working with them was stimulating and enriching. I would like to thank profoundly Charles for believing in this work from the beginning, helping me to lay the theoretical and practical foundations for its development, and supporting me over the years despite the distance and commitments. I am deeply grateful to Katrin, for her perseverance, seriousness and willingness to help me with anything concerning me or my work. Her guidance has enabled me to improve my study of sources, my literary analyses and, in general, my understanding of academic work.

Thanks to my parents and my sisters, who have understood and listened to me over the years. I would also like to thank the friends I met in Savona, Bologna and Shkodra, who always understood my departures and welcomed me on my returns. Furthermore, I am grateful to my friends in Durham, those who have been with me from the beginning and those I have met along the way; their company has been a cheerful and essential distraction during these years. A final thanks to Giulia, she has always been here during this journey and is more than I could have hoped for.

Introduction

On 28 March 1997, 120 Albanians were escaping the civil war by sailing to Italy. When it reached the Strait of Otranto, their boat was rammed by an Italian military ship, and 81 people died by drowning. This action was coherent with measures approved by the Italian government to defend the sea borders from migrants. Although Italian public opinion had already expressed claims about a putative Albanian invasion, this event was perceived as a tragedy and a criminal action, and the officials on the Italian ship were put on trial and sentenced to two years of prison (Salerno 2016).

It would have been difficult, at that time, to imagine that 25 years later the systematic refusal of landing in Italian ports to any ship carrying migrants would have become a practice of governance used to obtain internal consensus. The conceptualisation of borders as a concrete barrier, protecting a national identity, has grown and found legitimisation in public opinion as well as in the governments of the last years. The perception of migrants as a challenge to national integrity is the insight of a public environment permeated by a narrative about the meaning of national identity. The deep contradictions in the continuous reaffirmation of the national paradigm, while the contemporary context is shaped by global interconnections, are creating the necessity for a problematisation of the process of identity-making within a transnational perspective.

This thesis seeks to go some way towards enhancing our knowledge about the construction of a national identity in Italy, approaching the theme from a transnational perspective and analysing it through the study of Italian cultural discourse about the Adriatic. Among the diverse studies on Italian national identity, while several focus on the issue of expansionism and colonialism within Italian culture, a specific investigation to look at the role of the Adriatic as a whole has yet to be developed. Endorsing a transnational perspective permits us to deduct the mythical features from the concept of nation, allowing an analysis of the latter as an artificial notion which came into being during the nineteenth century (Hobsbawm 1990: 44–45). This notion is the result of historical and cultural circumstances hinged on a community and eventually dependent on the achievement of political autonomy; the main condition of the existence of a nation is the previous existence of a state (Collini 2019). The subsequent outcome is to bind the validity of the national framework and consider it in relation to other systems and processes which exist outside the definitions of borders (Burdett 2018). Concretely, this approach permits, first, to frame this research following the *longue durée* temporality in the construction of identity. Second, it provides the tools to look at the process of identity-making from outside the narrative constructed by the same process. Through a transnational lens, it is possible to notice the continuous historical, social and cultural compromises and relations that maintain the

national structure. The thesis, to articulate a transnational perspective about its subject of investigation, aims to employ a thalassological approach framed on the Adriatic Sea.

Reconsidering the process of identity formation in a transnational context prompts a re–evaluation of the role played by Italian colonialism and its cultural manifestations from the Liberal period through the Fascist regime. Robert Young emphasises the symbiotic relationship between colonialism and the construction of the modern nation-state, pinpointing how, for diverse reasons, 'one typical feature of the nation was that once created, it sought to absorb or acquire more territory beyond its boundaries' (Young 2015: 68). Within the Italian context, the correlation between nation-state construction and imperialism is evident. Emilio Gentile, building upon discourses and theories of Italian intellectuals during the Risorgimento, the historical process through which Italy achieved its unification, such as Vincenzo Gioberti and Giuseppe Mazzini, contends that the myth of a Greater Italy seduced the Italian political elites during and after Risorgimento. Within this myth, the heritage of ancient Rome played a crucial role, but was also a symbol of freedom and progress and 'cast the fascination of might and expansion, and this heightened its attraction in the age of imperialism' (Gentile 2009: 47). Italy achieved formal unification in 1861, shortly before the beginning of the scramble for Africa, and an imperial agenda informed Italian politics from the beginning of its existence as a state. Even prior to completing the nationalist project of redeeming Italian-speaking communities within the Hapsburg Empire, Italian political leaders, such as Francesco Crispi (1887-1891; 1893-1896), advocated colonial expansion as the vocation of a unified Italy. According to various historians, the primary impetus behind Italy's path toward colonialism lay in the necessity to construct a perception of prestige and power for the nascent nation to gain recognition as one of the Great Powers of Europe (Labanca 2002: 54).

Owing to its origins, Italian colonialism was from its outset subject to state-sponsored propaganda, seeking to exalt its prestige through diverse mediums, spanning from journals,[1] conferences, and societies, to visual arts, museums and exhibitions (Belmonte 2019). Furthermore, the nexus between Nation and Imperialism in Italy was further fortified by the foundation of the Associazione Nazionalista Italiana (Italian Nationalist Association). This association gathered prominent intellectuals of the era, including Enrico Corradini, Luigi Federzoni, and Gabriele D'Annunzio, around a nationalistic agenda aimed at fostering Italian colonialism in the Mediterranean (Labanca 2002: 112–

[1] Such as *L'Italia coloniale*, founded in 1900.

13). Fascism moved on from its Liberal legacy and further articulated some of its principles, amplifying both the discursive and practical tools to exercise imperial practices. Through an extensive propaganda campaign, the regime emphasised the civilising and racial aspects of its colonialism, alongside its regenerative functions for Italians (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 168–72), effectively embedding the concept of Empire within the notion of Italianness. As Davide Rodogno posits, this connection evolved from a Spenglerian vision of international relations, wherein territorial expansionism symbolised Italian supremacy in the Mediterranean (2006: 45). Within the Fascist paradigm, the empire became a tool to extol Fascist civilisation and bolster Italy's position as its leader (Ben-Ghiat 2006). Based on this premise, the regime orchestrated massive propagandistic endeavours, establishing colonial agencies replete with their publications, bureaucracy, cultural activities, and celebrations, engaging both the masses[2] and intellectuals[3] in the narrative of the Italian empire. These features generated an extensive body of colonial historiography and literature, which constitutes a distinct field of study in its own right.

Within this field of study, the expansionist aspirations towards the eastern Adriatic present a distinctive case. When examining the histories of various empires, a dichotomy emerges between land empires, rooted in geographical proximity, and maritime empires, leveraging technologies enabling European control over distant territories typically situated across seas (Young 2015: 14–15). The Adriatic region, from an Italian standpoint, encapsulated aspects of both these types of empire. At the onset of the 20th century, Italy sought to complete their national unification by annexing the Italian-speaking communities residing near the Italian-Austrian border, alongside aspiring to establish a hegemonic position in the Adriatic (Cattaruzza 2016: 3–4). Albania in particular was seen as a strategically pivotal asset by various Italian governments. This area, due to the denial of Italian sovereignty over it in the Versailles Treaty, held profound significance as a spatial linchpin for the construction of the Fascist narrative, as opposed to the liberal state. Moreover, preceding 1922, the northern Adriatic region constituted the *raison d'être* of Italian irredentism, a cultural and political movement started around 1866 which sought to incorporate into the Italian state the Italian-speaking areas

[2] Alongside the traditional colonial press, we must note that Cinema was also involved in this narration, as directors such as Guido Brignone and Goffredo Alessandrini guaranteed imperialistic cinematographic productions (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 167–68).

[3] Anthropologists, as well as geographers and ethnographers, were brought in by national research institutions in an attempt to map and draw the colonised populations (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 172–73).

ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, areas identified by this movement as unredeemed lands (Ambrosio 2011). Furthermore, Venice and Rome employed imperial dominion over the eastern Adriatic for centuries, leaving a cultural legacy surrounding this area that was resumed by the nationalistic and Fascist initiatives after the First World War. This historical uniqueness contributes to a distinct colonial narrative, offering divergent cultural experiences that prompt an exploration of the eastern Adriatic's role in shaping Italian national identity.

The thesis endeavours to investigate the Italian colonial rule over the western Balkans by analysing the interplay between culture and imperialism in literary production. Two primary considerations underpin this direction of research. First, the Fascist empire was defeated by war, not by a comprehensive process of decolonisation (Labanca 2002: 432–35). Therefore, a proper public reconsideration of the colonial experience was almost completely avoided; the whole imperial structure of representation remained unquestioned and hidden in public memory and historiography. Second, the stabilisation of socialist states in the former Adriatic colonies bolstered, within Western Europe, a narrative depicting these territories as geographically and politically distinct from the West (Todorova 2009: 133), giving a political reason to avoid any reconsideration of the prejudiced representations towards them. These issues call for an approach that transcends a mere chronicle of events; a multidisciplinary approach integrating historical and textual analyses thus becomes imperative for a comprehensive exploration of the topic.

Following these initial considerations, we may attempt to delineate the primary research objective: to frame the Italian discourse about the Adriatic, employed during the Liberal and Fascist period, as a discourse in which Italianness imagined and articulated its role as imperial power even before the occupation of the region. Diverse Italian intellectuals elaborated on the notion of Italian national character during the nineteenth century. During the Risorgimento period, many nationalists agreed that foreign dominations in Italy caused Italians' degeneration. According to these authors, the main features that testified this decadence were the idleness and effeminacy exhibited by the Italian population, which needed to redeem its status and regain the past greatness – a greatness that must be conceived not only in terms of attitude but also in terms of national glory (Patriarca 2011: 37). One of the main fields in which the Italian national character manifested its inferiority compared to the other European countries was the colonial struggle. Pasquale Turiello (1836-1902), a writer who deeply explored these themes, argued in the second edition of his *Governo e governati* (1887) that Italy's absence from the colonial struggle would establish its status as a minor nation and that Italy needed to strongly embrace an imperialist policy, regardless of potential casualties (Patriarca 2011: 85). By focusing on the Adriatic, this work highlights how Italian authors identified and described

imperial features as elements of Italian national character. From the sources analysed, Italianness emerges as a character capable of playing an imperial role in the Adriatic. This role is constructed through the representation of Italians as superior to the other national groups. This superiority is supported by various arguments – historical, cultural, linguistic, or even behavioural – and will be explored in the following pages. In other words, this thesis argues that an examination of this discourse could reveal a further dimension to the imperial facet of Italian identity, shedding further light on its defining characteristics.

1. An Expanding Field of Research

The time period at the core of the thesis lies between 1910 and 1943, framing a pivotal period marked by accelerated Italian expansion in the Adriatic. During this time, the Italian Nationalist Association was founded in Italy, which advocated for Italian expansion and the acquisition of the unredeemed territories. Italy demanded sovereignty over the Dalmatian and Albanian seaside in exchange for its entrance into the First World War and, during the latter, attempted to establish a protectorate over independent Albania. At the end of the war, the city of Zadar and the entire Istrian peninsula became Italian. Between 1939 and 1943, Dalmatia, Montenegro and Albania were under Italian control. Furthermore, this period encapsulates Italy's attempt to construct a Mediterranean empire through the occupation of Libya, Rhodes, the Dodecanese and Greece, a project that served to foster the idea of Italy as a unified and prosperous country within an internal situation deeply fragmented by the Southern Question (McGuire 2020: 25; Ben-Ghiat 2006).

The historical starting point of this analysis will be the year 1910. This was the year in which Enrico Corradini founded the Italian Nationalist Association, which through the newspaper *L'idea nazionale* called for an aggressive colonial policy (Labanca 2002: 112; Lowe and Marzari 1976: 114–15). Intellectuals close to the association frequently propagated irredentist and imperial causes institutionally and publicly. Their publications encompassed various political themes, offering insight into Italian imperial aspirations, imaginations and projections. Valerie McGuire highlights the significance of examining nationalist authors to comprehend Italian imperial narratives regarding the Aegean, as after the conquest they 'translate the nostalgic homeland of the Mediterranean into an imperial frontier' (McGuire 2020: 44). For instance, an author like Federzoni celebrated the Italian conquest of Rhodes as a redemption from various Italian humiliations, as a further homeland for Italians, and as a frontier for further expansion (McGuire 2020: 72–74). The Nationalist Association evolved into a political party, eventually merging with the Fascist party in 1923, playing pivotal roles in Fascism's

foreign policy. This association was neither the first nor the only to call for a colonial expansion;[4] nonetheless, its members articulated a nationalistic ideology capable of amalgamating imperialism and irredentism, formulating a distinct expansionist discourse that was instrumental in advocating for Italy's participation in World War I (Wilcox 2021: 21). Consequently, the association's inception becomes a crucial point within the thesis, as it fused irredentism with imperialism, perpetuating an expansionist discourse that coherently conveyed claims for both the expansion in the unredeemed lands and in Albania. The analysis concludes in 1943, marking the collapse of Italian and Fascist Adriatic ambitions.

Italian imperialism and its heritage have often been dismissed or erased from collective memory and institutional discourses. Nevertheless, on a scholarly level, studies about this phenomenon are burgeoning. Scholars have explored various facets of Italian colonialism, rapidly expanding the field. Besides Angelo Del Boca's historical research and Nicola Labanca's monograph on Italian colonial history, there have been specific essays about the cultural, social and political features of the phenomenon, providing an understanding of the diverse nuances that featured within Italian colonialism. Despite its limited geographical expansion, Italian imperialism wielded diverse discourses of identity, race and power that are progressively being examined by scholarly research. These discourses reflect on peculiarities of the Italian case, like the reinterpretation of the defeats of Dogali and Adwa, initially celebrated as instances of Italian heroism or completely removed from colonial celebrations (Belmonte 2019), but which later came to symbolise the decline and weakness of Liberal Italy within Fascism's narrative (Triulzi 2003).

Many scholars have emphasised the Fascist regime's impact on Italian colonial discourse, as it amplified and reshaped many features inherited from Liberal Italy while introducing new discursive tools to glorify the Italian empire. Fascism geographically expanded the Italian empire, with campaigns in Libya (1923-1932), Ethiopia (1935-1936), Albania (1939) and former Yugoslavia (1941); it also tried to bond the intellectuals to the regime through the establishment of state-sponsored cultural institutions (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 34–41) and created a series of regime-serving publishing platforms (Cavazza 2012). The relationship between Fascism and culture was characterised by censorship, but it also conveyed a palingenetic and productive power that aimed to foster a cultural and political revolution within the nation (Griffin 2002). This kind of power is notably evident in the cultural

[4] From the beginning of the 20th century, various associations and journals were founded with the same aim (Labanca 2002: 104).

portrayal of the Italian empire during the regime. In addition to territorial expansion, Fascism employed racial segregation, especially after 1935 (Barrera 2004), legitimising it with concerns about racial purity and contamination, which in turn influenced Italian cultural representations of the colonies (Duncan 2005).

Crispi's project to use the colonies as a means to channel Italian mass emigration as a solution to the Italian peasants' demands for land, which failed at the time (Mohanty and Andemichael 2019), was rescued by Mussolini, who tried to enhance a form of demographic colonialism on a wider scale (Larebo 2005). This project constituted, from the Italian perspective of the time, a unique feature of Italian colonialism; it differed from the French and English contexts, which were based on capitalistic exploitation, while Italian colonial ambitions employed concepts of emigration and reclamation (Veracini 2018), and were represented as more human than the other European empires.

These features similarly informed Italian authors and their writing production, influencing the formation of narratives of settlement that constructed the image of the Italian empire as an empire of work, and Italian workers as capable of transforming the African land into an Italian territory (Burdett 2010b: 118–41). Furthermore, Fascism enhanced the production of a specific genre of novel, the colonial one, by acting as commissioner and patron to the authors by awarding monetary prizes and contests specifically targeted to this genre (Casales 2020). Fascist colonial propaganda was not limited to literary forms, and its systematic approach produced a huge amount of diverse sources, including documentaries, exhibits, fairs, films, museums, artefacts and newsreels, all committed to celebrating Italian and Fascist colonialism (Belmonte and Cecchini 2022).

Fascism also created the *Istituto luce*, a public film company which played a crucial role in narrating the empire to the Italian population (Mancosu 2022). At the same time, Italian colonialism, even during the Fascist period, encountered various forms of resistance within Italy; looking at the literary production of the time, it is possible to notice how some authors resisted the Fascist idea of society through their writings (Duncan 2002), and communist parties openly opposed Fascist imperialism (Srivastava 2018: 32-34). Nonetheless, Fascism had a structural impact on Italian colonialism, developing it towards various cultural and political dimensions that are being scholarly elucidated,[5] and projected an idea of Italianness that was deeply rooted within the idea of empire, constructing

[5] In the past few years, various studies have addressed the relationship between Fascism and imperial culture, by focusing on newspapers (Deplano 2018a), colonial novels (Casales 2023), geographical institutions (Atkinson 2005), and museums (Falcucci 2020, 2021).

these claims on Roman heritage and Italian attitude.

The impact of Fascism is even more straightforward when focusing on the relationship between Italy and the Adriatic. From the end of the nineteenth century, the Irredentists' began to make claims in Italy, which aimed for the Italian occupation of unredeemed lands, while the foreign office had the project to expand in Albania. This latter aim was mainly pursued through a policy of influence, articulated through the exploitation of Italo-Albanian connections and the foundation of consulates and schools in Albania (Qesari 2017). Furthermore, the Venetian imperial past, with its images, discourses and representations, equipped Italian institutions and intellectuals with a storehouse of discursive tools to legitimate Italian expansionist claims in the area (Laven and Damien 2015; Wolff 2001).

In 1915, by signing the Treaty of London, Italy entered the World War, expecting in the event of victory the recognition of its sovereignty over Dalmatia, Albania, Julian March and Istria. During the war, Italian troops occupied Albania and tried to establish an Italian protectorate over the territory but failed due to the locals' resistance (Tallon 2014). At the end of the war, Italy obtained vast territorial concessions, but its expansion in Dalmatia and Albania was limited to the city of Zadar and the island of Sazan. Various Italian intellectuals thus developed complaints against the former allies; these expressions were based on victimhood, and claimed the injustice of the peace conditions imposed on Italy; it was in this context that D'Annunzio formulated the expression 'vittoria mutilata' (mutilated victory) (Cattaruzza 2016: 88). Within this situation, D'Annunzio occupied the city of Rijeka, establishing a political administration that claimed a crisis of the Liberal order, and the necessity of a new political system (Serventi Longhi 2022). The newborn Fascist movement tried to take advantage of Italian discontent after the war – Mussolini insisted on the Italianness of Dalmatia, and the failure to make it Italian was represented as a failure of the Liberal government (Wolff 2001: 355–56). One might argue that Italy's eastern border played a crucial role in Fascism's path towards power, as it provided nationalist arguments against the institution after they failed to control the unredeemed lands despite their victory in the war. Furthermore, D'Annunzio's experience in Rijeka proposed various discourses, images and symbols that constituted the core of Fascism's imaginary. After the coup in 1922, Fascist Italy had to rule over the territories obtained after the war, with various Yugoslavian minorities living within its borders, and employed various measures to denationalise them, closing their schools, removing their language from documents, and shutting down their cultural associations (Cattaruzza 2016: 128–29). Furthermore, Fascism signed various economic agreements with the Albanian kingdom, creating *de facto* an Italian protectorate in the second half of the '20s (Basciani 2022: 14–15).

The Adriatic had been the subject of Italian expansionist imagination since the beginning of unification (Burgwyn 2005: 309), and within Fascism's project of a Mediterranean empire, Italy eventually invaded Albania in 1939 and former Yugoslavia in 1941. The Italian administration in the Adriatic territories has obtained less scholarly attention than the one in the African colonies. The incoherent and disorganised Italian system of power in the region has been accounted for both in the former Yugoslavian territories (Burgwyn 2005; Gobetti 2013) and Albania (Basciani 2022). Italian atrocities in the area have been widely documented, especially regarding the figure of General Mario Roatta (Del Boca 2005; Conti 2008), as well as the racist policies employed against the Yugoslavs (Chiarandini 2022). Furthermore, in analysing Italian policies in former Yugoslavia, scholars have highlighted how there had been decades of misrepresentation of the Yugoslavs in Italy, and how Italian leaders supported an aggressive assimilation of the Yugoslavs in the name of the superiority of Italian civilisation (Burgwyn 2005: 297–98).

At the same time, the investigation of Italian soldiers' diaries and testimonies from the Balkans underlined the contradictions that featured within the soldiers' perceptions of local people, which were a mixture of racist assumptions and appreciation (Rodogno 2004). Scholars emphasise the uniqueness of the Italian administration of Albania, which represented the invasion as a unification, and created a local Fascist party (Rodogno 2006: 58; Basciani 2022: 58). Furthermore, the relationship with Montenegro, which was connected to Italy by both a dynastic and economic policy, has been historically addressed (Ungari 2008; Basciani 2017). Moreover, studies about Italian imperialism in the Mediterranean, as well as its cultural discourse, emphasise the role of Mediterraneanness within Italian identity (Ben-Ghiat 2006) and demonstrate the need to gain perspective over the Mediterranean context in order to understand the various nuances through which Italian culture and identity expressed their imperial features (McGuire 2020).

However, the various studies on Italian imperialism in the Balkans have not yet provided a comprehensive investigation of the literary and cultural productions that accompanied and sustained this phenomenon. Larry Wolff has studied Venetian enlightenment and its representation of the endpoint with the collapse of the empire. Diverse patterns of narration continued to inform Italian literary representations of the Adriatic (Wolff 2001: 356). This thesis aims to look at how Italian cultural narratives represent the eastern Adriatic, suggesting that these representations supported the Italian geopolitical ambitions and constituted a distinctive case within Italian imperial culture. This distinctiveness is given by the fact that the Adriatic and the Balkans had been at the core of Italians' expansionist imagination for decades. The other Italian colonies, both in Africa and in the Mediterranean, were the product of international events, geopolitical calculations and international agreements, rather

than the subject of long-term desires or the results of diverse interests. The eastern Adriatic represented the place where Italy could complete its national unification, and it was therefore functional to the construction of Italy as a nation. Furthermore, it was considered strategic territory and fundamental for Italian geopolitics, which Italy had tried to exercise a policy of influence towards for several decades before the actual conquest.

2. In Between Imperialism and Balkanism

Looking at the historical relationship between Italy and the Adriatic reveals how Italy developed an expansionistic ambition toward the Adriatic. This ambition became a concrete political reality only for a limited period, specifically between 1939 and 1943, yet its influence permeated Italian perceptions and depictions of the region for decades. The aspirations and subsequent various endeavours to establish Italian dominance over the Balkans encompassed an imperialist outlook on the region. Ali Behdad contends that imperial heritage is characterised by both amnesia and nostalgia, and that a postcolonial perspective should aim to challenge the amnesia, or forgetfulness, surrounding imperial memory and 'expose the genealogy of oppression and the oppressed' (Behdad 1994: 6). This work aims to chart the genealogy of Italian discourse regarding the Adriatic – a discourse that, within the specified time period, ultimately supported the employment of an oppressive system of Italian power and representation over the area. This discourse encompasses issues of identity, expansionism, representation, and power, constructing an image of the eastern Adriatic as a sphere where Italianness locates and expresses its imperial attitude. It shows how the other national groups living there were perceived as hierarchically inferior to Italians and without any legitimate national claim over the territory they inhabited. The following chapters will thus try to elucidate the various evolutions and metamorphoses that Italian culture's representation of the Adriatic displayed in narrating and supporting imperial ambition in the region.

In this endeavour, the thesis will employ various methodological frameworks to orientate the analysis across different chapters. Nonetheless, certain key theoretical aspects of the thesis persist at its core, and warrant elaboration. Edward Said, in *Orientalism*, scrutinised Foucault's critique of pure knowledge and Gramsci's concept of hegemony to postulate the nexus between culture and political power (Behdad 2019). As such, Said's study conceptualises Orientalism as a cohesive system of representations and knowledge about the Orient, shaped by the imperialistic dynamic between the West and the East that has evolved alongside the expansion of modern empires. Orientalist discourse does not directly pertain to a specific kind of political power, but rather exists as a 'distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts'

(Said 1978: 12).

The Gramscian notion of hegemony held significant importance for Said in explaining the persistence and functionality of orientalist discourse. He envisions hegemony as the predomination of certain cultural forms over others in civil society, and emphasises the role of culture as 'part of the civil society [that] is directly involved in the way dominant ideas and discourses are generated, circulated, and maintained in any society that is not totalitarian' (Bhattacharya and Srivastava 2012b: 8). Bhattacharya and Srivastava, in reading the relationship between Said and Gramsci, argue that Said's interpretation of Gramsci enabled him to suggest that the relationship between empire and culture was productive, rather than inhibiting. To individuate the connection between these two elements in terms of how they bear productive power is crucial to how Said's theory functions, allowing for an analysis of individual texts and authors 'within a larger cultural milieu without making the author or the text always already subservient to the political demands of imperial ideology' (Bhattacharya and Srivastava 2012b: 9).

Working from the assumption that the connection between power and culture is a generative relationship, and asserting that a specific discourse – such as Orientalism – operates and circulates due to cultural hegemony, this thesis argues that analysing the cultural discourse through which Italian culture engaged with the eastern Adriatic can recognise and frame a coherent Italian narrative concerning the region. This discourse encompasses issues of identity, expansionism, representation, and power, constructing an image of the eastern Adriatic as a sphere where Italianness locates and expresses its imperial attitude. The primary sources explored in the thesis demonstrate how the eastern Adriatic can evoke memories of past empires directly associated with Italian national belonging, with the latter belatedly identified as Italian. Moreover, the descriptions of the region depicted by these sources reveal how Italians elaborated their identity in the Adriatic, asserting their capacity to assume an imperial role in the contemporary scenario. The analysis of these intertwined processes aims to reveal the various subtleties, nuances, narratives, and features that are conflated in the construction of an Italian perspective on the region.

Following Said's example, what is essential to look at in the primary sources in order to frame and understand the functioning of such a discourse is representation. It is through representation that a cultural discourse circulates, and it is on representations that perceptions, understandings and elaborations about a specific region are constructed. Additionally, 'these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects' (Said 1978: 22). In the concluding chapter of *Orientalism*, Said argues that Orientalism is a system of representation that introduced the Orient within western culture and, eventually, western empire (Said 1978: 202–

3). Furthermore, he analyses the Orientalist representations employed by western culture in the decades concurrent with the essay's publication, indicating how Orientalism evolved throughout history, and was not a cultural phenomenon that merely accompanied the age of empires (Said 1978: 284–328).

My research aims to establish a distinct yet more limited relationship with history. The forthcoming chapters do not contend that the sources analysed introduced the eastern Adriatic to the Italian public. Instead, they often draw connections with Larry Wolff's essay on Venetian representations of the Yugoslavs, arguing that some images and narrations survived the collapse of Venice, and had been employed by Italian media and literature for decades. Simultaneously, this work does not argue that the system of representations, stereotypes and prejudices employed by Italian culture between 1910 and 1943 regarding the eastern Adriatic continues to significantly influence the relationship between Italy and the region. While it is not entirely dismissible a priori, and even though problematic readings of Italian history in the Adriatic have persisted in recent years (Lamour 2023), establishing the contemporaneity of this phenomenon lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

This analysis instead seeks to investigate how Italian cultural discourse about the Adriatic evolved, expanded, and enriched its representative patterns during a historically crucial period for the relationship between the two shores of the region. Consequently, my perspective also views this discourse as a historical phenomenon, inviting a new historicist approach to the cultural and literary production of the time. New historicists argue that 'literary texts are embedded within the social and economic circumstances in which they are produced and consumed' (Bennet and Royle 2016: 140). Hence, textual critical analysis might offer insight into the historical context in which a text was created and consumed, as well as the negotiations between the author's artistic sensibility and the institutions and societies of the time. Through this lens, a particular literary representation can be understood as a site where issues of 'politics and power can be negotiated' (Bennet and Royle 2016: 142). Nonetheless, the thesis does not aim to approach the sources in an overly deterministic manner. As elucidated earlier, this thesis will endorse the idea of the productivity of the encounter between culture and power, particularly in the chapters that look at the relationship between Fascism and representations. However, the corpus of sources is not composed of texts untrammelled by the historical and political circumstances of the time. Some individuals who wrote about the Adriatic were involved, to varying degrees, in Italy's projection over the region. Furthermore, the relationship between Fascism and culture did not solely rely on censorship, but simultaneously employed various decrees that needed to be respected by the culture producers (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 20-22). Consequently, the thesis employs a new-historicist perspective in the sense that it attempts to locate the analysis of

representations in relation to the historical environment in which they were produced.

The theoretical frameworks utilised to delve into the study of representations are borrowed from Said's methodology as articulated in both *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, chiefly contrapuntal reading and strategic formation. The former was devised to situate specific texts within the context of the relationship between culture and empire. The term contrapuntal was assumed from music, and was employed by Said to read how discrepant experiences, with all their peculiarities, might be interpreted together as belonging to the same system of relations (Buchanan 2018: 125–26). To analyse the sources contrapuntally would permit employing 'a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which the dominating discourse acts' (Said 1994: 51). In the context I aim to explore, this approach would involve, for example, identifying the imperialistic implications embedded in the description of a specific space as deeply shaped by Venetian heritage. Furthermore, contrapuntal reading involves delving into features about the subjects represented that are only implied in the texts but are crucial for characterizing and revealing the inequalities underlying the system of representation employed by these sources. For instance, it includes examining the semantic fields implied by Comisso in *Il porto dell'amore,* which describes a Serb that had been living his entire life in Rijeka as incapable of finding his son within his city, and who had to ask for help from the newly arrived Italians (Comisso 2002b: 58–60). A contrapuntal reading foregrounds how such a narrative sustains a national hierarchy, portraying the Italians as capable of knowing everything about the place even if they just arrived, while the Yugoslavs rely on the Italians to solve their own issues.

Strategic formation, as defined in *Orientalism,* is 'a way of analysing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large' (Said 1978: 20). Said's analysis considered a vast range of texts and cultural experiences, published in different historical contexts and on various territories, and thus exhibited more nuance within such an extensive work. The thesis will employ strategic formation in individuating and analysing the recurrent patterns of representation used to describe the Adriatic, as shared and reiterated by various authors. This approach aims to emphasise how specific narratives were collectively supported and reiterated through different cultural materials. Thus the following chapters pinpoint how each source articulated its perspective over the history of the Eastern Adriatic, as well as how these perspectives are coherent with each other and – to some extent – repetitive, despite being employed in various texts with differing aims.

This work has been profoundly influenced by Said's literary analysis in framing its research

objective and methodological approach. Furthermore, from Said's research emerged a wide branch of studies focused on the representation of subjected otherness. Among these studies, those that played a pivotal role in directing this thesis' argument delve into the role of cultural representation produced by Western Europe towards Eastern Europe. Within this field, it is necessary to mention Larry Wolff, with his works about the French and Venetian representations of Eastern Europe, who demonstrates the role of enlightenment in shaping the patterns of representation of otherness (Wolff 2001, 1994). Ezequiel Adamovsky, who investigates the French literary representations of otherness in the process of identity-making, focusing on the value of cultural narratives in social practices (Adamovsky 2006), was also an influence. Finally, the analysis of Maria Todorova provides a study of how Western Europe used to represent the Balkans, showing how Western European travellers and intellectuals displayed similar and coherent patterns in describing the Balkans. These patterns employ what she frames as 'Balkanism' as a standardised way to represent the region by constructing it as an incomplete space, emphasising the in betweenness of the region, and allowing the Balkans to be 'constructed not as other but as incomplete self' (Todorova 2009: 18).

Todorova's argument allows this thesis to locate and understand the diverse patterns of representation concerning the Balkans that are employed by the Italian authors as coherent or belonging to a larger European discourse about the region, and to distinguish the Italian specificities within this discourse. Nonetheless, Todorova distinguishes between Orientalism and Balkanism as two distinctive disciplines, constructed on different relationships between Western Europe and the object of its observation, in one case the Orient, and in the other the Balkans. Her book argues how the Balkans are a periphery for Western Europe but, at the same time, the proximity of the two entities in terms of race and religion[6] impede employing postcolonial theory to analyse this relationship (Todorova 2009: 17). This reasoning emphasises a distinctive feature of this thesis, as it aims to employ the works of diverse postcolonial theorists to analyse Italian discourse about the Balkans. The reasons behind this split from Todorova's approach are to be found in the distinctiveness of the Italian relationship with the Western Balkans.[7] This work contends that it is possible to conceive Italian expansionism towards the eastern Adriatic in terms of imperialism, and the reasons that motivate this idea will be clarified as the thesis develops. Nonetheless, there are a few elements about this that might be worth exploring in an introductory phase, as they are valid for the entire research work. When viewing Todorova's

[6] Todorova is mainly concerned with Orthodoxy, rather than Islamic communities in the Balkans (2009: 17).

[7] A similar distinctiveness is articulated also in the relationship between Italy and the Aegean (McGuire 2020: 28).

argument, it is necessary to emphasise that the Italian discourse was also directed towards a region, Albania, where a majority of inhabitants were Muslim. Meanwhile, Todorova foregrounds how one of the elements that made the Balkans closer to Western Europe compared to the Orient was their being Orthodox rather than Muslim. Nevertheless, the Italian sources explored here do not engage directly with this aspect of Albanian society. When Italian troops formally occupied the country, in 1939, Mussolini was already claiming that Islamic societies could be involved in a Fascist colonial project (Burdett 2010b: 45-47). Consequently, this thesis will not focus on this religious aspect, as it is scarcely represented. Additionally, Italian society was already accustomed to colonies mostly inhabited by Muslim people, and from a Fascist perspective, this did not represent an obstacle. Furthermore, Italian policies in governing over the Yugoslav people after the First World War, especially after 1925, attempted to denationalise and subsequently Italianise the Yugoslav groups living within Italian borders, with aggressive identity policies that were defined by Elio Apih as a 'cultural genocide' (Apih 1988: 129). As will be shown in the third chapter, even the distinction between Orthodoxy and Catholicism was fundamental to justifying the Italian alliance with Croatia and the identification of Serbs as both enemy and inferior. Moreover, the alliance between Croatia and Italy also implied the Italian and Catholic agreement on the violent persecution against the Orthodoxies that was employed by Pavelić (Burgwyn 2005: 54).

These elements suggest how Italy, despite avoiding propagandising strict racial segregation between coloniser and colonised as it did in the African colonies, perceived a Yugoslav identity within its border through an imperialistic perspective. They did so to pursue assimilation, in an imperial context, which does not mean achieving equity between citizens of the metropole and colonised subjects but was rather a means of ruling the empire that was widely employed by various European colonial powers (Young 2015: 19–23). Consequently, despite the region's status as a space between Europe and the Orient, Italian politics and culture represented it as a geographical and social space other from them, where it was possible to employ an imperialistic discourse. Although Todorova's argument explores Western European representations of the Balkans, the Italian case, due to its geopolitical projects and historical heritage in the area, can be considered from a different perspective. Therefore, to articulate an understanding of the Italian discourse about the Adriatic, this thesis needs to diverge from Todorova's perspective and will employ various concepts from postcolonial theories, such as the negation of coevalness, subalternity, imaginative geography. At an introductory level, it is necessary to articulate a general understanding of these concepts. The negation of coevalness is a practice noted by Johannes Fabian (2014) in anthropological writing, where anthropologists describe the subjects of their observations as belonging to or coming from an earlier epoch than their own,

thereby implying a certain backwardness in their way of life. The theme of subalternity has been widely explored by postcolonial studies. In the context of this thesis, I argue that the notion of subalternity, as elaborated by Gramsci in Notebook 25, where the subaltern is somehow included in the integral state (Thomas 2018: 863–64) and simultaneously lacks political autonomy (Freeland 2020: 196), is functional in describing the imagined relationship between Italians and Yugoslavians as portrayed in some of the thesis' sources. Edward Said, in *Orientalism,* argues that imaginative geography is a way to represent a specific place that does not aim for accuracy. Rather, it serves to legitimate an arbitrary understanding and a specific discourse about a foreign place, often resulting in an evaluation of the degree of civilisation of a geographical space (Said 1978: 71–72).

Alongside these concepts, this research relies for its development on the notion of discourse, which should be further clarified. Said's use of discourse was widely scrutinised by literary and postcolonial critics, highlighting how his formulation differs from Foucault's, with the former being seen as too monolithic and failing to acknowledge the potential resistance of the colonised subject within this system of discursive representations (Bhabha 2003). Furthermore, this thesis diverges from Said's work in employing different aims and types of sources, as well as by studying a context distinct from the cultural relationship between West and East, a context in which the colonial relationship is often less straightforward in comparison to that between France or England with the Orient. To account for the specificities of the Italian discourse about the eastern Adriatic – a discourse that employed a concrete political domination for only a few years, and in a context where local resistance movements were capable of hindering the development of a proper Italian administration – this thesis aims to elaborate on Robert Young's interpretation of Said's discourse and Homi Bhabha insights concerning the functioning of such a discourse.

Young contends that Said interpreted Foucault's notion to develop his own analysis, and suggests that 'Said's use of the notion of discourse to demonstrate the way in which forms of knowledge were constructed within a particular kind of language, which in turn was replete with all sorts of cultural assumptions, enabled Orientalism, and colonialism more generally, to be analysed as an ideological production across different kinds of texts produced historically from a wide range of different institutions, disciplines and geographical areas' (Young 2016: 385). From this assumption, Orientalist discourse might be understood as a form of knowledge, thus articulating a multidisciplinary perspective in which various disciplines delved into Orientalism (Boer 2003: 13). In light of this interpretation of discourse as a multidisciplinary form of knowledge, the thesis aims to provide insight into this discourse and to do as such is necessary to understand the functionality of this form of knowledge.

Beginning from Said's assumption of the relationship between cultural production and political systems, Bhabha articulates a pivotal insight concerning the working of colonial discourse and its knowledge. He contests the absolute power of the Orientalist discourse, suggesting how 'the knowability of the colonial subject always eludes colonial discourse […] colonial discourse produces ambivalent, fraught, psychically inflected knowledge and that such discourse says as much about the colonizer as it does about the colonized' (Byrne 2019: 155). To recognise the ambivalence of this kind of knowledge – that within Bhabha's articulation lies the creation of the colonial stereotype – is pivotal to avoiding one of the widely recognised weaknesses of Said's model, namely the theoretical assumption that within a colonial context, power is held entirely by the coloniser. Furthermore, following Young, the ambivalence that Bhabha frames is derived from Said's work, which 'denies [the ambivalence] but nevertheless demonstrates' (Young 2004: 192). Bhabha's theory of colonial discourse and stereotype will be central to the analysis articulated in the fourth chapter; at this point, it is thus useful to define the kind of knowledge that a consciously broad notion of discourse implies. In other words, the thesis aims to employ a notion of discourse as the construction of a particular form of knowledge about a given reality. This form of knowledge, which aims to be the truth, does not rely on a faithful representation of the subject, and the true essence of the latter can thus escape this observation. This interpretation of discourse and its relationship with the subject that it aims to represent is crucial to understanding the asymmetric connection between Italian representations of the eastern Adriatic and Italian colonial practices in the region. By looking at Bhabha and Young's critics of Said, it is possible chart an understanding of colonial discourse as a fallacious form of knowledge, which this thesis aims to explore in the context of Italian expansionism in the Adriatic.

3. Geographical Thinking in the Adriatic

Gramsci, in 'Alcuni temi della questione meridionale' (1926), reflects on the relationship between the industrial north of Italy and the rural south, reflections that emphasise the topographical aspects of the latter, which can be connected to the issue of national integration. This emphasis was fundamental to Said's understanding of imperial culture as a form of 'cultural topography' (Said 1994: 52). In light of Said's elaboration of Gramsci, one can frame how imperialism as a broad phenomenon is marked by a form of geographical thinking, and 'modern imperial cultures are similarly territorial in their orientation' (Bhattacharya 2012: 94). Therefore, imperial cultural production is often directed towards the representation of cultural topography; the attempt to understand Italian discourse about the Adriatic, and to follow its articulations in the construction of a geographical space, raised a fun-

damental spatial issue which might be summarised as the necessity to chart the geographical perspectives and boundaries of my analysis.

In delving into Italian imperialism in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, McGuire advocates for the adoption of a thalassological[8] approach to view the diverse nuances of the Italian empire in the Mediterranean. Building on Manuel Borutta and Sakis Gekas' essay, which frames the Mediterranean as a colonial sea (Borutta and Gekas 2012), McGuire argues that the development of a thalassological perspective would transcend 'area studies and traditionally nationalist paradigms through a transnational and trans-Mediterranean perspective' (McGuire 2020: 9). Furthermore, such an angle allows one to frame the diverse features of Italian colonialism and overcome the tendency to diminish the relevance of the Italian imperial project, understand the connections between Fascist and Liberal Italy's discourse in the overseas territories, and provide 'a richer perspective on the extent to which empire remained a vital frontier for Italian nationalism' (McGuire 2020: 12). These aspects are also crucial in the Adriatic, and building on the convincing work by McGuire, this thesis will employ a thalassological perspective centred on the Adriatic context.[9]

Scholarly speaking, the imperial frame has been widely explored from a transatlantic perspective, as a privileged point of view that emphasises maritime regions as autonomous units of analysis (Di Fiore and Meriggi 2011: 38). Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, in their seminal works about Mediterranean history,[10] employ a historiographic model that connects ecology and history in an attempt to holistically explore the Mediterranean (Abrecht 2019). To follow their aim, the authors suggest working on the notion of the 'history of the Mediterranean' as the 'history of the whole in a particular geographical sense' (Horden and Purcell 2006: 730). Departing from Horden and Purcell's premises, Gekas and Borutta contributed to a history of the colonial Mediterranean 'by connecting studies of Mediterranean areas that are normally treated separately from each other' (Borutta and Gekas 2012: 3). In their work, the scholars underpin how the Mediterranean, within colonial representations, was at the same time European and not European, and an analysis of it as a colonial sea shows the diverse asymmetries within European nation-states. Building on these assumptions, this

---

[8] From the Greek term 'Thalassa', meaning sea.

[9] In this context, it is necessary to also mention also Ian Chambers' work on the Southern Question and the politics of interrupted modernity, which examines the histories developed between the shores of the Mediterranean to view the Mediterranean as a postcolonial sea (Chambers 2008).

[10] I am essentially referring to two publications, *The Corrupting Sea* and *The Boundless Sea*, with the latter published twenty years after the first, aiming to address the omission of the first publication (Horden and Purcell 2000, 2019).

thesis aims to employ a thalassological perspective, with the geographical unit of its investigation of Italian discourse constituted by the Adriatic Sea.

The study of Italian imperialism towards the Balkans has been often segmented into at least two distinct fields of investigation. Although the whole Eastern Adriatic coast was subjected to Italian expansionist desires, especially after the First World War (Wilcox 2021: 200-12), Italian expansionism in Albania and in the former Yugoslavian territories constituted two distinct topics. The reasons for viewing them separately are diverse and valid; Istria and Julian March territories were considered as belonging to Italy, as places where Italy needed to expand to achieve its unification, and the presence of Italian speaking minorities in Dalmatia easily functioned as a beacon to represent the expansion into the region as necessary to defend the Italianness of the land against the overwhelming Yugoslav presence. The Kingdom of Montenegro entered the Italian sphere due to dynastic reasons, since the princess of Montenegro married the future King of Italy Vittorio Emanuele III in 1896, and it became an Italian protectorate after the dissolution of the Yugoslav kingdom in 1941. On the other side, Albania was also a long-term expansionist aim for Italy, although for structurally diverse reasons, it was not perceived as a land necessary to complete their national unification, as there was no Italian minority living there. Nonetheless, its occupation was considered a strategic objective, and Italy thus constructed economic and cultural relations to play a hegemonic role in the area and tried to establish a protectorate over it prior to their actual invasion of 1939.

Furthermore, the analysis of Italian cultural discourse that this thesis employs will show how Italian literature deploys different patterns to describe the upper Adriatic and Albania. The latter was represented as a land forced into a primitive status, first by the Ottomans and eventually by Albanian institutions, giving Italians the right to overthrow them. By contrast, the Adriatic was described as a symbol of Roman, but especially Venetian civilization, which needed to be rescued from the Yugoslavs. In other words, one might say that the Italian culture of the time mapped the region as a nationally hybrid space in the north, where Italians and Yugoslavs contend with each other for political hegemony, and as a peripheral space in the south, where an oppressed population needed Italian help. In order to look at these discrepant realities as a geographical unit, I will employ the notion of a ‘micro region’ developed by Horden and Purcell, who understood the diverse Mediterranean histories as ‘microlocal’ and the Mediterranean world as a ‘mosaic’ (Horden and Purcell 2000: 78). The authors observed how one characteristic of the Mediterranean is its fragmentation into diverse micro regions,

or micro ecologies,[11] and that the unity and distinctiveness of the field of inquiry of the Mediterranean as a whole is given by the connections between these different regions, as well as by 'the unique concentration of factors that are not themselves peculiar to the region' (Horden and Purcell 2006: 735). Consequently, to employ a thalassological approach would mean to assume a maritime space as a space distinguished by its internal coherence and similarities that can be explored as a coherent unit of analysis, wherein people and cultures circulate and interact with each other (Di Fiore and Meriggi 2011: 39).

Following this model of understanding the geographical unity to address, one might consider the Adriatic as a whole, whose history can be charted within the frame of the thesis. The Adriatic, within the study of Italian imperial discourse, can be considered as just one single system, distinct from others. Throughout the thesis, I argue that the unity of this system is given by the Italian expansionist desire, which featured the Italian discourse about both the northern and southern Adriatic. All the sources considered in this work, regardless of the people that produced them and the regions represented, employ an imperial dimension to describe the area. However, what distinguishes the Adriatic, and the Italian imperial project within it, from other regions commonly acknowledged as belonging to the Italian empire is their history and relationship with Italy. It is historically acknowledged that Italian colonial policy had to move in between the interests of the other European colonial powers. Both the Horn of Africa and Libya had been obligatory directions for Italian colonial policy, while the Aegean islands were occupied for strategic reasons during the Italo-Turkish war. The territories in the Adriatic, however, were a long-term desire of Italian foreign policy; the Irredentists' claims for a further eastern expansion and policies aiming at spreading Italian influence in Albania were both present in Italy from the end of the nineteenth century.

Therefore, I argue that this region might constitute a field of inquiry in itself, which provides a point of view about the employment of an Italian expansionist discourse that contains nationalist and imperialist arguments. The analysis of the diverse patterns of representations and narrations embedded in the Adriatic discourse will enhance the insights into the relationship between national consciousness and Imperialism within Italian culture. Such a focus, namely on the meaning of the Adriatic for Italian cultural production, constitutes the original frame that this thesis aims to develop. Studies on the Adriatic history as a whole have recently been deployed (Ivetic 2019), and even on the

[11] The authors employed the concept of micro ecology, leaving it open to diverse interpretations, as they admit (Horden and Purcell 2006: 733).

relationship between Italian literature and the Adriatic as a sea (Geddes da Filicaia and Lorenzetti 2021). Nonetheless, this comprehensive thalassological perspective, which looks specifically at the Italian discourse, its identity, and its imperial implication, might articulate an original perspective about the relationship between Italian identity and the Adriatic. Furthermore, the heterogeneity of this frame when considered together provides a distinctive feature to this analysis, as it opens a perspective on which kinds of cultural relationship Italy constructed with both peripheral and hybrid spaces, and how Italian identity situated itself in both these spaces, especially when these territories entered within the Italian Fascist empire. These themes will be unpacked in the third and fourth chapters, where the focus will be oriented towards the discursive practices that accompanied the Italian occupation.

4. Sources and Questions

This thesis bases its analysis of cultural discourse on a corpus of diverse literary sources that engage with the Adriatic geographical space, published in Italian and in Italy between 1910 and 1943. The selection of literary sources to look at the representations of cultural discourse was guided by the project's timeline. Italian culture developed diverse cultural products about the eastern Adriatic, including movies, paintings, and museums. However, this kind of production is not homogeneously distributed in the period that the thesis considers, and with the aim of charting the development of this system of representation through structurally different political regimes, it was necessary to rely on types of sources that were equally displayed during each period. Nevertheless, within the corpus of literary sources, I differentiated by considering diverse sets of literature that testify to the peculiarities of each season. The first of these is travel literature, interpreted loosely as pieces of literature produced following a direct experience in the region, therefore including novels, articles, and partial autobiographies.

Mary Louise Pratt coined the expression 'contact zone' to refer to the space in which people foreign to each other develop any kind of relationship, featured by the 'involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict' (Pratt 2007: 8). My textual analysis, with its focus on representation, intends to investigate the descriptions of this kind of space, as it is within the contact zone that it is possible to locate the experience of Italians in the Adriatic and the diverse nuances that they might trigger. Travel literature plays a pivotal role in the analysis of this space and has been widely employed in studies about imperial discourse. These scholarly experiences have articulated many reasons why travel literature is an ideal source to investigate issues of identity and empire, and

for the aims of this thesis, two of them are particularly compelling. The first is related to the representation of a different place, as travel literature is the result of an encounter between the cultural background of the author and a new spatial reality, showing how the cultural background influences the description of the reality, and eventually the levels at which the rhetoric of imperialism functioned (Burdett 2009). The second looks at the identity features concerning the author that surface within it, as the encounter with the otherness, and the representation of it, develops the shaping of identity following cultural, ideological, and social structures which can assume consistency only with the evidence of the difference (Adamovsky 2006: 17–19). Within this broad understanding of travel literature, each chapter will focus on diverse writings, introducing each of them, and addressing their peculiarities and their functionality within the analysis.

The second set of sources are the – as yet unpublished – guidelines for the state-sponsored exhibits organised during the Fascist period concerning Albania, which are contained in the Historical Diplomatic Archive of the Italian Foreign Ministry. The fourth chapter will focus on the guidelines for the Albanian section of two exhibits, the *Mostra della razza* and the *Mostra triennale d'Oltremare*, both of which were intended to open in 1940. The first, however, was never inaugurated due to the war; the second closed only a month after it opened. These exhibits were part of the massive system of colonial propaganda employed by the Fascist regime, and they were functional to display the Italian empire to the Italian population (Belmonte and Cecchini 2022). These guidelines were directed at artists and curators and exist in textual form, but they address issues related to material culture, dictating which kind of objects, paintings, data, and images needed to be exposed in these fairs, and demonstrating what was perceived as useful to celebrate the empire within a Fascist rhetoric (Falcucci 2020).

The role of material culture in Italian colonialism began to be a topic of investigation only recently; nevertheless, it is useful to understand the appearance of the empire within the metropole. Despite its demographic ambitions, the Italian colonial empire was not accessible to all Italians, and not all Italians had direct contact with the empire; as such, these exhibits aimed to enable such a contact for everyone. Therefore, through the study of these kinds of sources, it may be possible to 'address the imaginaries of imperial subjects, examining the role that empire and colonialism played in shaping gender and class roles, the history of the sense and emotions, and subjectivity and consciousness at large' (Belmonte and Cecchini 2022: 330). Within this thesis's perspective, the guidelines are valuable sources of how Fascist Italy imagined Albania within the Italian imperial community. Furthermore, they are relevant in understanding the decision-making mechanism at the core of

these exhibits, as they contain handwritten annotations and comments that provide an incredibly useful source on the process of how Fascism exploited a subjected reality to sustain a specific expansionist discourse. The first tries to locate the Albanians within Fascism's hierarchical understanding of races, while the second celebrates Albania as a land that was subjected to Italian authority at various points in time over the course of history, and how these authorities made the region prosperous.

The main research scope is to obtain a general idea about the cultural movement of imperialism in the eastern Adriatic, specifically about how Italian culture shaped the eastern Adriatic, an external concrete geographic space, as a colonial reality. This aim is addressed through two principal research questions, each with their subsequent issues. The first is to state how the eastern Adriatic was shaped and perceived by Italian culture, in a period characterised by Italian expansion in the region. This research thus contends that as they experience the eastern shore of the Adriatic, Italian authors display an imperial identity associated with their national belonging. Italian identity, which belongs to Southern Europe, and is configured as one of the peripheries of Europe, within the Adriatic context was referring to itself as the metropole, while other national belongings were framed as peripheral. To explore this issue, two research questions are posed: first, how do Italian authors represent the territory and the people who are foreign to them that they encounter in the Adriatic? Second, how do they represent their interactions with this context, and what role does national belonging play in these interactions? Each chapter focuses on these two issues and articulates them into specific research questions. The first delves into the Italian travelogues' patterns of representation about Albania, Epirus and Montenegro before and during the First World War. In focusing on these patterns, the chapter will provide an understanding of how the Ottoman authority, the Italian cultural and economic activities in the region, and the local subjects were discursively characterised by the Italian authors. This analysis will address how these texts displayed the ability to interpret the Adriatic space as a region where their Italian identity employs a metropolitan aspect. The chapter emphasises how, in describing their observations about the regions, these authors represent them as ideal for the establishment of an Italian dominion. The travelogues investigated will be those of Vico Mantegazza (1912a), Antonio Baldacci (1917), Gualtiero Castellini (1913), Federico V. Ratti (1914) and, in a more cursory way, Guido Cora (1912) and Roberto Almagià (1918). This analysis will provide further insight into the relationship between Italian travellers and Ottoman territories, already studied by Spackman (2017), arguing how in the Adriatic, the Italian authors demonstrated an original imperial understanding of these territories. The second chapter investigates the period between 1919 and 1925, years marked by the end of the First World War, the frustration of Italian territorial ambitions in the Balkans, Gabriele D'Annunzio's occupation of Rijeka, and the first experience of Italian occupation

in Dalmatia. This section aims to reflect on these experiences through an analysis of D'Annunzio's journalistic writings (1928), Comisso's novel about the occupation of Rijeka (2002b), Giulio Menini's diary from Split (1925), and Beatrice Speraz's autobiography (1915, 1923). The section looks at these writings through the deployment of diverse theories, such as Euro-Orientalism, which entails the discursive construction and classification of Eastern Europe based on class distinctions elaborated by Adamovsky (2005), and Cavarero's relational notion of selfhood. In Cavarero's theory, identity in the act of narration assumes a relational status that 'always postulates an other as necessary' (Cavarero 2000: 24). This chapter contends that these writings convey a distinctive national character in their expansionist claims. This chapter pinpoints how these texts construct a relationship with the Yugoslavs by locating them in a lower political and cultural position. Alongside this literary construction, the authors expressed expansionist claims towards these regions, articulating them through a national frame. The second chapter thus emphasises how these sources represented the expansionism of the eastern Adriatic as an undeniable right of the Italian nation, while simultaneously envisioning a subaltern role for the national otherness living within those territories.

The third and the fourth chapter will investigate the same issues while also attempting to articulate a further genealogical perspective over Italian discourse about the Adriatic. They look at the discursive elements introduced by the arrival of Fascism in Italy, aiming to understand how Italian culture represented its role in the Adriatic, and to account for the changes produced by Fascism, which developed a concrete political expansionism over the eastern Adriatic. Moving from an understanding of Fascism as a revolutionary and nationalist force (Griffin 2012), these chapters look at the ideological system employed by the regime. The third chapter looks at the publications between the end of the 1920s and 30s, focusing on Comisso's *Gente di mare* (2002a), Arturo Marpicati's *Itinerario Adriatico* (1922, 1931), Mario dei Gaslini's *Aquilotti sull'Adriatico* (1929), and Luigi Federzoni's *L'ora della Dalmazia* (1941). These texts show how, on the basis of the patterns of narration about the region articulated by previous authors, during the Fascist period, Italian descriptions of the Adriatic addressed more elements. They described the region as being subjected to Italian mastery and, at the same time, addressed questions of homogeneity and identity in describing their perception of a national otherness, that of the Yugoslav population, living on a territory perceived as Italian. Consequently, they understood this national otherness as a minority living within an Italian space. The authors employed different strategies to relate with the Yugoslavs and assert their superiority, and within the chapter these strategies are analysed through Bhabha's concept of hybridity, arguing how Fascism's discourse articulates narrations and discourse capable of escaping the traditional contradictions that featured within colonial discourse. The fourth chapter examines the works about Albania

by Indro Montanelli (1939), Ciro Poggiali (1943), Pio Bondioli (1939), and the guidelines about the Albanian sections of the *Mostra della razza* (1940) and the *Mostra triennale d'Oltremare* (1940) produced by the Italian administration in the region. Following Homi Bhabha's understanding of colonial stereotypes, this chapter questions how the representations articulated by state-sponsored exhibits and Italian writers functioned to sustain the Italian administration of the area. This section thus shows how these representations were useful to maintain and legitimate Italian rule in the region, emphasising how Fascism enhanced the number of discursive tools that were used to construct the area as being subjected to Italian dominion. Furthermore, this section attempts to discuss the thalassological perspective and how it helped to understand Fascism as a productive energy for Italian cultural discourse about the Adriatic. The conclusion articulates an understanding of the two main questions posed here, considering the diverse analyses employed within the text. Furthermore, it explores some of the possible further developments that this research indicates, focusing on the possibility of looking at counter-hegemonic narratives, both within and outside Italy, and investigating the further developments of this discourse through history.

Chapter I

Imperial Memories and Italian involvement: Travel Writing between Montenegro, Albania and Epirus 1910-1919

In the field of postcolonial studies, particularly after Said's *Orientalism* (1978), the notion of discourse became fundamental to understanding the interconnections between the production of knowledge and the preservation of colonial power. Following Said's articulation of Orientalism as a Foucauldian discourse (Said 1978: 3), for this thesis' purposes it is crucial to also conceive the discourse as an organising force, able to synthesise the relation between knowledge and power, and to create realities and narrations that perpetuate the structure of power in which the discourse is conceived. Within the colonial context, as stated by Loomba, studies on discourse show the relations between cultural and political processes in the creation and perpetuation of colonialism, in particular looking at the interactions between knowledge and power. Literary texts, being part of society's institutions and able to encode the nuances within colonial cultures, played a pivotal role in giving consistency to colonial discourse (Loomba 2015: 80–83). Consequently, this chapter aims to investigate Italian travelogues about the Adriatic as the literary elements of a larger discourse of power that Italy was trying to employ towards the eastern Adriatic. The study will utilize diverse postcolonial theories, attempting to target them to the specific context of the Italian colonialist discourse in the Balkans. At the time, this was not yet articulated as a direct political dominion, but rather as an expansionist intention, which also surfaced through literary texts, and requires an analysis targeted to its specific condition of existence.

The analysis will concentrate on the patterns of representation deployed by Italian authors concerning the region. Aligning with Said's perspective, the chapter emphasises that what circulates within these kinds of cultural discourse 'is not "truth" but representations' (Said 1978: 21). Therefore, the primary inquiry of this chapter is to examine whether and how Italian literature articulated and disseminated an image of the eastern Adriatic that was conducive to supporting Italian expansionist ambitions. This perspective presents the issue of intentionality, akin to Bhabha's critique of Said. Bhabha, in 'Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Orientalism' (1983) suggests that by describing Orientalism as a product of the western will to govern the Orient, Said emphasizes how colonial power is held only by the colonizer, indirectly providing a reductive interpretation of the relationship between colonizer and colonized (Young 2004: 181–82). This chapter analyses a context with precise temporal and spatial coordinates, wherein Italian colonial dominion was not overtly displayed. At the time these representations were created, they did not function as instruments of colonial

power, but rather expressed intentions regarding these territories. Therefore, it is difficult to individuate the anxiety and conflictual economy that are crucial to Bhabha's understanding of Orientalism.

Nonetheless, Bhabha's critique contests the straightforwardness of the Orientalists' representation of the Other as suggested by Said, questioning the relationship between representation and subject, with the latter aspect particularly relevant to this chapter's focus on representation. It does not suggest that the primary sources at the core of the analysis elaborate an image of the eastern Adriatic entirely dependent on the Italian imperialist attitude. Rather, it will try to show how the historical, political and social features of the eastern Adriatic represented by the authors were functional to support an Italian expansionist project. One cannot deny that the local history, geography, politics and society influenced the Italians' representations, but these representations emphasised some of the original features of the place as elements that were capable of legitimising an Italian expansion in the area. Furthermore, the absence of a colonial institution in the area left more interpretative space for the authors, who did not have to account for the contradictions within the colonial system of power. In other words, this chapter contends that the texts considered, working in the interstices between the subjects' agency and the Italian expansionist attitude, in the absence of a colonial structure, were free to interpret the features of the subject as functional by themselves to Italian expansion and to articulate an asymmetrical power relation on the basis of this interpretation. An example is the interpretation of the Albanian struggle for independence as a request for an Italian protectorate. While, during the Great War, Italy attempted to establish a protectorate over Albania, the instrumentality of these interpretations became evident.[12] Nonetheless, these depictions started to imagine and legitimate an Italian dominion over the region that was eventually achieved by Fascism.

Ali Behdad (1994) claims that postcolonial research is 'to counter the nostalgic "forgetfulness" that obscures the genealogy of the science of imperialism' (Behdad 1994: 8), and in the genealogy of Italian imperialism in the Adriatic that this thesis aims to articulate, the current chapter focuses on images, descriptions and myths about the region that were articulated before the occupation, but which became functional to and connected with it. This focus would provide a privileged glance towards the construction of a discourse that literarily creates an area that was central to Italian expansionism. This knowledge is necessary to understand how the Italian expansionist discourse that anticipated the Fascist invasion was semantically constructed, allowing us to individuate the literary basis from which the Fascist imperial discourse about the Adriatic emerged.

---

[12] With the Albanian National troops attacking the Italian army and expelling it from the region (Tallon 2014: 449–50).

Through the analysis of literary representations, this chapter aims to provide a perspective on the power structures within which this literature was published and consumed. To achieve this, the texts need to be approached as negotiations between authors and society. In other words, to gain an understanding of the political and cultural structure that influenced the perception of the eastern Adriatic, it is necessary to look at the literature about this area as produced by both the authors and the structures of power in which the authors were living. A new historicist perspective understands literary texts as being closely entangled within the historical circumstances in which they exist (Bennet and Royle 2016: 138–48), as well as providing the framework in which to elaborate the general questions to engage with the sources considered. Therefore, investigating the depictions through which the eastern Adriatic was elaborated within Italian literature might provide clues as to how the Italian authors perceived themselves with respect to the Balkan's national otherness, and which relation of power they articulate with this otherness. In other words, within this perspective, these texts are also sources about the cultural and political environment of the context; consequently, analysing them will provide insights into the power relations that they expect to employ regarding their discourse.

To explore these issues, travel writing constitutes a useful source for two diverse reasons: first, it makes the region epistemologically visible and does so in terms of truth, as travel writing positions itself as revealing the real nature of a place (Behdad 2019). Second, within the scholarly understanding of travel literature, through travel records the authors show beliefs and stereotypes of their own culture and can refer to previous representations and narrations, promoting and legitimating past discourses about the place being narrated (Burdett 2010b: 30). It is through the investigation of the encounters between the authors and the eastern Adriatic's national otherness that it is possible to delineate the system of power working at the basis of Italian literature's representation of the Balkans' otherness, to understand at which level the national discourse worked and how it overlapped with an imperialist mindset about the otherness narrated.

This chapter centres on the southern part of the Adriatic, specifically examining how Albania, Epirus and Montenegro – regions not included in the irredentists' rhetoric – were portrayed by Italian literature. Despite not being considered unredeemed land, Italy employed various political and cultural strategies to exert hegemonic influence over the area from the late 19th century. Andrea Ungari (2008) explored the dynastic issues in Montenegro, emphasising how Elena of Montenegro, Queen of Italy, tried to play a role in the succession crisis that started in 1921, and how this situation influenced Italian policy concerning the country. Alberto Basciani analyses how, at the beginning of the 20th century, Italy and Montenegro created a consortium to create and maintain a monopoly over tobacco in Montenegro; in 1906, the *Compagnia di Antivari* was created by Giuseppe Volpi, the future

governor of Libya, to build the port of Bar and develop a railway in Montenegro (Basciani 2017). Furthermore, Stravo Skendi (1967) and Bern Fischer (1999), in their historiographical accounts of Albania, also explored Italian interventionism in the area. They both emphasise the role of Crispi in legitimising the national aspiration of the Italo-Albanians and the Italian attempt to develop a policy of influence over the Albanian national movement between the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Within this frame, Edon Qesari (2017) investigates the role played by Italian scholarly institutions in the Italian attempt to tie Albanian national aspirations to Italy. Nicola Mai charts the reciprocal representation between Italy and Albania, which he identifies as 'Italist' and 'Albanist' discourse, in an analysis about representation that compares two periods: one after 1991, with Albanian migration towards Italy, and the other looking at the Fascist and pre-fascist period. Mai emphasises how the Italian discourse about Albania represented the area trying to validate an unequal relationship between the two states, a relationship in which Italy also exercised hegemony over Albania (Mai 2003). Building on Mai's research, this analysis aims to enhance knowledge about the Italian expansionist attitude towards the region by attempting to chart the intellectual structure that lies behind the historical events. Furthermore, the chapter will articulate a perspective of the Italian representations of the Ottoman Empire through a case study of the Italian travelogues about the Balkans. Barbara Spackman investigated the written testimonies of Italian travellers in the Ottoman territories, focusing her analysis on travelogues about Egypt, Jerusalem and Anatolia, emphasising how, in their contact with the Ottoman otherness, these authors show a flexible Italian identity (Spackman 2017). Nevertheless, in the following sections, I argue for the specificity of the Adriatic space; as will be analysed further, the Italian authors travelling in this space asserted their Italianness as an identity feature that allowed them to employ an imperialist perspective over the territories visited.

This chapter will analyse the text by focusing on the patterns of representation, scrutinising the corpus of the primary sources to show how the Italian authors depicted the region that they were visiting. The study will first focus on how the local political authority was represented, before moving on to the features of the territory and population employed in these texts. Finally, it will pinpoint how they imagine and represent the relationship between the region and Italian institutions. As theorised by Said, approaching these authors' publications as a cohesive system of texts with referential power among themselves and employing a contrapuntal reading, the chapter aims to understand the functioning of imperialistic discourse in shaping the literary creation of a colonial reality (Said 1978: 20–22). The corpus of primary sources encompasses authors who published about their direct experience in the area between 1910 and 1919, primarily writers and journalists who actively engaged with the geographical region. The main authors include Vico Mantegazza (1856-1934), Antonio Baldacci

(1867-1950), Gualtiero Castellini (1890-1918), and Federico V. Ratti (1877-1944), with occasional reference to the publications of the geographers Guido Cora (1851-1917) and Roberto Almagià (1884-1962). The chapter is organised into four sections, examining how these authors perceived Ottoman authority, their relationship with the places they encountered, their representations of the local population, and their portrayal of Italian activities in the region.

1. A Contradiction over European Soil: The Ottomans

Literary production concerning the Balkans witnessed a significant surge at the onset of the 20th century (Todorova 2009: 120–23). Travel accounts, in the form of geographical essays, articles and collections of correspondence, established themselves in Italian literature. The contributors to this burgeoning production hailed from diverse backgrounds, including journalists, geographers, ethnographers, and writers achieving contemporary popularity. The authors scrutinised traversed the expanse between Montenegro and Epirus, and most of them visited the same cities: Bar, Scutari, Vlorë, Durrës, Ioannina and Sarandë. During the authors' travels, most of the locales were under Ottoman rule, which is a recurring theme in their narratives. Moreover, Italy's overt opposition to the Ottomans, exemplified by the invasion of Libya and Dodecanese, reflected its participation in what McGuire defined as the 'scramble for imperial expansion' arising from the Ottoman Empire's collapse (McGuire 2020: 26–27). Consequently, Ottoman rule became a focal point of interest for these authors, who engaged extensively in portraying it through pejorative patterns, underscoring a deeply rooted anti-Turkish sentiment. The authors' depictions conveyed two primary aspects. First, the Ottoman authority was perceived as non-European, with the authors often conflating this geographical observation with the semantic associations related to civilisation and modernity. Second, through their travel experience, these authors asserted the Ottomans' ineptitude at governing the region. These representations, although not unique to Italian literary production, echoed a trend that had emerged in western European intellectual circles since the late 18th century. Western European intellectuals depicted the Ottoman state as an authority that originated in the Orient but occupied a land presumed to be European (Osterhammel 2018: 46). This representation often employs these intellectuals' desires to exclude the Ottomans from what was considered Europe (Wolff 1994: 149). Furthermore, as Balkan nations sought independence, western European travellers and writers propagated the notion of the Ottomans as a declining empire and a symbol of backwardness (Todorova 2009: 109–10). For the purposes of this thesis, it is pertinent to underscore the specific features employed by these authors to narrate the region and position Italy in relation to it.

The non-European characterisation of the Ottomans extended beyond geographical or spatial

data, incorporating aesthetic and moral values. Framing the Ottoman government as Oriental, the authors proposed a hierarchical relationship between the concepts of the West and East, invariably positioning the West as more civilised and modern. This mode of thinking aligns with Orientalist discourses (Behdad 2019) that can be exemplified in Mantegazza's writings. Vico Mantegazza, a journalist, photographer, writer and entrepreneur, played a significant role in Italian cultural authority in the region (Burzanovic and Popovic 2016). He worked for diverse newspapers, including the *Corriere della Sera, La Nazione*, and *Il Fanfulla*; he was a correspondent from the African colonies who went to Eritrea right after the battle in Dogali (1887),[13] and later to the Balkans. A supporter of Italian intervention in Libya and the self-determination of Balkan states, Mantegazza's interests were closely tied to foreign policy and the Balkans. He visited many countries in the area, becoming one of the most important Italian cultural authorities on the region (Guida 2007). Furthermore, he was also one of the sponsors of the Compagnia di Antivari (Basciani 2017). In 1912, he published *L'Albania* for Bontempelli & Invernizzi, an account of his travels in Albania. The text aimed to enhance the knowledge of Albania for an Italian readership and detailed his journey from the north of the country to Epirus. In critiquing Ottoman rule in Durrës, Mantegazza laments:

> 'Ancora adesso sebbene a poche miglia da paesi civili, per ciò che riguarda la vita materiale e l'ambiente è tale e quale come se si fosse in qualche punto del lontano Oriente.' (Mantegazza 1912a: 118)

The author juxtaposes the idea of civilized countries with the Orient, claiming a relationship between the concept of civilisation and geography. Furthermore, he emphasises the ontological contradiction presented by Albania – an ostensibly European region governed by an Oriental authority, rendering it, from the author's perspective, uncivilised. This representation, exemplified by Mantegazza, typified similar patterns articulated by other authors, collectively conveying a perception of the Ottoman presence in Europe as contradictory to the essence of Europe itself, as the latter is conceived as the birthplace of civilisation. Said elucidates how, within Orientalist discourse, geographical space assumes arbitrary features to assert a distinction between 'a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space' that is helpful to employ a discourse of identity (Said 1978: 54). This exercise of imaginary geography, as Said identifies it, surfaces in the relationship between these authors and

[13] Some accounts of Mantegazza's literary description of the African colonies are analysed in an essay written by Silvana Palma (2005).

Ottoman rule. When describing the territory, the authors utilised their perception of a contradiction between geographical space and Ottoman dominion to assert two main concepts. First, they sought to position themselves, as Italians, among the civil powers of Europe. Second, they aimed to undermine the legitimacy of Ottoman rule in Albania, contending that it contradicted the inherent nature of the territory itself. This latter concept forms the core of the second main pattern evident in these texts.

The texts reveal an anti-Turkish sentiment by depicting them as inept rulers.[14] The Turks were portrayed as governors with deficient logistical skills, perpetuating backwardness in the territories they governed (Castellini 1913: 178). The authors contended that the Ottomans destroyed the Venetians and the Roman ruins (Mantegazza 1912a: 74), depicting them as primitive, akin to how African people were represented.[15] For example, Antonio Baldacci, a geographer whose work will be analysed in detail later in the chapter, states in the introduction of his *Itinerari albanesi*:

> 'In passato, quando si parlava dell'Albania, come di molte altre provincie soggette alla Turchia, si ricordava un paese sepolto in una desolante barbarie che nulla aveva da invidiare alle più remote contrade africane.' (Baldacci 1917: xxii)

In this quote, the author uses Africa as a benchmark for the level of barbarism in a given place, indicating an exercise of imaginative geography in portraying an entire continent as a standard for barbarism. Moreover, Baldacci employs the image of a barbaric Africa to critique the Ottoman government, establishing an equivalence between the Ottoman-ruled territories and Africa, thereby suggesting that they were incapable of benefiting the people under their rule. Simultaneously, the authors painted the eastern Adriatic territory as virgin land, asserting that the Ottomans were unable to utilise or exploit it in a modern manner. The authors consistently highlighted the region's forests as a source of endless wood with significant commercial and agricultural potential. However, according to Mantegazza, Ottoman governance obstructed the development of the forestry industry:

> 'Tali foreste […] potrebbero costituire una sorgente di ricchezza non indifferente. Ma lo sviluppo dell'industria forestale [...] è in tutti i modi ostacolata dal Governo Ottomano.'

---

[14] Similar issues featured in Western European literature throughout the 19th century, especially within the experience of philhellenists (Todorova 2009: 70–71).

[15] For instance, Mantegazza sustained that the artistic signs of the Turks were the same found in Eritrea (Mantegazza 1910: 44).

(Mantegazza 1912a: 113–14)[16]

This quote illustrates the author's perspective that these territories represented untapped commercial and agricultural opportunities that were being thwarted by the Ottomans. This further contradiction between a land rich in possibilities and a government unable to deploy effective political practices indirectly undermined the political status of these territories. In engaging with the southeastern Adriatic region, the authors portrayed the Ottoman presence as illegitimate on various levels. If the Oriental nature of the Ottomans is used to assert their incompatibility with the principles that rule the European world, on a practical level their governmental practice demonstrates their inadequacy to rule over that territory. In both instances, these patterns suggest a disconnect between the Adriatic reality and Ottoman rule, positioning the central government as neither an expression nor a coherent entity with the region it administered. Nonetheless, as the authors explored these territories, they encountered signs and symbols of other authorities over the area that they interpreted as being more coherent with the region.

2. The Glorious Italian Past

The authors collectively forged a coherent narrative concerning the past, beginning with general historical accounts of the regions they approached. These historical narratives consistently alluded to the purported connection between these territories and Italian history.[17] However, upon entering the actual travel space, the past assumed a more intricate dimension. Once engaged in the descriptions of the territories, the authors indulged in continuous reflections on the region's history, configured through brief digressions triggered by encounters with the observed reality. These digressions, scarcely related to traditional historiography, revealed how the exploration of this region fostered a discursive construction of multiple temporalities, able to overcome the contemporaneity that they were observing. The detours through the past manifested continuously and were triggered by the sight of heterogeneous devices present in the reality observed by the authors. These devices could be encounters with signs from the Roman or Venetian past, listening to someone speaking Italian, or the names of certain cities. These devices are scattered throughout the texts and, reading these continuous

[16] Similar descriptions can be found in Ratti (1914: 153) and Baldacci (1917: 27–28).

[17] Focusing, for instance, on the similarities between the national awakening of Montenegro with the role of Piedmont in the Risorgimento (Mantegazza 1910), or on the connections between Skanderbeg and Venice in the fight against the Turks (Baldacci 1917: 23–24).

encounters, it seems that all the authors, while exploring the area, perceived themselves as walking on a narrow path between the present and the past.

The past is continuously overflowing from the terrain, exposing the different temporal reality in front of them. A striking example is provided by Federico Ratti, a journalist, writer, and playwright prominent at the time. Ratti, who had affiliations with the Italian Nationalist society, reported from Libya during the Italo-Turkish War for *La Tribuna,* and from the Balkans for *Il Corriere della sera,* and later participated in the Great War. He also worked for diverse periodicals (such as *L'Italia coloniale, Hermes* and *Poesia*), entered the Fascist party; However, after the start of the war he began to oppose Fascism and was progressively isolated and left in poverty by the regime (Hofmann 2017: 227–30). From his experience in the Balkans he wrote various texts, one of which is entitled *L'Adriatico degli altri, l'Albania nell'ora presente*, published by Bemporad&figlio in 1914. This text opens with a commentary that articulates Italian geopolitical rights within the Adriatic, and narrates the author's journey from Bar to Vlorë. In describing the Venetian part of Bar, Ratti writes:

> 'I ruderi che di lontano biancheggiavano al sole, come ossa insepolte, si animano, si completano, si ricompongono in una unità meravigliosa profilando […] una piccola città.' (Ratti 1914: 48–49)

Despite their initially bone-like appearance, the ruins of the ancient Venetian city were revived, coalescing into a coherent representation of a city in front of the author's gaze. This quote illustrates the history that is evoked by these authors and how they portrayed it. Descriptions of the past assumed varied forms based on the triggering device, but all the authors anchored their digressions in two entities: the Roman and Venetian Empires, which are consistently evoked as entirely positive forces that had administered the region in the past.

Within colonial and Orientalist discourse, the concept of time assumes structural relevance, creating a hierarchical relationship between West and Orient (Behdad 1994: 6–7). As explored further in this chapter, invoking past temporality serves as a discursive tool to underscore the contrast between the observer's modernity and the perceived backwardness of the observed. Nonetheless, the texts considered convey a system to describe time that conceptualises the notion of multiple temporalities that, as Russel West-Pavlov contends, 'provided a legitimizing alibi for the more direct form of exploitation' (2013: 159). The representation of temporalities, following Burdett's assumptions on Italian colonial literature, embodies a 'hierarchical vision of cultural difference, reinforcing the putative superiority of the colonial power' (Burdett 2020: 255). Italian travel writing about the eastern

Adriatic constructs diverse past temporalities to depict the subjects encountered, accentuating a hierarchy among temporalities and positioning the authors' past temporality as civilised with respect to others. In the sources considered, temporalities are expressed through a depiction of time that introduces structural semantic contradictions and narrative disruption in the traditional continuity between the past and the contemporaneity. The relation between these two temporalities is narratively characterised by anachronisms, as per Genette, which are mainly deployed through flashbacks and distortions of a coherent timeline (Bennet and Royle 2016: 55–56). While asserting the superiority of their historical time, these authors articulate images, concepts and discourses about the history of the places they encounter that exalt their Venetian and Roman heritage. The positive elements emphasised in their representations vary contextually, but three common patterns are recurrently developed by most of the writers. Consequently, the construction of a specific past serves a dual purpose: on the one hand it represents a disreputable contemporaneity, while on the other it is used as a device to claim and legitimise Italian expansion in these territories. On the latter function, the following sections will explore how the authors engage with the Roman and Venetian heritage of these territories, showing how it was represented as great, civilising and inherently Italian.

2.1. The Ancestors' Greatness

In all the authors' work considered, both the Venetian and Roman Empires are portrayed as entities capable of bestowing a period of glory upon the territories in question. Mantegazza, for example, consistently extols the greatness of Venetian and Roman rule over the land. Upon entering Vlorë, he observes that most Venetian buildings have become ruins, yet he remarks:

> 'Rimangono ancora in piedi [...] le mura dell'antico castello […]; il ricordo dell'epoca gloriosa della Repubblica è vivo nei nomi delle città e dei paesi, e nella lingua nostra, tuttora la più diffusa, che è sempre la lingua del commercio [...]. La carta dello Stato Maggiore austriaco […] sembra la carta di una regione italiana, poiché […] la maggior parte dei nomi – e tutti senza eccezione quelli della costa – sono italiani.' (Mantegazza 1912a: 137)

The author perceives these territories as directly connected to the time of the Republic of Venice, their names enough to evoke a past that ended two centuries earlier (Lane 2015: 470–75), as a glorious epoch still influencing contemporary perceptions of the Albanian territory. The proof of this glory is indirectly given by the Italian names and the Italian language. These aspects operate on a dual level: they impart an Italian voice to these territories, allowing them to speak Italian, but they also emphasise

that these territories were still identified by Italian names. Even an Austrian map, which belonged to a government that opposed Italian ambitions in the Balkans, requires Italian names to properly classify the territory. This quote, along with similar depictions by other authors,[18] supports a discourse of impact and identity on the territory. Mantegazza presents the Venetian heritage as something recognisable despite its collapse, which still serves as the main trademark of the region. This imagery suggests that the period of Venetian domination left an influence deep enough to be the primary feature of the territory. Moreover, these authors, in their descriptions of the past, provide legitimisation and explanation of the importance of these empires.

2.2. Past Empires and Civilisation

The second pattern involves characterising the Romans and the Venetians as entities capable of civilising the people they encountered through imperial practice. The representation of the empires as glorious hinges on their ability to open the doors of civilisation to other groups that are deemed uncivilised. It is worth noting the temporality through which this paradigm is deployed. The encounter between the civilised and uncivilised is enclosed in a definite past, with few connections to the authors' contemporaneity. Antonio Baldacci's travelogue about Albania epitomises this theme. Baldacci, a geographer, ethnographer, and botanist, played a pivotal role in Italo-Albanian relations before and during the Fascist regime as Honorary Consul General of Albania in Bologna until 1939 and then as a lieutenant-general in Albania until 1943. Between 1892 and 1902, Baldacci explored Albania, Epirus and Montenegro multiple times, surveying the countryside in the name of the *Società Geografica Italiana* and providing written accounts of each experience (Lack and Barina 2020). These accounts were collected in a unique publication in 1917 with the title *Itinerari Albanesi*. Baldacci was first interested in botanical exploration but became involved in ethnographic descriptions of the populations that he met during his travels. Through his work, the issue of civilisation emerged continuously, which was addressed by depicting the past. Describing Albanian history, he writes:

> 'All'epoca Romana, noi entriamo nella storia illirica. […] La potenza di Roma modificò profondamente la primitiva indole illirica anche nella lingua, sono di derivazione latina molte parole dell'uso comune.' (Baldacci 1917: 40)

Baldacci portrays the encounter with the Romans as a milestone in the history of the local population,

[18] For instance Ratti and Castellini, (Ratti 1914: 20–21; Castellini 1913: 21–22).

capable of fundamentally altering their nature. The Illyrians are depicted as passively waiting for an agent able to move through time and show them civilisation. The identification of the Romans as the first to bring civilisation to the local population is a pattern that is reiterated by other authors. Ratti, for example, builds on Baldacci's work[19] and, on the city of Durrës, writes:

> 'Durazzo, dal bel nome romano che i veneziani hanno reso ancor più armonioso, è [...] una piccola città di fisionomia adriatica e di anima levantina. Il Leone di San Marco porge a chi viene dal mare il primo saluto dall'alto della cittadella [...], e i bassorilievi romani con le belle figure dei legionari attestano che da noi fu anche qui sparso il primo seme della civiltà.' (Ratti 1914: 113)

Ratti gives a detailed account of the past empires in the contemporary landscape, highlighting the Italian name of the city and the archaeological signs as an unambiguous symbol of the first seed of civilisation, planted by the Venetian and Roman Empires. Both authors underscore the primacy in the process of bringing civilisation to these territories, attributing to them not only the ability to civilise, but also the distinction of being the first to achieve this. The quote reinforces a symbol of the Venetian past – the 'Leone di San Marco' – as the city marker, and this use of symbols to signify the territory as still being related to past domination will also surface in the analysis of D'Annunzio, explored in the second chapter. Furthermore, the symbols of both empires, the 'Leone' and the 'bassorilievi' in the quote, are interpreted as belonging to a singular identity. This interpretation is recognisable in the use of the first-person plural, and the use of the pronoun 'noi' indicates the last common pattern of representation of the past of these territories.

2.3. History as Italianness

The Venetian and Roman history that emerges from these depictions belongs to a past that, while influential, lacks a genealogical connection with the current administration of those territories. The signs of this past are often ruins, architectural remnants, or decorations, seldom linked to the contemporaneity of those places. Nonetheless, these authors suggest a connection between the glorious and civilising past and contemporary Italy. As seen in the previous section, Mantegazza perceives the Italian names of the cities as a heritage of the glorious past of Venetian dominion, while Baldacci and

[19] Baldacci works on Albania resulted in the bibliography presented by the author.

Ratti represent an equivalent connection with the Roman past, identifying themselves with the Romans. Mantegazza provides among the most extensive accounts of the relationship between the Roman and Venetian past and contemporary Italy. For instance, arriving in Durrës, he observes:

> 'Qualche tronco di colonna [...], qualche capitello infranto [...], sono ora tutto ciò che rimane a ricordo di quell'epoca gloriosa: dell'epoca in cui […] i paesi di tutta la Penisola Balcanica erano ai romani assai più famigliari di quello che non lo sieno agli italiani di oggigiorno, i quali paiono ignorare o aver completamente dimenticato che per due volte [...], prima con Roma, e poi con Venezia, l'italianità si è affermata così fortemente in questa parte dell'Adriatico.' (Mantegazza 1912a: 117)

The nostalgic tone, achieved through a subtle comparison between the Romans' knowledge and present Italians' understanding of the Balkans, coupled with the depiction of the ruins, presents an image of Durrës as haunted by the souls of the past that find their synthesis within the notion of Italianness. The entire past is depicted as a glorious temporality, where Italianness, deeply rooted in this temporality, assumes the ability to connect the Roman and Venetian experiences with contemporary Italy.

By analysing the patterns of representation of the past, it becomes apparent how this literature fosters a nationalisation and subsequent Italianisation of the history of these territories. The continuous digressions about the past reveal a contemporary reality that is used to constantly evoke a glorious past that speaks the same language as the authors: Italian. The references to the Roman and Venetian past enhance a process of framing the history of the countries as related to Italy. This process of labelling and connecting the imperial past with contemporary Italy, even if still deployed through rudimental ideological devices, would be extensively used within Italian travel-writing during Fascism as a legitimisation of imperialistic attitudes (Burdett 2010b: 32–33), as I will explore further in the fourth chapter. Furthermore, this labelling displaces the history of the territories visited, denying their past as their own, while acknowledging it as distinctly Italian. In other words, their past was not shaped or featured by themselves, but rather it was the Italians' ancestors to hold the agency over those places. This becomes particularly evident when the authors encounter the people currently living in the territories.

3. The Primitive Contemporaneity

The literature examined reveals a consistent superimposition of an Italian past onto contemporaneity. This overlapping brings forth a fundamental contradiction between the representation of the past, understood as glorious, and the depiction of contemporaneity as primitive and barbaric. During their

journeys through the region, the authors encountered diverse social groups and populations characterised by distinct religious beliefs, national affiliations, and languages. Despite this diversity, they tended to adopt similar attitudes in their descriptions, reflecting conventional stereotypes prevalent in western European literature of the time about the Balkans. This adherence to stereotypes demonstrated a condescension towards populations that the writers perceived as primitive, yet not exotic enough to captivate their interest (Todorova 2009: 14–15).[20]

Within the source material considered, the characterisation of the local people was primarily reduced to annotations about their habits, which are subsequently framed as barbaric, or primitive. For example, Baldacci recounts an encounter with a group of shepherds living on the Albanian mountain in the following terms:

> 'Si siedono intorno a noi e [...] cominciano a toccare tutti gli oggetti che abbiamo [...]. Mi ricordo delle meraviglie suscitate in loro dai cerini [...]. Povera gente primitiva! […] Fino allora non ci eravamo mai imbattuti in gente più primitiva; credo che essi vivessero la vita di duemila anni fa!' (Baldacci 1917: 314)

The astonishment and habits of these shepherds are used by the author to project them inside a temporality without any progress, locked in a primitive status for ages, far from the time in which the author was living. These representations of the local population can be found in most of the travel literature published within this context, and a similar attitude to the local inhabitants can be observed in Ratti's writings chronicling his travels across the north of Albania:

> 'Pur essendo così vicini al mare, siamo in piena Albania […] dove si conduce la vita presso a poco come ci si conduceva nel 1300 […]. Ebbene, chi volesse fare esperienza di medio evo, del più rozzo e barbarico medio evo, non ha che ad attraversar l'Adriatico, sbarcare a Medua, recarsi ad Alessio.' (Ratti 1914: 85–86)

The quote positions the Albanians within a temporal framework that ceased to progress during a particularly cruel and barbaric medieval age, establishing a profound temporal disjunction that creates an unbridgeable gap between different temporalities, accentuating the perceived cultural disparity

[20] Many diverse writers employed these representations. For instance even Umberto Saba, in accounting for his experience in Montenegro, addressed the curiosity of the locals as the same curiosity of the 'selvaggi d'America' towards Columbus. (Saba 1956: 165–76)

between the author and the subject narrated.[21] This process reproduces a phenomenon identified by Johannes Fabian as the denial of coevalness (2014: 37–70), wherein the subject of the narration is placed in a temporal realm distinct from that of the narrator. This temporal dislocation in turn reinforces the historical superiority of the observer who, from a more modern and civilised standpoint, can categorise the observed as less developed, less modern, and less civilised. This aspect would be further reiterated by Fascism's discourse on Albania, which emphasised the Italian ability to locate primitive Albanians in a modern timeline, as further explored in the fourth chapter. Furthermore, Ratti's quote highlights another dilemma: the contradiction inherent in acknowledging the existence of a barbaric reality in a space so proximate to Europe. In other words, the assumption of a different temporality for the locals generates a spatial problem. Authors often underscored the eerie aspect of encountering, on the doorstep of Europe, a population living in such an uncivilised state, subsequently drawing parallels with other geographical realities where the presence of such populations might be less contradictory. For instance, Mantegazza described how the Albanian landscape and weather resembled that of Massawa, and asserted that Italians' knowledge of Albania was as limited as their acquaintance with Libya a few years earlier, suggesting an imminent change (Mantegazza 1912a: 157–58). Furthermore, he perceived certain features as emblematic of the Oriental situation displayed in Albania. As he portrays his arrival in Durrës, he notes:

> 'Durazzo per chi giunge dal mare […] si presenta assai bene. [...] Si può avere addirittura l'illusione di avvicinarsi ad una delle città della nostra riviera ligure, alla quale le mura dell'antico castello veneziano dànno un carattere quanto mai pittoresco. Ma vi accorgete subito di essere in Oriente appena sbarcate, e vi trovate […] circondati da una folla di cenciosi che cercano di strapparvi di mano la valigia, che vi tendono la mano chiedendo qualche parà e mormorando Dio sa che cosa con quella loro voce monotona e gutturale così caratteristica.'(Mantegazza 1912a: 116)

The author encapsulates the contradiction between the past, which determines the 'Italian' features of the past, and the inhabitants who disrupted the author's illusion, reminding him that he landed in an orient identifiable by its startling poverty. This contradiction is expressed through a binary opposition – the Italian appearance against the miserable oriental people – showcasing, as was explored in the

[21] The issues related to the different flow of time in different societies is a theme that was deeply developed by Italian literature representing the south of Italy, especially by Carlo Levi (Moloney 2005: 171–77).

first section about the Ottoman, the influence of an imaginative geography about the Orient in legitimating a specific discursive representation of the place encountered (Said 1978: 71–72). This representation is constructed on the division of the territory – which is perceived as shaped by Italian heritage – from its inhabitants, who transform the place into an incomprehensible and miserable Orient.

The endeavours to discursively Italianise the past of the territories, coupled with the representation of a barbaric present, create two layers of disruption: the first is temporal, entailing the narration of a civilised and modern past alongside a primitive contemporaneity. The second is spatial, generated by the geographical proximity to Italy of a reality perceived as barbaric and belonging to a generic Africa or Orient.

4. The Italian Presence

Within this framework shaped by contradictions, it is intriguing to examine how Italian activities, such as schools and enterprises operating in the eastern Adriatic, were portrayed by the authors. For instance, when describing the Italian schools in Durrës, Mantegazza writes:

> 'Le nostre scuole erano allora appena istituite, e provai ottima impressione constatandone i risultati ottenuti. […] Sono essi [gli insegnanti] i principali artefici della nostra influenza: sono essi che insegnano ad amare il nome italiano e che mantengono vive le simpatie verso il nostro Paese. […] Tutti [gli studenti] parlano abitualmente italiano fra loro. […] Senza saperlo, fanno essi pure una propaganda efficace per la nostra lingua. Un soffio di latinità ritornò a farsi sentire su quella costa e in questa città che ne fu il principale scalo per i romani.' (Mantegazza 1912a: 124–27)

Despite the expected positive accounts of the Italian activities in these territories, it is worth noting the expansionist aim of Italy's presence in Albania and its interconnectedness with the Roman past. The Italian school is depicted as an agent capable of reviving the Roman past without any temporal or spatial contradictions. The students were different entities from those met by the author on his arrival – they were not confined to a past temporality, but were instead entirely involved in the process of spreading Italian influence. The Italian school enabled the students to enter the Italian sphere of influence, suddenly dismissing their barbaric status, and they became entities capable of reviving the Roman experience through language. The Italian language as a symbol of the Italian hegemony on the eastern side of the Adriatic is a recurrent topos in these accounts, which will be further explored

in the next chapter. At this point, is necessary to highlight that the establishment of a common language historically played a decisive role in nineteenth-century policies that aimed to develop a national consciousness in a given place (Anderson 2016: 71-74). In this passage, the use of the Italian language makes the Roman past no longer in contrast with the current time; rather, the latter became a revival of the former. The semantic connections between the old empires and the Italian cultural and economic activities emerge in most of the travel accounts. For instance, Ratti landed in the port of Bar, partially built by an Italian Company, *La compagnia di Antivari;* after the glorifying the Italian work there, expressed as modern and civil, the author describes the Austrian bombing of the port during World War I as follows:

> 'È un po' destino del lavoro italiano di creare su quella spiaggia opere di civiltà e di bellezza per vedersele poi abbattere dalla violenza della guerra. Sorte eguale, e peggiore, di quella l'ebbe già l'antica Antivari veneziana.' (Ratti 1914: 47)

The equivalence drawn between the Venetian past and the contemporary Italian presence is striking. Both created symbols of civilisation, and both saw these symbols as being destroyed by others. The connection between the Italians and the Venetians was embodied by the civil construction that they were able to deploy over these territories; just as the Italian schools were able to resuscitate Roman heritage there, so the Italian workers displayed the same attitude and skills as the Venetian rulers. The authors solved the contradiction between the past and the current appearance of these territories by looking at the Italian presence. Through Italian influence, the civilisation that these populations – reduced in their timeless barbaric status – were unable to display was enhanced.

These texts also address the relationship between Italy and the eastern Adriatic through an analysis of the current political developments in the Balkans. The authors viewed the uprising of Balkan nationalities against the Turks as a favourable outcome for Italy, relating this phenomenon to Italy's foreign policy in preceding years. Gualtiero Castellini offered one of the most interesting representations of this relationship. Castellini, a writer and journalist, worked for diverse journals, including *Il Carroccio, La Grande Italia* and especially the nationalistic publication *L'idea nazionale.* He was also a war correspondent in Libya for *La gazzetta di Venezia.* Castellini had an intense publishing activity, with books that delved into nationalist and colonialist themes. During the Balkan wars, he was a reporter for *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, and at the end of the wars he published the collection of his reports with Treves in 1913 under the title *I popoli balcanici nell'anno della guerra, osservati da un italiano* (Merolla 1978). His account provides an Italian perspective on the first Balkan war, abounding in suggestions and claims about what Italy should do in the Balkans regarding

the new political developments. In introducing the Balkan War, he asserts:

> 'All'Italia si deve in gran parte il riaccendersi del conflitto balcanico. Il primo colpo di cannone sparato da noi il 29 di settembre 1911 sulle coste balcaniche rompe per sempre una tradizione che sembrava ormai acquisita: quella dell'impossibilità di una guerra europea. È il primo passo e il più forte.' (Castellini 1913: 125–26)

Castellini bestows upon Italy the role of the European protagonist of war, stressing a temporal coincidence and underlining the leading role that Italy occupied in creating the possibility of a European war. The author further explains that he affirms Italy's pivotal role in giving the Balkans an example and a path to follow with the war in Libya.

The geographer Guido Cora takes a similar approach. Cora was a scholar who was mainly known for his cartographic activity, and who founded the geographical journal *Cosmos* (Surdich 1983). In 1912, he published an account of his travels in the Balkans related to the war developments on *La Nuova Antologia* (Cora 1912); his publication is full of parallels between Italians in Libya and Balkan nations against the Turks. He describes the outbreak of the wars as follows:

> 'Come l'Italia, dopo tante ingiurie patite in Tripolitania si era decisa a romperla col Governo Turco, così il Montenegro, la Bulgaria, la Serbia e la Grecia, stanche dei soprusi decisero finalmente di far valere i loro sacrosanti diritti colla forza delle armi.' (Cora 1912: 287–88)

The common enemy depicted allows the parallel between these two wars, presenting them as complementary, but the representation also allows the reader to view Italy as the nation which first created a model to follow for the Balkan states. From these accounts emerges a depiction of a decisive Italian role in the Balkans as the entity that, through its example, created the conditions for the Balkan nations to emerge from under Ottoman rule. In other words, these travel accounts tended to depict Italy as capable of being a patron to the Balkan nations in their first step towards gaining independence. At the same time, they maintained an imperial perspective over these national groups. These tendencies develop a contradiction between the result that these authors advocate – the independence of the Balkan Nations and the disappearance of the Ottoman empire – and the reasons for their claims, namely to extend Italian influence over the area. Therefore, the representations explored here have a double determination and support both independence and imperialism. Within Orientalism's history, this double determination is not new; it has already been investigated in T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926), wherein, as Porter notices 'as a war between imperialist powers was in this

case also an anti-colonial struggle of liberation, the war itself was subject to a double determination' (Porter 2013: 156). Moreover, these readings of the Balkan war emphasise how a war for national self-determination had, from the author's perspective, a similar meaning to a colonial war, such as the Italian war in Libya. This parallel legitimised Italian aspirations in Libya by comparing them to the national rights of the Balkan states, introducing a means to legitimise expansionism as a national right that would be systematically addressed by the authors analysed in the next chapter. Furthermore, the connection between the war and Italy suggests how the fight for national determination was perceived by the Italian authors as something that would have solved some of the contradictions provided by the Ottoman presence in Europe illustrated in the first section.

The description of a current time as being civilised only in relation to the few connections with Italy also served as a tool to legitimate claims for further Italian involvement in the region. These claims developed following the historical events in the area; in the literature published before the outbreak of the wars, the authors only enumerated the economic possibilities for deeper Italian involvement in the region.[22] For example, Castellini comments on the missed occupation of Vlorë by Italy during the first Balkan war as follows:

> 'Finora non si è tentato che sporadicamente d'illuminare il tenebrore di questa anarchia tollerata a mezza giornata dalle nostre coste. […] La mancata spedizione di Valona fu un errore, ed è dagli albanesi di qui sentita come una disgrazia. Nessuno più dell'albanese vi confessa oggi la sua impotenza. Noi abbiamo bisogno, essi vi dicono, di una nazione che venga qui ad organizzarci: nell'Albania meridionale questa nazione non può essere che l'Italia.' (Castellini 1913: 148–52)

The awareness of the local population reinforced the idea that there is a rogue situation close to Italy, and that Italy can solve this situation. The Albanians' acknowledgement of their own impotence is used to corroborate the concept of Italy as a nation capable of organising and elevating other populations above their primitive status. Moreover, this quote demonstrates how the author interpreted the Albanian national struggle as a phenomenon that *required* Italian intervention, suggesting an unequal relationship reminiscent of colonial rule. Castellini supported the self-determination of nations, but

[22] The two main authors that produced these claims are Mantegazza and Baldacci, both in front of the luxuriant nature mostly unexploited of the region provided confuse enumeration of the possibilities to exploit this territory from the Italian companies.

his representation of Albania as requiring Italian intervention foresees an unequal relationship between Italy and Albania, comparable to a colonial relationship. In the description of Scutari, occupied by international forces comprehensive of an Italian contingent, Castellini provides this representation of the Italians:

> 'I ladroni li temono poiché agli italiani è affidato il servizio di polizia. L'altra notte abbiamo accompagnato una ronda […] Per un momento avemmo l'illusione di essere i soli padroni. E il ricordo di Tripoli ritornava prepotente […] Quando si va all'accampamento italiano l'illusione è completa. Nè l'illusione nasce soltanto presso le tende dei nostri marinai; all'altro estremo della città si leva la rocca veneta – segno antico della nostra dominazione – e si apre il fiume percorso da piroscafi e da lance che battono bandiera Italiana.' (Castellini 1913: 173–74)

Through the illusion of being the only occupiers, the author reaffirmed that the entire area surrounding the city speaks Italian. The parallel with Tripoli is used to recall a colonial domination which the author perceived as being replicated in the space surrounding him. Furthermore, the presence of the Venetian fort, which recalls past Venetian rule, reinforces the author's assumptions of living in a place where Italians dominate. The quote addresses it directly, mentioning how the Venetian symbol is a sign of 'our' domination, consequently connecting Venice with Italy and claiming Italian domination in the area. Similar claims and parallels were shared by many authors. For instance, Ratti directly called for an Italian protectorate over Albania (Ratti 1914: 144–45), while Mantegazza, in a further publication, stated that Italy should do in Albania the same as was done in Libya (Mantegazza 1912b: 251).

The Italian imperialistic attitude towards these territories was solidified in the texts published during the final year of the First World War, when Italy occupied Saseno and Vlorë. The geographer Roberto Almagià, in 1918, published a report about the benefits brought about by the Italian occupation of these territories in *Rivista Coloniale.* This report enumerated the improvements implemented in Albania by Italy, focusing on the shift from Turkish to Italian administration. In the opening remarks, the author stressed the change of temporality in Albania, announcing that this place had entered a new era characterised by the Italian administration that enhanced structural improvement over this territory in a short period of time (Almagià 1918). After narrating all the successes of the Italian administration, the article concluded by placing the current Italian administration in continuity with the past Italian occupation of the territories:

> ‘Tra le due opposte rive, gli scambi di popoli, [...], di influssi civili rimandano ad antichi tempi preistorici: l'espansione italiana in Albania non è dunque oggi un fatto nuovo ma riproduce un fenomeno già tante volte verificatosi nel corso della storia, e perciò ritrova, quasi inconsapevolmente, vecchi cammini ed avvia ora a soluzione vecchi problemi.’ (Almagià 1918: 195)

Reflecting on the historical relations between the two sides of the Adriatic, Almagià proposed that the occupation of Albania was legitimised by the past, providing solutions to the current problems of the area. There is a lone temporality expressed in this article, which features Italy alone as the occupying and civilising power. The continuity between the glorious imperial past of Venice and Rome and the Italian occupation, implied by Almagià, is coherent with the representation of these territories proposed by the travelogues published before the occupation explored in this context. Furthermore, as I will explore in the analysis of the Albanian pavilion in Italian colonial fairs, this continuity would be reiterated and further developed by Fascist discourse.

These authors characterised the Italian presence in Albania as being capable of solving the temporal contradiction in the region, which had been set in place by the Oriental attitude of the Ottoman government and the primitive appearance of the local population. Italian activities were not only capable of reviving the past glory of the two empires, but consequently also redirecting the local population on a path towards modernity and civilisation. This discourse provides various representations that legitimise Italian ambitions, but it also articulates an image of Italian identity as the heir of both the Roman and Venetian empires. By virtue of this heritage, Italy is framed by these authors as the proper national actor to cure the Oriental and primitive status of a land located at the doors of Europe. Consequently, these accounts depict Italian identity as both imperial, due to its glorious past, and capable of semantically relocating into Europe a territory previously ruled by the Ottomans.

5. Conclusions

From the analysis above, it emerges that these travelogues employ semi-Orientalist patterns to depict the territories encountered. These patterns delineate the primitivism and inferiority of the societies described, without being fascinated by the exoticism of the territory. As Torodova contends, the western European descriptions of the Balkans at the time were ‘totally devoid of the mystery of exoticism’ (Todorova 2009: 14). The absence of this fascination for the exotic, which was usually common in western representations of the Orient (Said 1978: 1), does not invalidate employing an imperialist perspective over these territories. The authors portray a coexistence of multiple temporalities within

the same space, each assuming different connotations depending on their relation to Italy and Italianness. Italy thus became an agent capable of endowing time with a specific connotation that is civilised, imperial and Italian, resulting in the distinctive trait of recognising the past of eastern Adriatic. However, contemporary Italy was also represented as capable of reducing the multiple temporalities that formed the current eastern Adriatic into a univocal temporality, the Italian one. This issue assumes a colonial significance because, through the convergence of multiple temporalities into a univocal one, the latter assumes the role of an imperialistic reality. It has the ability to assimilate a series of temporalities that are perceived as backward, expedite their developments towards modernity, then map them out of their own time and place them in the national and Italian timeline.

Furthermore, these depictions of the Balkans hint at the suggestion of a specific Italian identity. Barbara Spackman, through her analysis of diverse Italian accounts about Ottoman territories written between the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, demonstrates how Italian travellers showed a national identity that was weaker and more flexible when compared to French and English travellers (De Donno 2018). Spackman mainly explores accounts about Egypt, Anatolia, Jerusalem and Mecca, and does not take into account travelogues from the Balkans. Nonetheless, the texts explored in this chapter, which engaged with the Adriatic and Balkan space, show the opposite attitude about the national identity of their authors. The investigation of these publications indicates how, in their encounter with the otherness, these authors elaborated their national identity as historically imperial, connected with Rome and Venice, and capable of employing this imperial attitude even in their contemporaneity. Spackman's primary sources explored diverse Ottoman regions during the nineteenth century, and in their accounts, Islam played a crucial role (Spackman 2017: 4–5). Meanwhile, the texts analysed here show different concerns and foreground a different relationship with Italian national identity. Rather than showing the historical 'malleability of a weak national identity' (Spackman 2017: 213), these sources highlight how Italian travellers in the Adriatic perceived their national identity as one that should play an imperial role in the area. This divergence from Spackman's sources can be attributed to at least two reasons. The first is related to the historical context in which these sources were produced and originally consumed. The authors considered in this chapter published their works on the eve of the First World War. In 1911, Italy celebrated its fiftieth anniversary as an independent state with the inauguration of the Vittoriano and an institutional emphasis on Italian national identity and values (Baioni and Thom 2011). These events might have influenced how the authors perceived their national identity. Conversely, the first sources that Spackman analyses are antecedent or contemporary to Italian unification, and a different relationship with Italian national identity might also be related to this temporal occurrence. At the same time, it is not possible to ignore

the geographical reason. This chapter delves into sources that find motifs to represent the imperial features of Italian identity in the characteristics of the region that they are visiting; elements such as the history, the architectural ruins and Italian activities allow the authors to advocate an Italian hegemony over that territory. In other words, when these authors travelled in the Balkans, they reinforced their national identity, identifying it as civilising, modern and expansionist, allowing them to be fascinated by this imperial dimension, as the work of Castellini suggests. The comparison with other contemporary travellers in the Ottoman Empire suggests that the Adriatic occupied a specific role within the authors' perceptions, which differs from the relationship with other territories. While there is further scope for scholarly research into this topic, my investigation goes some way towards analysing the idiosyncratic traits of colonialist attitudes in the Adriatic. This central point will be further explored in the next chapter by analysing authors who travelled in other Adriatic territories that were not subjected to Ottoman rule.

As I argued at the beginning of the chapter, this analysis may provide some insights into the discourse of power that these authors conveyed in their travelogues about the Balkans. The chapter suggests, with the analysis of diverse quotes, how the authors' texts imagined an unequal power relationship between the Balkans and Italy, conceived through the employment of diverse imperialist representation. To enhance our understanding of the diverse nuances of this relationship, it has been useful to consider Bhabha's critique of Said's approach to Foucauldian discourse. Homi Bhabha suggests that Foucault's concept of power does not rely on a symmetrical relation between the holder of power and the subject to the power. Rather, 'subjects are always disproportionately placed in opposition or domination through the symbolic decentring of multiple power relations which play the role of support as well as target or adversary' (Bhabha 2004: 103). Therefore, to solve the inequality of this power relation it cannot just be reversed, as it is asymmetrical. While both Bhabha and Said investigate contexts which were or have been directly colonised, this analysis focuses on a territory which was not yet occupied by the entity that produced these representations. Consequently, the assumptions about this issue cannot rely on the evidence emerging from an outright domination, but rather are based on what kind of domination these texts imagined, and hence must be treated with some prudence. Nevertheless, I argue that these authors constructed different temporalities to elaborate the territories encountered in their travels, and that in each of these temporalities they locate a power relationship between Italy and these territories. The texts accounted for an ancient past when the region was civilised by entities directly related to Italy, suggesting that, without the intervention of those entities, the region would have not achieved civilisation by itself. Furthermore, the authors dislocated the current people of the region as living, again, in a timelessly primitive state, as they lost

the greatness and civilisation that the past entities provided them with.

Meanwhile, in the few spaces where Italy was able to employ its hegemony, civilisation was revived. Looking at these representations, one can argue that the authors narrated a history of the territory where the locals occupy an inferior position to the Italians. Moreover, this inferiority is reiterated even in the contemporaneity that the texts describe, and when they claim a further Italian presence, they do so in the name of the Albanian necessity, to be helped and protected. Consequently, the authors articulated diverse power relations in various epochs that, legitimised with their struggle against barbarism, displace the subject on various historical levels. This chapter has shown how these texts articulate an Italianness that, within the Adriatic context, perceives itself as bearing a deep imperial attitude, and is capable of displacing the subject of this attitude through the multiple power relations represented by the diverse temporalities employed by the authors in elaborating the region.

Chapter II

The Transition Period: Imperialism from a Liberal Phase towards Fascist culture

The aftermath of the First World War gave rise to a complex geopolitical situation in the eastern Adriatic. The collapse of the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires, the Treaty of London, Italian ambitions, and the Yugoslav National awakening all transpired within a few years, resulting in a transitional phase of political power in the region. This period was marked by temporary occupations, nationalistic claims, diplomatic negotiations, and semi-spontaneous collective actions. From the Italian perspective of the time, the First World War aimed not only to expand Italian holdings on the Adriatic, which it did, but also to annex the entire Dalmatian territory, thereby fulfilling the irredentists' national aspirations. The failure to achieve this latter goal, despite Italy obtaining significant concessions in the Julian March and control over the city of Zadar, fuelled among nationalist intellectuals and politicians a sense that Italy's victory was not properly acknowledged by their former allies. This frustration led to renewed claims and discourses that advocated for a change in the status quo in the Adriatic, challenging the post-Versailles order in the Balkans. Various Italian writers, including Attilio Tamaro, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Luigi Federzoni engaged in writings that addressed this situation, arguing for the legitimacy of Italian rule in Dalmatia (Wolff 2001: 353–55). Envisioning a geopolitical situation in the eastern Adriatic with a stronger Italian presence meant striving for further political transition that would position Italy as the hegemonic nation in the region, to the detriment of the nascent Yugoslavian state. These texts often depicted a conflictual relationship between the two national groups, and this chapter aims to analyse the patterns through which Italian authors represented this relationship.

The reality of the eastern Adriatic during this period attracted significant scholarly attention. Events such as the peace conference in Versailles, D'Annunzio's occupation of Rijeka, the emergence of a Yugoslav nation, and their aftermath have garnered considerable academic and political interest.[23] Gabriele D'Annunzio played a pivotal role in the Italian perspective that this chapter aims to explore. Lucy Hughes-Allet (2013) provided a comprehensive overview of D'Annunzio's biography, emphasising various aspects of his life, including his wartime participation and involvement in the irredentist cause. Hughes-Allet highlighted how the occupation of Rijeka seemed to defy social conventions,

[23] For instance, within his article Lamour analyses one of the most recent uses of D'Annunzio by Italian politics. (Lamour 2023).

attracting a diverse array of individuals to the city, and how this experience was posthumously legitimated by Mussolini and therefore included in Fascist rhetoric concerning the treaty of Versailles (Hughes-Hallet 2013: 484–94). Dominique Kirchner Reill's detailed historical account about the occupation of Rijeka (2020) delved into the pre–existing context and its aftermath, as well as examining the impact of the occupation on Italy. Reill characterised D'Annunzio's adventure as a 'proto-Fascist adventure tale' (Reill 2020: 23) and explored the various political dimensions of his administration. The political perspective was further explored by Enrico Serventi Longhi (2022), who highlights the elements introduced by D'Annunzio in the city's administration, presenting a new prototype of political power and society that opposed the Versailles order and Western European democracies (Serventi Longhi 2022). D'Annunzio's journalistic activity has been compiled into a single volume by Annamaria Andreoli, Federico Ronconi and Giorgio Zanetti (2003). Elisa Segnini and Michael Subialka edited a collection of essays aimed at rethinking D'Annunzio's life and production from a world literature perspective (2023). Within this collection, Russell Scott Valentino, through a case study of the cherry brandy 'Maraschino' produced by an Italian family in Dalmatia, emphasises the connections between D'Annunzio's discourses about Dalmatia, the legacy of Venetian enlightenment's representation of the region, and the national redemption occurring in Rijeka (Valentino 2023). Moreover, Milou van Hout (2019) explores the relationship between the occupation of Rijeka and irredentism, focusing on cultural discourses and their influence on geopolitical strategies.

Furthermore, at the beginning of the 20th century, the author was already one of the most famous Italian writers. Giovanni Ragone highlights D'Annunzio's ability to communicate with the masses, emphasising his role in the formation of Midcult as a literary model for mass communication, combining elements of high culture with codices typical of the popular novel. D'Annunzio's work also impacted the role of journalists, who began to be conceived as intellectuals, capable of interpreting and vividly describing the contemporaneity (Ragone 1983: 754-755). This chapter aims to look at D'Annunzio following Scott Valentino and van Hout's perspectives, attempting to employ an analysis of the nationalist and historical arguments used by D'Annunzio's writing about the Adriatic. Furthermore, it delves into the imperialist features that D'Annunzio bestows upon Italian national identity and history in order to legitimise an Adriatic expansionism. Nevertheless, from this thesis' perspective, D'Annunzio's figure is part of a larger historical and cultural process: Italian Adriatic expansionism, which scholars have extensively examined, particularly in the aftermath of Versailles.

Maura Hametz (2014) examines how institutions such as the Italian national tourism agency (ENIT) or the Royal Italian Geographical Society used both a historical and scientific approach to assert the Italian character of Dalmatia and other parts of the eastern Adriatic's coast that had not been

ceded to Italy in Versailles. Egidio Ivetic's volume on the history of the Adriatic (2019) underscores the impossibility of a clear national division between Italians and Yugoslavs in the area at the time, with the post-Versailles borders creating nationally heterogeneous territories that conflicted with the concept of a nationally homogenous state. Marina Cattaruzza's analysis (2016) provides a critical examination of the Italian military occupation of Dalmatian territories after the armistice, emphasising how the normalisation of the geopolitical situation only started after the treaty of Rapallo in 1921 (Cattaruzza 2016: 83–122). Francesco Caccamo (2018) explores how Sidney Sonnino's request for the eastern Adriatic territories during the Treaty of London aimed at completing national unity and consolidating strategic positions in the area. Furthermore, this essay highlights how Italian authorities were suspicious of the Balkans' allies from the beginning of the war (Caccamo 2018). Luciano Monzali (2007), in his work on the Italians of Dalmatia, offers a detailed historical account of the Italian internal debate regarding the annexation of the territories established by the Treaty of London. He also explores the process through which Zadar was annexed by Italy, and the citizenship conditions for Italians who continued to live in Yugoslavia.

Italian imperialistic projects in the Mediterranean during these years were also studied by Valerie McGuire (2018a), in an essay that emphasizes how the Associazione Nazionalistica Italiana (ANI) perceived Italian expansionism in the Balkans and the Mediterranean as functional to support Italian communities abroad. McGuire also highlights how Italy transformed its dominion over the Dodecanese from temporary to permanent, taking advantage of the wartime situation (McGuire 2018a). Furthermore, Larry Wolff's works are notable in examining the representation of the area. In *Venice and the Slavs* (2001), Wolff investigates Venetian representations of Dalmatia and their impact on Italian nationalistic claims after Versailles. The Italian press, after the armistice, published extensive accounts of the sympathetic relationship between Italians and Dalmatians, with authors like Attilio Tamaro arguing for permanent Venetian rule in the region. Antonio Viti de Marco denounced the Yugoslavs as savage, and the Italian president, Vittorio Emanuele Orland, affirmed that contemporary Dalmatia was the fruit of past Venetian and Roman dominion (Wolff 2001: 351–59). Wolff's 'The Western Representation of Eastern Europe on the Eve of World War I' (2014) demonstrates, through three case studies, how Yugoslav voices in Western European decision-making following the Balkan wars were marginalised, underscoring the political asymmetry between the Balkan states and Western European states. In summary, this historical period witnessed a complex interplay of political, cultural, and literary elements. This situation generated a wide range of literary sources, which can testify to and represent the Italian attitude towards the eastern Adriatic within this time period. Despite the broad scholarly attention paid to this phenomenon, an analysis that adopts a postcolonial perspective

on the Italian political and cultural discourse displayed about the eastern Adriatic in the years during and after the war has only been partially developed. Within this chapter, I will try to develop such a perspective by employing various postcolonial theoretical concepts, including Orientalism, Euro-Orientalism, and Fabian's denial of coevalness in order to read and analyse the sources.

This chapter undertakes a critical analysis of the engagement and representation of the eastern Adriatic by a heterogeneous group of Italian authors during the period spanning from the aftermath of the Great War to the onset of the authoritarian turn within the Fascist regime. The analysis is oriented towards establishing a postcolonial perspective on the Italian discourse concerning the Adriatic, elucidating the influence of imperial attitudes on literary representations of the region. This study contends that Italian literature, in its exploration of the eastern Adriatic during this timeframe, refashioned the area through recurring patterns of representation, motifs and narratives that delineated an imperialistic relationship between the two shores. To focus on this aspect would allow us to view the construction of Italian imperial identity through the Adriatic case study. This perspective also has historical relevance in the fact that it was coherently deployed by both Liberal and Fascist Italy. This trajectory enables an analysis that charts the development of Italian imperial discourse in the Adriatic in tandem with the rise of Fascism.

Moreover, the study seeks to unravel the narrative frameworks employed by Italian literature in describing the region, illustrating their capacity to construct an imperialistic discourse regarding a region that had not yet been occupied. To delve into these themes, this chapter primarily engages with the issue of Italian representation of the area. It does so by examining four distinct texts, each representing direct experiences in Dalmatian territories that, even according to the Treaty of London, were intended to be part of the Yugoslavian Kingdom. Intriguingly, these texts manifest an Italian imperialist perspective toward cities that were not designated as Italian, even within the international agreement between Italy and the Entente powers. The four texts under examination include two first-hand accounts from D'Annunzio's occupation of Rijeka: Giovanni Comisso's novel *Il porto dell'amore* (1924) and D'Annunzio's collection of articles, *La riscossa dei leoni* (1928). The study also delves into Giulio Menini's memoirs from Split, *Passione adriatica, memorie di Dalmazia* (1925) and Beatrice Speraz's autobiography *Ricordi della mia infanzia in Dalmazia* (1915, 1923). Within this framework, the chapter explores various patterns of representation.

First, it examines how these texts portray Italianness in the eastern Adriatic, considering issues related to national identity, the perception of the Italian presence in the area, and the arguments put forth to legitimise Italian hegemony. Second, it investigates the literary construction of the national otherness as conveyed by these authors, particularly the Yugoslav identity. This analysis seeks to

understand whether these depictions serve the purpose of justifying Italian hegemony, and if they envision a specific role or space for the Yugoslavs within an Italian dominion, along with the type of relationship envisioned between these two national groups. Finally, the chapter investigates how the authors represent the geographical space of the Adriatic, examining their descriptions of the territory as well as their relationship to it. The approach adheres to a New-Historicist perspective, reading these texts as deeply embedded within the social and economic circumstances in which they were created (Bennet and Royle 2016: 138–49). This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the constitutive elements of these circumstances. Consequently, they could lead us to gain insights into the issues of culture and power negotiated through the relationship that occurred between the two sides of the Adriatic. Within this perspective, the chapter employs a contrapuntal reading of the sources, following Edward Said's methodology as outlined in *Culture and Imperialism* (Said 1994: 32–33). This approach focuses on the shared and recurrent representations, narratives, and motifs within these texts and explores the geopolitical messages they convey. The analysis ultimately aims to illustrate how the sources selected collectively articulate a coherent discourse that epistemologically organises the Adriatic space as a hierarchical domain, where Italy must play a hegemonic role.

The chapter is structured into four sections. The first delves into D'Annunzio's imperialistic message and its construction, providing an exploration of how nationalism gives rise to imperialist features. The second section explores Comisso's perception of Rijeka as a space in which limitless youth can be lived. The subsequent section is dedicated to an examination of Menini's diary and its articulation of a legitimising discourse for Italian expansionism. The last section conducts an analysis of Beatrice Speraz's autobiography, which narrates her childhood experiences in Dalmatia, focusing on the identity issues that she experienced as the daughter of an Italian woman and Yugoslavian man.

1. Memories and Paths for the Future: D'Annunzio's Views from Rijeka.

D'Annunzio was already a major figure on the Italian cultural stage before World War I, and he achieved a specific political dimension through his cultural activities. As part of the nationalist cultural milieu, D'Annunzio was committed to advocating for Italian involvement in the war, through articles and public speeches (Andreoli and others 2003: lxv-lxvi). He positioned himself as a spokesperson for the irredentist cause (Hughes-Hallet 2013: 4), actively participating in the Italian debate about entering the war between 1914 and 1915. His compelling oratory skills played a decisive role in rallying large crowds and garnering support for Italy's entry into the war (Daly 2018: 48–49). In the aftermath of World War I, from the columns of *Il corriere della sera*, D'Annunzio coined the

expression 'vittoria mutilata' (mutilated victory) to define the situation in which Italy achieved a military victory but only obtained partial recognition of its territorial demands in the eastern Adriatic. In response to the treaty of Versailles, in September 1919 D'Annunzio tried to redeem the mutilated victory by occupying Rijeka, known as Fiume in Italian (Ballinger 2018b: 70).

The occupation of Rijeka gained huge significance, both politically and culturally. The *Reggenza italiana del Carnaro*, the institution that ruled Rijeka during D'Annunzio's occupation, implemented a system of power that was intentionally antithetical to liberal democracies, which were perceived as rotten and unjust. D'Annunzio's oratory was central to Rijeka's political system, emphasising heroism and spiritual values as principles for the population to embrace (Falasca-Zamponi 2023: 6). Moreover, this political experiment was based on D'Annunzio's endeavour to establish a direct connection between himself, as the city's leader, and the collective audience of the assemblies, where decisions were made by acclamation. This experience articulated a sacralisation of politics and aesthetic rituals, such as the Roman salute, which constructed a mythical and symbolic apparatus that would provide the basis of Fascism's aesthetic discourse (Serventi Longhi 2022).

D'Annunzio's rule in Rijeka lasted from September 1919 to December 1920, when the treaty of Rapallo regulated the border issues between Italy and Yugoslavia,[24] and led the Italian army to remove D'Annunzio and his *Arditi* from Rijeka. When he landed in Rijeka, D'Annunzio was at the peak of his popularity. During the war, through articles, discourses and demonstrative actions, D'Annunzio had systematically represented symbols, values and places of the war, obtaining great popularity and particularly emphasising the significance of the eastern Adriatic territories, especially Dalmatia and Trieste (Isnenghi 1990). On January 4, 1919 he wrote one of the most famous manifestos of Italian imperialism, the 'Lettera ai Dalmati' (Alatri 1980: 13), published on *La Gazzetta di Venezia, Il Popolo d'Italia* and *Idea Nazionale* (Andreoli and others 2003: 1749-52). The number of his articles, discourses and letters – mainly published by *La Vedetta d'Italia*[25] – about the eastern Adriatic also significantly increased during his occupation of Rijeka. Most of D'Annunzio's publications that engaged with the theme of relations between Italy and Dalmatia, as well as a few unpublished writings about the same issue, were edited by Eugenio Coselschi into a collection entitled *La riscossa dei*

[24] With significant territorial concessions made to Italy; as a consequence, 'about three hundred and fifty thousand Slovenes, and one hundred thousand Croatians were thus incorporated into the Italian state' (Cattaruzza 2016: 112–13).

[25] An Italian nationalist newspaper published in Rijeka at the time (Reill 2020: 99).

leoni, and published by Bemporad in Florence in 1928. This collection shows the author's expansionistic attitude towards the Adriatic within a time span that dates from the beginning of the First World War to the arrival of Fascism, resulting in a valuable source to understand the literary perceptions and construction of the eastern Adriatic within Italian culture.

La Riscossa dei Leoni mainly comprises letters, discourses, articles and chronicles related to the events in Rijeka during D'Annunzio's occupation. These texts were deeply influenced by the historical context, and their tone evolved with the changing situation. The discourses addressed before and during the war were infused with optimism regarding Italian expansionism. For example, in a letter addressed to the city of Zadar in December 1915, he writes:

> 'Per tutta la tua bellezza italiana, credi nella promessa, credi nella gioia della seconda primavera […] e i tuoi Leoni di sopra le tue porte fremeranno alla "santa entrata."' (D'Annunzio 1928: 12)

The quote illustrates D'Annunzio's high expectations and emphasises the Italian identity of Zadar, associating its beauty with Italy. The Italian arrival is a promise, and will signify a second spring for the city. The ordinal number suggests that there was a previous spring, related to the Venetian period, and connects the imperial experience of Venice with the Italian state. Furthermore, he reinforces this connection by evoking images of the Lions depicted on the doors of the city as trembling before what D'Annunzio calls 'Saint's arrival'. This formula, as the author explains a few lines previously, featured the return of Venetian rule to Zadar in 1409 after a period of Hungarian occupation. This letter anticipates the Italians' arrival with unwavering certainty, even though Italian troops were far from achieving their territorial goals at the time.

The texts published after the war thus articulate disappointment, anger and promises for the future, enriched by irreverent descriptions of Italian prime ministers and the American president. These writings display some of the typical elements of D'Annunzio's style, with continuous metaphors and attempts to conflate political meaning with figures from classical tradition (Asor Rosa 1976: 401–4). For instance, in the first discourse of the collection, which took place in Genoa and was addressed to a group of exiled Dalmatians, D'Annunzio describes the features of the territories surrounding Salona. Mentioning the ruins of a Roman city, he writes:

> 'Or sembra che quivi il genio del luogo, *genius loci*, non sia nella lapide inscritto ma grandeggi tuttavi […] che mai può dunque valere lo sforzo de' barbari contro la legge di Roma? Là dove tali fondamenta ponemmo, là il genio del luogo ci aspetta.' (D'Annunzio

1928: 6)

The genius loci is an entity that, in literature, can deploy various roles (Hartman 2010) and trigger uncanny sensations. This figure was created by Latin religion and is relatable to the figure of a ghost, yet strictly connected to a specific place (Bennet and Royle 2016: 182–83). Within this quote, the author twice repeats the concept of Genius Loci, first in Italian and then in Latin, stating that it is waiting for the Italians, and assigning it a specific activity. This quote uses an entity from Latin culture as the representation of the soul of a place, in this way expressing a specific political claim: that Dalmatia was Italian, and even the soul of the territories was waiting for them.

The central theme explored in these writings is the legitimacy of Italian territorial demands in Dalmatia. D'Annunzio aimed to establish Italian expansionism in the eastern Adriatic as natural and legitimate, employing representations and discourses about the relationship between Italy and Dalmatia that require a closer reading. Within these depictions, it is possible to distinguish between the articulation of Dalmatian geographic space and the people who inhabited the region.

1.1. Lions and Books: D'Annunzio's Geography of Dalmatia

The lion was a prominent figure in the iconography of the Republic of Venice, associated with the evangelist Saint Mark. Venice used this figure to testify its dominion over the territories that were under its control, meaning cities under the Republic featured statues or bas-relief of the lion of Venice on the cities' doors or churches (Grasman 2012). D'Annunzio, in this text, constantly appeals to the lions of Venice as identity-markers of the Dalmatians cities. The author repeatedly depicts them with a metaphorical leonine appearance, and binomials like 'sorella leonina'[26] are rather common within these appeals. The evocations of lions often assume mythical features, as they represent the immanent Venetian spirit of these cities. One of the clearest examples of these evocations is the discourse that D'Annunzio pronounced to the population in Rijeka:

> 'Tutti i Leoni dell'Istria, [...]; e tutti i Leoni del Carnaro, […]; e tutti i Leoni della Dalmazia, da Zara, […] da Cattaro, tutti dalle muraglie, [...] dalle podesterie, tutti oggi guatano a Fiume, traggono a Fiume, rugghiano a Fiume. […] È la riscossa della potenza veneta e della magnificenza veneta nell'Adriatico senza pace.' (D'Annunzio 1928: 71)

[26] One of the most common of these references is to the city of Zara (D'Annunzio 1928: 10–11).

In this article, D'Annunzio explains the significance of the occupation, and in doing so refers to the Dalmatian cities as lions, underscoring the value of the Venetian heritage in shaping their identity. The temporal marker 'oggi' suggests a longstanding presence for the lions, which only manifested when Italian authority was established in these lands. This scenario assumes a heightened Venetian shadow in the closing lines, and the author represents the takeover of Rijeka as the revival of the Venetian power over an Adriatic Sea without peace. In describing the Adriatic as a space without peace, D'Annunzio evokes an element of Venetian power discourse that dates back to the 14th century with the Latin phrase 'Pax Tibi Marce Evangelista Meus' – peace to you Mark, evangelist of mine. In Venetian iconography, this sentence was inscribed on the image of the open book accompanying the lion figure. This symbol suggests how Venice represented itself as an entity capable of providing peace – the peace of Saint Mark – to the places under its influence (Grasman 2012: 126–27). Consequently, the closing statement proposes a parallel between Italian expansionism, represented by D'Annunzio in Rijeka, and the Venetian empire, insinuating that only an Italian expansion into the Adriatic would pacify the region, as Venice did centuries before. D'Annunzio frequently frames Dalmatia through a Venetian lens, as this experience was still moulding the identity of the region. Alongside the lions, the author employs a range of metaphors and discourses to reiterate this representation; for example, in the 'Lettera ai dalmati' he writes:

> 'Davanti all'altare di Perasto, dov'è sepolto il gonfalone repubblicano bagnato d'un pianto che non s'asciuga.' (D'Annunzio 1928: 14)

This passage refers to an episode that occurred in 1797. After the collapse of Venice against Napoleon, the last Venetian captain in the city of Perast, Giuseppe Viscovich, buried the standard of the Venetian empire while crying, wetting it with his tears (Ferraccioli and Giraudo 2014). The author establishes a continuity between that event and the contemporaneity of Perast, asserting that the standard remains wet as the wound caused by the Venetians' departure still lingers. Articulating this image, D'Annunzio indirectly implies that only the arrival of the Italians can end the pain of a land that is still crying.

These symbolic representations, alongside sporadic representations of Roman influence, are homogeneously diffused throughout the text, featuring the entire imaginary scenario in which these territories are located. D'Annunzio portrays a region where the Venetian imaginary, within its values and ideas, is still alive and affecting the contemporaneity. For D'Annunzio, the main key to interpreting and describing these territories is their Venetian aspect, which he perceives as overwhelmingly influential and obscuring the display of different identities in the area. Therefore, this collection conjures a unidimensional Dalmatia, existing primarily as a vestige of Venetian heritage, waiting for a

redemption that might occur but, in the author's perspective, only through Italian expansion in the region.

1.2. Loyal Dalmatians

Alongside a construction of the territories as essentially Venetian, D'Annunzio often describes the Dalmatians as being loyal to Italy. When they appear collectively, the author repeatedly emphasises their loyalty, although often without even specifying to whom they are loyal. The topos of the Dalmatians' loyalty was recurrent in literary expressions of the Venetian enlightenment during the 18th century. One of the most important examples is Carlo Goldoni's play *La Dalmatina* (1758), written as an homage to the loyalty of the Dalmatians in the Venetian wars against the Turks. To achieve his goal, Goldoni portrays the figure of captain Radovich, a Dalmatian sailor sent to rescue Zandira, a woman kidnapped by the Turks. Radovich vanquishes the Turks and declares his loyalty to Venice, invoking the presence of a lion on his breast (Wolff 2001: 25–26). D'Annunzio often articulates this topos in dramatic tones:

> 'Giacomo Boni, al tempo tristo in cui crollò il campanile di San Marco, volle caricare il tritume dei mattoni […] in una peata; e nel mezzo mare gittò il carico solenne, che andasse a ritrovar gli anelli sommersi dei Dogi. Dalmati fedeli, se l'ingiustizia si compia [the denial of Italian sovereignty over Dalmatia] voi caricherete le vostre barche coi rottami delle pietre gloriose, e vi imbarcherete con essi; e uscirete anche voi nel mare del vostro amore disperato; e vi lascerete andare a picco, voi e le reliquie, per ritrovare nel profondo i nostri morti, non più servi ribaditi ma uomini liberi tra uomini liberi.' (D'Annunzio 1928: 29)

This quote, extracted from the 'Lettera ai dalmati', depicts the Dalmatians as loyal to such an extent that they would prefer to drown in the sea with the ruins of their past than be subjected to the rule of Yugoslavia.[27] In the lines before, D'Annunzio recalls an event from 1902, when the archaeologist and art conservator Giacomo Boni threw a fragment of plaster from the collapsed bell tower of Saint Mark in Venice into the sea, echoing the ceremony known as 'Sposalizio del Mare' (Romanelli 1971).[28]

---

[27] It is interesting to note that a few years before Frank Supino, the representative of the Dalmatians among the Yugoslav committee claimed that Italian dominion over Dalmatia would have constituted rape (Wolff 2001: 351).

[28] A ceremony in which the doges threw a ring into the sea to represent their dominion over the Adriatic (Brunetti 1936).

The author connects this event with an imagined tragic future in which the Dalmatians would have fulfilled their loyalty, spontaneously drowning in the sea. The quote outlines the denial of Italian sovereignty in Dalmatia as a tragedy that would cause the Dalmatians leaving the mainland to drown into the sea, an image that triggers a sense of surrealism or strangeness, which is a common pattern in the literary description of tragedies (Bennet and Royle 2016: 118–19). This sense is first created through the evocation of untouchable feelings, like the desperate love that D'Annunzio associates with the Dalmatians, and their concrete and tragic effects on the imagined real lives of Dalmatian citizens. Second, by assimilating their destiny with that of the ruins of Saint Mark's tower. This metaphor aims to evoke in the reader a combination of emotions related to the incoming tragedy and its significance for the Dalmatians. The latter are admired for their loyalty but also consoled, as they can only be free after death. This metaphor serves a meta-linguistic function, outlining what the denial of Italian dominion over Dalmatia would have meant in the Venice-centred code used by D'Annunzio, namely a complete tragedy. A tragedy in which the Dalmatians, as human beings existing in the text only within the Venetian frame, would disappear into the sea following the destiny of the Venetian empire.

Reading these depictions of Dalmatia and the Dalmatians, it is possible to recognise D'Annunzio's effort to revive the memory of the Venetian empire. The author constantly views the region through a prism of empire, showing how he only understands Dalmatia through a Venetian perspective. The latter perspective embodies an unequal relationship between the reader and Dalmatia, recalling an imperial system in which Dalmatia was peripheral with respect to Venice. This inequality is particularly evident in how D'Annunzio describes the Italian role in the region.

1.3. Between Imperialism and History: Italianness in the Adriatic

La riscossa dei leoni articulates an image of Italy and Italians that relies on three main patterns of representations: Italy as victorious in the war but the victim of international political scheming perpetrated by the former allies; Italy as capable of making huge sacrifices for the cause of its expansionism; and Italy as the heir of Venice. The first two patterns are common in post-war literature and focus on elements of victory, nobility, heroism and sacrifice, while the last requires a closer reading.

D'Annunzio deploys the idea of Italy as the heir of Venice through two diverse discourses: one depicts Italy as the metropole of the Dalmatians, while the other sustains how Italy is the only nation able to revive Venetian glory. The first discourse displays a paternalistic tone and has an element of patronage. For instance, in the opening article, which contains a speech to the Dalmatians, delivered in May 1915, D'Annunzio claims:

> ‘Mi sembra che da una simile cecità ostile siamo noi rimasti afflitti, dopo la sciagura di Lissa. Non abbiamo veduto […] quel che i vincitori operavano […] per cancellare ogni vestigio del nostro dominio su la costa orientale, per distruggere ogni traccia d’italianità su la bella spiaggia latina […] Noi non abbiamo osato aiutare né confortare la triste e taciturna lotta proseguita da voi, o fedeli di Roma […] Sotto la forza latina di Roma, dei Papi, di Venezia, come sotto la forza barbara dei Goti, […] degli austriaci, la vita civile della costa di là, come quella della costa di qua, fu costantemente di origine e di essenza italiane.’ (D’Annunzio 1928: 4–5)

The quote shows how the Roman and Venetian empires were conceived as phenomena belonging to the same process to which Italy belongs, namely Italian civilisation. D’Annunzio addresses the history of Dalmatia from a civilising perspective, stating that the fundamentals of civil life on the other side of the Adriatic, even when dominated by others, were generated by Italy. Moreover, the author depicts Italy’s lack of involvement in the war as a refusal to help the other side of the Adriatic, while the latter was fighting to affirm its Italianness. This quote also addresses the will of the Dalmatians, represented as people who were aiming to be part of Italy. The ‘Lettera ai Dalmati’ provides further articulation of this last concept:

> ‘Io ridico che questa Madre di biade e di eroi, questa guerriera del Solstizio tra il mare e l’alpe [Italy], ha pur sempre fra tutte le genitrici il grembo più fecondo. Il dominio morale sembra il suo destino. […] Ripeto nel fragore della lotta quel che dissi nel silenzio dello spirito “Ella è l’artefice chiara delle stirpi confuse. Soltanto in lei la materia diversa e incandescente della nuova vita troverà i grandi conii perfetti. Soltanto in lei s’imprimeranno vive ancora una volta le forme ideali” […].’ (D’Annunzio 1928: 25)

These metaphors sustain the idea of Dalmatia as an expression of Italy, and consequently that the Dalmatians would only be able to achieve their archetypal form within an Italian context. The relationship depicted between Italy and Dalmatia expresses a paternalistic view of the latter – that only inside Italy could Dalmatia revive its civilisation. This quote articulates a maternal role for Italy, addressing a filial relationship with Dalmatia that is an often reiterated topos within the text. For instance, D’Annunzio recalls how Baiamonti called Dalmatia ‘Figlia minore d’Italia’ (D’Annunzio 1928: 3). Labelling the occupying or colonising power as maternal is a common topos within colonial literature. However, it is worth noting how D’Annunzio introduces the concept of Dalmatian self-determination. Through the evocation of an imaginary shaped around geometric themes, the author

delineates Italy as the only entity able to provide certainty over the origins of the unclear races. Furthermore, he establishes an unequal relationship between Italy and Dalmatia, affirming how being under the guidance of Italy was the only way for Dalmatians to achieve their potential. In other words, D'Annunzio argues that Dalmatia, in order to achieve self-determination, needs to be located within Italy.

In the second article of the collection, D'Annunzio associates the Venetian empire with Italy as two entities that not only had territorial and cultural continuity, but who were also able to deploy the same perspective towards Dalmatia, that of domination and colonisation. This text, addressed to Zadar, conveys this discourse to a significant degree:

> 'Il tuo popolo vecchio "santa intrada" chiamò l'ingresso dei magistrati veneziani. Ora attendi con certezza una entrata più santa: quella del nostro Re […]. Le tue donne possono cucire in segreto il tricolore, come fecero alla vigilia della giornata di Lissa. […] Quel tricolore ondeggerà al vento della primavera ventura, insieme con gli stendardi di San Marco dissepolti. Noi veniamo da Venezia. Siamo partiti su l'alba da quella Venezia a cui tu assomigli.' (D'Annunzio 1928: 11)

The association between the two flags, the common point of departure, and the holiness of the entrance are elements that involve a continuity between the two entities. The Italian perspective seems to be the same as Venice, and thus the perception that Dalmatians should have of Italians was the same as they had of the Venetians. Furthermore, the evocation of the Venetian past shows a pattern to follow for Italian action in the area, suggesting how Italy is not only the most proper heir, but also the entity that should actively follow a policy of expansionism in the Adriatic.

In conclusion, *La riscossa dei Leoni* provides a comprehensive view of the figures, arguments and imaginaries employed by D'Annunzio. An examination of these imaginaries reveals D'Annunzio's specific, selective treatment of time and memory. For instance, he arbitrarily ignores diverse aspects of the historical relationship between Venice and Dalmatia, especially the various times in which Zadar rebelled against Venice. This approach leads readers to construct an image of this reality that is forged in the past by past actors. The Dalmatians, like Dalmatia itself, are conflated with the concept of Dalmatia as created by the Venetian empire. Through these writings, D'Annunzio represents a pattern of relating to the past and memory that labels the memory of past empires as something that belongs to a contemporary nation. He also conceives memory as a tool to legitimise the national expansionist attitude. Recollection is not merely a manifestation of a glorious past, but also an element that is able to trigger and indicate the path for Italy's future actions. Evoking the image that Venice

had of Dalmatia, and evoking Italy as the heir of the Venetian empire, D'Annunzio tried to both legitimate and propose a concrete Italian expansionism in the area, directly representing Italy as an elected nation which should rise above others for its history and value.

The author had also articulated similar arguments previously, in 1914, in the *Canti della guerra latina*, where he argued that Italian entrance into the war would have led to a resurrection of the Latin race and a rescue of the glorious the past (Härmänmaa 2015). The historical dimension is crucial in understanding D'Annunzio's expansionism. As demonstrated by the passages quoted, D'Annunzio conceptualises Italian expansion in the Adriatic as a resurgence, rather than a mere expansion. As Filippo Caburlotto's analysis of *Merope*, *La nave* and *Il fuoco* reveals, D'Annunzio does not conceive the Italian colonial war as a conquest, but rather as the fulfilment of Mediterranean Latinity, and the assertion of Italy's historical and natural right, derived from its Latinity (Caburlotto 2010).

Additionally, as noted by Isnenghi, the Adriatic situation in the aftermath of Versailles allows D'Annunzio to conflate both historical and military aspects in the Italian right of possession, as given by Venetian heritage and their victory in the war (Isnenghi 1990). Nevertheless, the enunciation of these historical arguments, as I have tried to articulate, does not allow us to dismiss the imperialistic dimensions of this text. D'Annunzio proposes, in *La riscossa dei leoni,* a redemption of history for the Italian nation: it must redeem the historical role that its – putative – ancestors played in the same area. Within this proposal, D'Annunzio conflates two elements of Italian identity, imperialism and nationalism; he masks the expansionism in Dalmatia as an assertion of Italian historical rights. This operation serves as a tool to justify Italian demands in the area, but it also articulates imperialism as an immanent feature of Italian nationalism.

The author constantly evokes an Italian presence in the Adriatic as the return of Venetian glory, but the return he claims is one of imperialism, not mere national redemption. The imperial frame surfaces particularly in his depictions of Dalmatians; D'Annunzio defends the irredentist cause, but he does not believe that Dalmatians and Italians are part of the same population. Rather, he foresees an Italian expansionism that is able to involve, within its borders, a Dalmatian otherness, and involves them only through the Venetian frame, rather than constructing a peer relationship with them. As Eric Hobsbawm defines, an invented tradition is 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (Hobsbawm 2012a: 1). Within this perspective, it is possible to frame D'Annunzio's reading of the situation in Dalmatia as the proposal of a tradition, that of the Venetian empire, that should inform the geopolitical practice of

the Italian Nation. Within this conception, the imperial dimension is not lost, as demonstrated by the representation of Dalmatians and the evocation of imperial Venice as the ancestor of Italy in the Adriatic. Rather, it merges with Italian nationalism in a single phenomenon. D'Annunzio's view was shared by many different figures, especially within the Italian nationalist movement, such as the admiral Enrico Millo, who was the chief in command of the Italian military occupation of Dalmatia at the end of the war, and who publicly supported D'Annunzio's action in Rijeka, even if it made him guilty of sedition.[29] An analysis of Menini's chronicle from Split will provide a further perspective on this way of perceiving Italianness in the Adriatic. Nevertheless, even among D'Annunzio supporters, this was not the only way to address the relationship between Italy and the Adriatic, as the focus on Comisso's novel aims to show.

2. Youth and Occupation: Comisso in Rijeka

D'Annunzio had, undoubtedly, a privileged perspective from which to narrate Rijeka's experience; however, the magnetism of his character, alongside the circumstances through which the city was ruled, attracted many intellectuals and writers (Hughes-Hallet 2013: 4-5); one of those who wrote about it was Giovanni Comisso. Comisso was one of the Italian soldiers who refused to shoot D'Annunzio during his march towards Rijeka. He eventually joined the Arditi and settled in the city throughout the entire occupation. At the end of this experience, he wrote his first novel about his life in Rijeka, which was published a few years later, in 1924, with the title *Il porto dell'amore.* At the time of publication, Comisso was already known as a poet and this novel gained great public success, had numerous re-editions, and was included in the collection of tales named *Gente di mare*. Comisso engaged with the Adriatic context in different writings. This chapter focuses on his early novel, *Il porto dell'amore*, while the next one explores *Gente di mare*. The choice to examine Comisso's texts in two different moments has thematic reasons. *Il porto dell'amore* is set in the immediate post-war months and looks at a specific experience related to the outcome of the First World War, similar to the works of D'Annunzio and Menini explored in this chapter, and narrates an experience of occupation. Meanwhile, *Gente di mare*, published during the Fascist period, offers different insights about the relationship between the author and the eastern Adriatic. It is not a story of occupation but rather a story of cultural and economic exchanges that occurred in a political context – the Fascist one – completely different from that of *Il porto dell'amore.* Consequently, for the thesis purposes, the two

[29] There were no consequences for his support (Cattaruzza 2016: 105).

texts dialogue better with other publications coeval to them rather than with each other. Therefore, this work looks at them separately.

The public success was accompanied by growing attention towards Giovanni Comisso among the literary critics and intellectuals of his time. Comisso was widely studied by the most important literary figures between the '20s and the '60s of the 20th century, from Montale to Pasolini, and many scholars tried to interpret his literary production. Nevertheless, as stated by Rolando Damiani, Comisso's literature remained somewhat difficult to frame and describe, with several literary debates attempting to define and label his narrative. Since his first novel, Comisso had deployed personal linguistic and stylistic features that remained mostly unchallenged through his works. From his apparent impatience towards grammar, the author developed specific linguistic features, enriched by irregularities and dialectal influences, that demonstrated a language disconnected from history (Damiani and Naldini 2002: xiv–xxi).

Analysing Comisso's style, Parise argued that his writing deploys a language that is strongly personalised in the act of writing (Comisso and Parise 1969: 10), and which is embedded within a direct and expressive style (Damiani and Naldini 2002: xx–xxii) that coherently sustains the main genre explored by the author: autobiography. Although Comisso's entire literary production could be considered, to some extent, autobiographical, as noted by Accame-Bobbio, it cannot be conceived as a direct transposition of life into writing. Rather, the author represented a life that simultaneously conceals and shows his own self (Accame Bobbio 1973: 9). Within this context, the narrative that emerges from Comisso's literary production seems capable of translating physical sensations into writing, showing the reader a kind of vital aestheticism. Comisso expressed a language, style and narrative that converge in the articulation of the main theme that the author explored: youth. Comisso's writings articulate youth as both a stylistic category and a perspective achievable by representing the truth of the moment (Damiani and Naldini 2002: xxii–xxvi). For instance, *Il porto dell'amore* constantly deals with the concept of the flow of time, displaying a juvenile perspective on the world that surrounds the main characters, proposing an association between Comisso's experience in Rijeka and youth as the season of life that he experienced during that year.

On a biographical level, Comisso deployed a relationship between his political views and literary production that seems contradictory. At a personal level, Comisso collaborated with the Fascist periodical *Camicia nera*, and went to Ethiopia for *La Gazzetta del Popolo* in 1937 to narrate and celebrate the Fascist imperial project in the colonies (Duncan 2005). Comisso's accounts from the Horn of Africa do not consistently celebrate Italian colonialism; nevertheless, they articulate problematic racist and colonialist considerations about the region (Trento 2012). At the same time, the

author came out against the invasion of Ethiopia (Duncan 2005: 103–4), and his literature does not have an open political agenda. As Derek Duncan argues, Comisso's literary production within the Fascist context evoked images and a narrative that were contradictory to the Fascist imaginary. The author constructed networks of superficial association in his descriptions of reality, undermining the presence of elements from Fascist discourse, which were overwhelming in the literature of the period (Duncan 2002: 49–63). One might argue that *Il porto dell'amore* shows a similar pattern, at least concerning the political rhetoric associated with the Rijeka experience.

In a brief commentary about the text, Emilio Cecchi underlined how it lacks the political pomposity that characterised D'Annunzio's narration about the experience, suggesting that this perspective may result from a more direct expression of historical reality (Cecchi and Sapegno 1969: 673). We must also note that D'Annunzio had a deep influence on Comisso, although this was confined to his lifestyle, rather than impacting his literature, as Comisso admitted himself (Damiani and Naldini 2002: xvi–xvii). *Il Porto dell'amore* engages with the theme of time and juvenescence, constructing the occupation of Rijeka as the most appropriate context in which to live youth. The novel articulates, in chronological order, various episodes that occurred to Comisso and his friend Guido Keller between the summer of 1920 and December of the same year, when Italian troops ended the occupation. These episodes narrate their juvenile adventures, their sentimental and hedonistic affairs, and their drug-related amusements. The events in Rijeka are an explicit allegory of the flow of time throughout life, from the light-heartedness of the adventures in the summer, associated with youth, to the parallels between greying hair and the arrival of the Italian army (Comisso 2002: 89).

Within this context, Comisso does not directly address the political dimensions of the occupation, which are almost entirely absent from the book. Therefore, *Il Porto dell'amore* leads us to interrogate not the direct ideological discourse itself, but rather the literary background where the author locates the narration. Placing this publication within its historical context of occupation will raise questions on how the author literarily constructed the local context as a viable location to display this articulation of youth. The following paragraphs will explore this construction, first focusing on the depiction of the physical space provided by the author, keeping in mind how the geographic context was foreign to the occupiers. Second, I aim to understand how the occupied subjects were framed in the narration. Eventually, the section will explore how the local reality relates to the author's depiction of youth.

2.1. A Space for Italian Freedom

In the novel, Comisso constructs a geographical space which seems to be a limitless reality to him,

his friends and the other Arditi, who can express their vitality and freedom however they like. Moving around the city, sleeping naked anywhere, abusing drugs and alcohol, having love affairs, seducing anyone they like, and making fools of the local population – Rijeka's reality seemed to be a sort of augmented reality, without social or legal limits that could obstruct their will. For instance, within the first pages, the author describes his awakening in these terms:

> 'Avevo dormito tutto il pomeriggio al sole accanto a giovani cipressi, disteso ignudo sulle larghe pietre d'un muretto. […] Il mondo che vedevo al di là della vallata sottostante, composto di pendii chiari, di rocciaie grigie, di caseggiati nitidi presso una foce tranquilla, di un golfo splendente senza che vi fosse il sole […] mi era così nuovo da convincermi d'esser giunto vicino alla sfera di un'altra terra del cielo.' (Comisso 2002: 35)

The images of the territories surrounding him trigger a dreamlike or even uncanny scenario in which a new earth is opening before his eyes. The sense of novelty that is given by the inability of the author to recognise the environment, merges with his awakening and the light of sunset, leading the author to describe those lands as a new planet under the same sky. The absence of other human beings, alongside other details like the fact that he slept naked, regardless of any sense of discretion, suggests a perception that all of reality is at his disposal. He wakes up in a completely new scenario, and despite noticing their houses he is unable to see any human beings. What enhances this suggestion is the combination of his inability to recognise the place and his subsequent classification of it as something new. The place was so unrecognisable that it had to be a new planet Earth. In the above quote, Comisso thus classifies the landscape around him in a way that reveals a complete control over reality. For instance, the view was not possible to be classified as new only for him, a stranger and occupier in that place – it had to be a new globe.

The indirect expression of this control, alongside the lack of social boundaries that in other places would have stopped the author from sleeping naked, recall Said's critique of Camus' tale *La Femme adultère*. The tale revolves around a Frenchwoman in Algeria who achieved an eroticised connection to the earth and sky she encounters. Camus delineates the relationship between the woman and the landscape through sexual terms, showing how the protagonist achieves immediate access to that territory. Said argues that the text creates a colonial sensibility, depicting the possibility of a French woman traveling within a colonised space and accessing its most intimate secrets (Said 1994: 176–77). Comisso does not propose the same level of sexual climax that characterised Camus' novel; nevertheless, the relation between the protagonist and the surrounding territories develops from the same premises: even if it was not his land, the protagonist had the power to access it completely, to

define it and live free from social boundaries. The quote exemplifies the relationship that Comisso constructs between himself and the surrounding space, a relationship that expresses a sense of freedom and possession. These senses are not typical of the city itself; rather, only Comisso and the other Arditis experience them, as the following section will explore.

2.2. Entangled Subjects

Comisso places the national otherness that inhabits the city in the background of the novel. The non-Italian local people living in Rijeka, mostly Yugoslavs, are a constant presence in the text but are never properly addressed, and remain only at the margins of the narration. Comisso depicts them as suspicious or scared by the Italian occupiers, but also as being at their complete disposal and displaying a passive acceptance of the occupiers' abuses, discourses and jokes. During a brief journey made with Keller, Comisso sailed a few miles east of Rijeka, looking for the country of the Morlach;[30] upon landing, he found a monastery and started a conversation with a Croat friar:

> 'Chiesi di visitare la chiesa e mi accompagnò con non poco sospetto. […] mi accorsi che il quadro di una Madonna era stato abbattuto da un'ala caduta a un angelo soprastante. Il padre tremando nelle labbra mi guardò […] e per il piacere di accrescergli la paura gli dissi che quello era di certo un segno di avvenimenti terribili. […] Una paura misteriosa lo spingeva a farsi amichevole e sedutosi sul muretto del chiostro mi invitò a conversare. C'eravamo appena messi d'accordo sulla supremazia spirituale di Roma quando nel quadrato della porta comparve il mio amico […] e il frate ci disse che a Fiume, nella notte, tutti i negozi e tutti i velieri dei croati erano stati distrutti dagli Arditi. […] La città che aveva finito con l'annoiarci fino ai capelli, forse stava per ritornare interessante.' (Comisso 2002: 50–51)

The mocking tone of the whole quote triggers a comic sensation that relies on a paradoxical interaction between the friar, representing a religious authority, and the young protagonist. The attitude of the latter, who seems to be there only to mock the friar and his beliefs, outlines a sense of superiority. This superiority manifests itself through the dialogue that the two characters share, which has an ironic tone. This tone relies, for instance, on the paradox of a young man convincing a friar about the

[30] The Morlach are a population from Dinaric Alps, stereotypically constructed by the Venetian literature of the 17th and 18th centiury as exceptionally violent (Wolff 2011: 127–28).

supremacy of the Roman church over an unspecified other church, but probably the reference is to the Orthodox church, the one to which the monastery belongs.[31] The description of the friar as being miserable, impressed by the joke of the author, and ready to recognise the superiority of the Catholic church over the Orthodox one, sustains this sense of superiority. The friar is suspicious, but is also subjected to the author's authority; meanwhile, the protagonist does not hesitate to place himself in an unequal relation of power with the friar.

This imbalance also surfaces powerfully in the final lines, where Comisso explains that they left Rijeka only out of boredom, and once the possibility of a new diversion appeared, they promptly returned there. The fact that the diversion was a violent action against the Croats was entirely meaningless from their perspective. Comisso further articulates the unequal relation of power between Yugoslav locals and Italian occupiers a few pages later, when he describes a conversation with a Serbian who was complaining because his son left to join the Arditi:

> 'Il mio amico lo aveva ascoltato, tenendo fisso lo sguardo nei suoi occhi come per dominargli la forza dura della voce, […] gli disse: «Vedete, la causa di tutto questo sta in voi: voi avete comandato alla vostra famiglia col bastone. Noi invece comandiamo con l'amore. E la vostra razza a contatto con la nostra, si è squagliata come neve al sole. I vostri figli ànno sentito che la nostra legge è il bacio e sono venuti verso noi […]» […] «Noi siamo partiti per questo desiderio di orizzonte chiaro, e senza fine, ma per avere diritto a goderne, bisogna avere meriti d'amore. Voi ne avete? » «Signore vi domando solo di farmi ritornare a casa il mio figlio che è scappato con gli Arditi.» Il mio amico promise di ricercarlo […] se egli avesse giurato di non percuoterlo, ma baciarlo. Il serbo, stupito, giurò. […] L'accampamento era poco distante, […] trovammo un ragazzo con altri […] Il mio amico gli ordinò di uscire. «Ora ritorna da tuo padre, mi à giurato che non alzerà il bastone contro di te» […].' (Comisso 2002: 58–60)

Comisso and Keller display and address their superiority when communicating with the Serb. The author represents the Serbian as being doubly incapable: first, he was unable to love, which in the system of values they displayed before him, means he did not deserve to occupy that land; second, he

[31] Comisso does not state clearly the belonging of the monastery, but he describes some of its features as 'Byzantines' and he speaks about an icon of the Virgin Mary (Comisso 2002: 50–51), elements that suggest the Orthodox belonging of the monastery.

was unable to find his son. In contrast, the two Arditi display their power by achieving both things – they are the legitimate occupiers and they easily find the Serbian's son, who was close to his father's house all along. Their discovery illustrates the different abilities of locals and occupiers. The two Italians, even though they have recently arrived in the location, moved easily through the place, knew how to find the boy and what to say to him; meanwhile, the Serb seems stuck to the ground. This aspect is linked with how Comisso conceives the territory of Rijeka as being at his complete disposal, as the previous section underlines. The different possibilities of movement, between occupiers and occupied, is a pattern that is often deployed through various colonial texts, and which shows a complete sense of possession and a mastery of the local reality by the occupiers.[32] Furthermore, within this scenario, the representation serves to highlight the relation between the Italians and locals, one based on the powerlessness of the latter when faced with the juvenile energy of the former.

To conclude, in Comisso's novel, the local population occupies a background role; the characters belonging to this category fulfil their purpose and are then quickly dismissed. The local national otherness relates to Italians from an inferior position of power, asking them for help and being completely subjugated to the author and his friends. Comisso represents this otherness as being unable to respond to the vital strength of the occupiers. The Arditi relate to the social and geographic reality they occupy as if it were at their complete disposal. They can move freely, without any obligation towards life or social rules, within a reality that does not challenge them in any way.

What seems to emerge from the construction of these two attitudes – the Arditi's and the locals' – is a relation of cause and effect. The vivid and physical representation of the youth that Comisso was able to express was also only possible due to the occupied reality. This situation provides a limitless reality in which their youth can flourish freely and be carefree about everything that surrounds them. The context of occupation is thus a fundamental pillar around which to develop an image of youth, presented as the constant following and realisation of human instincts. The depiction of a powerless otherness, unable to harm or rebel against the Arditi's will, conveys a specific system of power between the Italians and the locals. Such a system is embedded within a literary discourse that avoids any problematisation of the locals' status, presenting them only through the perspective of the author, which is also that of the occupier. Even if the political rhetoric that historically accompanied Rijeka's experience is, in Comisso, completely dismissed, the local reality fulfils the role of

[32] For instance, Said analyses the moving capability of Kim in Kipling's novel (Said 1994: 159–60).

the exploited and dominated. More specifically youth, with its energies and attitudes, is a characteristic that is only associated with the occupiers. While D'Annunzio proposed historical rights and war to justify and claim further Italian expansionism, Comisso directly articulates the power relation that was intertwined in the context of occupation. Within this articulation, he expresses a hierarchical structure of the social relations in Rijeka, one that reflected national belonging, and did so by describing and exploring the features of the youth that he displayed in the text. Comisso's hierarchy shows an otherness that is subjected to the occupiers' authority, a subjection that occurs without conflict between the two entities; intriguingly, this is a feature that only Comisso articulates among the texts explored in this chapter.

3. Occupation and Identities: Giulio Menini's Memories in Split

At the beginning of November 1918, in Dalmatian cities, the local Italian party created the 'Fasci Nazionali Italiani' – local committees to enforce Italian annexation. These committees stood in contrast with the committees that had taken power a few months before in the name of the independent Yugoslav government. The Italian government, following the armistice with Austria, began the military annexation of the Dalmatian islands and the north-eastern coast under the command of Enrico Millo (Cattaruzza 2011: 72–73). During the occupation, hundreds of refugees left the Dalmatian cities, heading towards Split, which was not assigned to Italy. Nevertheless, the Italian minority living in Split founded its own 'Fascio', which actively worked to seek the Italian annexation of the city, generating tensions with the Yugoslav administration. In response to the situation, Italy sent a military ship to the port of Split with the formal task of protecting the Italian minority and the secret hope that this presence would lead to a more structured occupation (Monzali 2007: 68–71).

The military ship was a cruiser named *Puglia,* captained by Giulio Menini, and was stationed in the port of Split between the end of 1918 and the summer of 1920. Menini had a double responsibility in Split, to protect the Italian minority, and to interact with local authorities to push the city under Italian influence. Within this context, Menini wrote an extensive account that included his entire experience in Dalmatia, published in 1925 with Zanichelli under the title *Passione adriatica. Ricordi di Dalmazia*, *1918-1920.* Following Camillo Manfroni's words, who wrote the preface of the book, the main aim of these memories had to be political: texts such as this would have triggered in the readers a sense of resentment against what was done to Italian interests in the Adriatic (Menini 1925: v–vii). Therefore, this account narrates an Italian perspective of the eastern Adriatic, within a geopolitical context marked by the contrast between Italian expansionism and Yugoslav national self-determination. Consequently, Menini's text provides an account of his daily activities, which contains

various elements that address features of Italian identity and how it represents itself within an attempted occupation.

Passione Adriatica is a collection of daily records that avoids the diary structure yet remains fixed on traditional temporal continuity. The text is divided into three sections: the first describes Menini's departure from Brindisi to Sebenico, where he annexed the city to Italy; the second depicts the author's stay in Split and his attempt to gain influence in the city; and the last provides an account of Menini's return to Split, in 1920, after the killing of Tommaso Gulli who had previously taken his place. The narration flows from the direct voice of Menini, which never problematises his involvement in the events, but rather describes and presents the object of narration as an objective truth. The political and national meaning is immanent and structural, and is directly revealed in each section of the book, providing an articulation of Dalmatia as part of Italy, and thus legitimising Italian presence in the area. This book represents a valuable historiographical source, due to the extremely detailed description of events, even by the standards of modern historiography.[33] Nevertheless, it is possible to read it as an Italo-centred perspective of the try to occupy Dalmatia in 1918; this perspective might show how the Italian authority in place, personified by Menini, articulated itself in the attempt to gain influence over the area. Furthermore, the texts are located in a context where the Italians were not in power, and the author had to confront Yugoslav political power on a daily basis, providing descriptions and discourses that are useful to frame how the relationship between the two nationalities was perceived from an Italian perspective, and how the latter represents the Yugoslavs themselves. Focusing on the referential function of the text, this analysis will try to reconstruct the Italian identity, as well as its relationship with the Yugoslavs, which surfaces alongside the exposition of events, which constitutes the main aim for Menini. This section will first explore the patterns of representing Italian identity in relation to the territory, delving into the author's depiction of Italy as a legitimate ruler of the region and as an occupying power capable of well administrating the territory. Second, it investigates the representation of Yugoslav otherness, and of the conflict between the two national groups.

3.1. Italy in Dalmatia: a Legitimate Ruler

As with D'Annunzio, Menini is disillusioned with Italian hopes towards the Adriatic, and constantly articulates, through various discursive devices, that Italy has the right to assert itself as the hegemonic

[33] For instance, Luciano Monzali used this to reconstruct some of what happened in Dalmatia at the end of the war (Monzali 2007: 74–75).

power of the Adriatic. In the first stage, Menini lands in Sebenico to annex the city, and from the first descriptions the operation acquired a dimension of re-gaining these territories. This element is continuously reiterated within the first section of the book through the enunciation of the spiritual and cultural connections between Italy and Dalmatia, which cast an Italian shadow over these territories capable of shaping its appearance. For instance, during a mission in Ragusa, Menini notes:

> 'Il viaggio si svolse percorrendo tutti i canali della Dalmazia, [...]. Non vi è uno scoglio, un isolotto che non abbia un ricordo veneto, cioè italiano.'(Menini 1925: 24)

The author argues how the physical aspect of the territory is Italian and at the same time Venetian. The quote represents the Venetian past, as in D'Annunzio, as a testament to the Italianness of the land. Intriguingly, in this quote Menini articulates a complete identification between Italy and Venice. The author projects a metaphysical dimension onto the islands and cliffs, describing them as entities able to contain memories that, following the previous pattern, are Venetian and thus Italian. In the absence of archaeological or architectural signs, rather than representing the space itself, the author undermines the border between the features of humans and those of landscapes, giving the latter the human characteristic of a memory with the role of reconfirming Italian presence there. The Italian dimension of the territory is not only related to the history of the place, but also to the current geopolitical status, which can become a factor in the perception of the territories. Describing his travel towards Split, Menini wrote:

> 'Confesso che, sorpassato Capo Planka, dove finivano le terre italiane, mi parve di respirare un'altra aria, ma quando la bella città di Diocleziano mi apparve alla vista […] mi sentii veramente commosso.' (Menini 1925: 46)

The recognition of a different air in relation to the Italian dominion is a rhetorical figure that returns to the idea of how the new-born Italian occupation was perceived, by the Italian himself, as able to overwhelm the natural context of the region. The odd sensation of breathing different air changes only when Menini reaches Split, the city where he went to defend the rights of Italians. Through these quotes, it emerges how the narrator was committed to providing an Italian identity to the physical appearance of the place. Rather than focusing on a qualitative description of the Roman or Venetian past, Menini proposes a substantial equivalence between Venice and Italy, further expanding D'Annunzio's attempts to represent Italian expansionism as a return.

The Italian appearance of the territory is not the only device that reiterates the presence of an Italian element in Dalmatia. Menini articulates an image of the local population that is coherent with

that proposed by D'Annunzio: the Dalmatians not only live in a place embedded with Venetian history, but they also share attitudes, language and culture with the Italians, and they direct their hopes during the world war towards Italy.[34] To depict Dalmatians as hopefully awaiting the arrival of Italians represents the Italian dominion as something unanimously coveted by the population. Such a theme is expressed vividly in the text; for example, describing a conversation that happened during his stay in Split with a Dalmatian friend about the battle of Lissa, Menini writes:

> 'suo padre morendo gli aveva confidato che nel '66, prima della battaglia di Lissa, aveva preparato alcune bottiglie di vino per festeggiare la imminente vittoria italiana. […] Anche un umile popolano mi confidò che nella sua famiglia, si tramandava il segreto del luogo ove era stata celata nell'epoca del risorgimento una bandiera italiana, quando si sperava nell'arrivo di Garibaldi.' (Menini 1925: 159)

The wait for Italy has both a collective and a familiar dimension: these two voices demonstrate how waiting for Italians was a common feeling among Dalmatians – they are represented as following the events of the Italian Risorgimento, hoping to also be rescued. The wait is also represented as featuring the family's histories, conveying the intimacy of a family's secret, transmitted from father to son. The rhetorical dimension of these anecdotes can trigger images and sensations that suggest to readers the idea of an incomplete 'Risorgimento', an argument widely spread by irredentists at the end of the 19th century (Cattaruzza 2016: 9). Furthermore, the common language always represented a key feature in the construction or invention of national communities (Anderson 2016: 55–56), and this is particularly true in a multinational context like the Dalmatian one. From the second half of the nineteenth century in the Hapsburg Empire, language became the main criterion to identify a culture and a nation, and the defence of the language became the main political point around which the diverse nationalistic parties of the empire gathered their consensus (Chiarandini 2022: 18–19). Even in this book, which tries to enlarge the borders of Italianness, language plays a significant role. Anecdotes of people speaking Italian – from the author's perspective thus demonstrating the Italianness of the territory – are spread throughout the entire text. One of the most significant episodes is narrated when Menini explains the insults that the Italians were receiving from the Croats:

[34] See for instance D'Annunzio's text. (1928: 11).

> ‘Il lettore si meraviglierà del come, pur odiandoci, questa gente parlava sempre il veneziano, tanto il gentil parlare è nell’indole dei dalmati. […] Il famoso italofobo Barac mentre giocava agli scacchi esclamò arrabbiatissimo contro il compagno: «Ti sei una mona!» Ciò dimostrava che avendo bisogno di esprimere qualche cosa di intimamente sentito, gli occorreva una lingua adatta.’ (Menini 1925: 122)

The anecdote, from the author’s perspective, shows the extent to which the Venetian language was rooted in the habits of the population, as it was used by a person who used to campaign against the Italian presence in an intimate moment. Despite this event, the author recognised that many Croats were not currently using the Italian language, but justified this by saying:

> ‘Se la maggioranza della popolazione, specie la rurale parla slavo, nelle famiglie della borghesia, anche fra i croati più accesi si adopra l’italiano come lingua d’uso […]. I croati rappresentano sino dalle antiche dominazioni la popolazione rurale, mentre gli italiani erano la classe dominante.’ (Menini 1925: 9)

This quote serves as a double representation: on the one hand, the Croats are perceived as rural, and traditionally do not have access to positions of power. On the other, even when this tradition is infringed, the Croats had to use Italian because this was the language associated with power, which the traditional rulers of the area used to speak. In other words, the author underlines that even when Italians were not the official rulers, Croats by themselves were unable to administrate without the Italian language. In this description, the author intimates a clear connection between class and national belonging, articulating two binary associations that sustain the historicisation of the relations of power between the two groups: the Italians as rulers of the area, and the Croats as peasants. The appearance of a class distinction in the classification of foreign national belonging is not new within the phenomenon known as Euro-Orientalism. As noted by Ezequiel Adamovsky, the Euro–Orientalist discourse has the capacity to classify otherness through a liberal-bourgeois class distinction (Adamovsky 2005: 617–20). Adamovsky’s research is mainly focused on French literature and, within the current work, it would be hard to maintain that the same applies comprehensively to Italian literature on the eastern Adriatic, where the ethnic and historicist dimensions seem to be prevalent. Nevertheless, it is impossible to deny the dissemination, among these texts, of insights and narratives about the class differences that occurred between the Italians and the other populations of the territories. Furthermore, to depict the Yugoslavs as rural and Italians as the urban population is a common representation, often used by Italian intellectuals to undermine the perception of the Yugoslav nation

(Verginella 2008).

Menini's attempts to legitimise Italian authority in the Adriatic are overall coherent with D'Annunzio's claims. Both authors articulate a form of justification that tends to represent Italian expansionism as a form of nationalism. Therefore, they do not represent it as an imperialist project, but rather as a form of return and reconquest of what is rightfully Italian. Nevertheless, both aim for an imperial system of power, with a hierarchical organisation of the various nationalities within it. Menini articulates this hierarchy in the form of a dialectic between urban and rural realities, and articulates the Italian frame as the only one coherent with the physical, cultural and linguistic features of the area.

3.2. Italy: the Good Occupier

In Split, the author had the opportunity to see how Italy behaved as a potential occupier. This account represents the nature of the Italian domination through two main patterns: the civil and gentle practices of the Italian soldiers, and the Italian ability to improve the living conditions of those they are occupying.

Menini addresses the Italian practice of occupation as capable of gaining consensus only through their gentle manners, their beauty, and their abilities. For instance, once in Split, Menini started to send his sailors ashore to allow the locals to get accustomed to their presence, a decision he explains as follows:

> 'Promettendomi dal contatto del popolo con i nostri marinai il maggior successo, come sempre accadde, perché ho visto che dove si trovavano i nostri marinai e soldati, dappertutto la conquista si faceva per la dolcezza, l'onestà dei nostri militi di terra e di mare, prodi in guerra, ma abili artefici di tutte le arti della pace.' (Menini 1925: 52)

The author equips the Italian soldiers with an apparatus of qualities that allow them to conquer with their mere presence. These qualities are kindness and honesty, alongside their ability to master the arts related to peace. This representation of Italian soldiers is a recurrent topos in this kind of literature. For instance, General Giacinto Ferrero, the commander of the Italian troops in Albania, in a report to the Geographical Congress in Florence about Albania (1923), celebrates the works of civilisation developed the Italian soldiers in this way:

> 'L'occupazione italiana dovette parallelamente all'azione militare creare tutta una vita civile scomparsa. Per la prima volta gli albanesi seppero il prossimo capace di accorrere e spegnere l'incendio delle loro case; soccorrere i loro profughi […] e questo loro

prossimo furono i nostri soldati.' (Ferrero 1923: 10)

Ferrero's publication proposes an image of Italian soldiers that is equal to that of Menini. Soldiers and sailors can even be helpful to provide works of peace. Thus, both these representations enhance the image of the Italians' attitude as a peaceful weapon, capable of spreading its hegemony with nothing but kindness. Their manners and their civilising ways are the tools that, in these representations, guarantee them success and popularity. These images serve to shape the image of the 'buon Italiano,' which would be widely exploited in the Italian colonial narrative during the Fascist period.

Furthermore, Menini provides an image of the Italian occupation as even being capable of improving the condition of the Yugoslavs. For instance, he describes that once, to gain popularity among the Serbs, he started to distribute food to everyone:

> 'La notizia si sparse in un baleno, ed allora non solo vennero gli italiani, ma il popolo slavo […] e naturalmente furono i miei più assidui clienti. […] Il presidente dott. Krstel, col cognato membro del governo volevano persuadere le donne a non prendere viveri dal nemico, una di esse li insultò facendo loro osservare che solo l'Italia pensava al popolo.' (Menini 1925: 60–61)

Even though the political meaning of this manoeuvre is explicit, the author does not hesitate to represent Italy as a power that is able to consider the concerns of the poor and the lower classes for political motives. This element is reiterated in the comparison between the area of Dalmatia administrated by the Italians and those ruled by the Yugoslavians. During his first stay in Split, he had to go back to Zara by land, and writes:

> 'Quale sentimento di benessere [...] sentii […] traversando il ben ordinato paese sotto le nostre leggi, colle terre tutte coltivate, dove industri contadini, aravano in pace con segni di tranquillità e contento, a differenza di ciò che avveniva nella terra in cui vivevo.' (Menini 1925: 143)

The people peacefully cultivating is a bucolic image that seems to have come about due to the Italian administration, directly underlining the difference between the Yugoslav administration of Split where, as Menini adds further in the text, no one is used to work. This discourse provides a vision of Italy as an occupying power that can improve, in a direct and immediate sense, the conditions of the local population, regardless of politics and national belonging. Furthermore, as the fourth chapter will explore, the glorification of Italian work became common in Fascist discourses about the colonies

and the land redemption that the regime made possible.

To conclude, Menini conveys an image of the Italian occupiers that connects their identity with their ability to rule over the occupied territories. The author articulates the Italian sailors as capable of gaining the people's empathy only by being themselves, indirectly stating that this feature represents further proof of the legitimacy of Italian occupation. Therefore, alongside the historical rights previously outlined, the Italians can claim, from Menini's perspective, a further right over the territory: their identity as peaceful, laborious, and civil occupiers. In describing the territories occupied by Italy, Menini thus argues how the Italian dominion is not only legitimate, but also justifiable in that it brings advantages to the locals as well as the Italians.

3.3. The Others: Unfair Occupiers

Menini's attempt to present the Italian occupation as legitimate is placed in the context of a conflict that endangers Italian aims. Consequently, the author develops a discourse of Italy as a victim of the Allies' attitude, echoing D'Annunzio's concept of 'Vittoria Mutilata' (Alatri 1980: 156–57). Within an extremely conflictual political landscape, Menini states that the inter-allied committee in Split, with admirals from France, England and the United States (Monzali 2007: 71–77), was supposed to be impartial, but when he refers to it for complaints or demands actions against the Yugoslavs he is often dismissed. Therefore, the author provides many descriptions of the allies' attitude towards Italy that allow him to shape the concept of Italy as the victim of anti-Italian sentiment. For instance, in reporting a conversation he had with the French Admiral, he comments that: 'Come si vede la macchina antiitaliana era ben montata a Spalato' (Menini 1925: 44). The existence of an 'anti-Italian machine' could be questioned on a historiographical stage, but from the author's perspective, this was a real issue in the relations that he was trying to construct in Split. Through the text, it emerges how the anti-Italian machine conflated the Yugoslavs' offences against Italians with the subsequent dismissal of these offences by the inter-allied committee. Menini describes the Yugoslavs' acts of aggression as violence against a peaceful Italian presence; for instance, in describing one of these writes:

> 'Dei nostri marinai, che passeggiavano pacificamente nei pressi delle Procuratie, s'imbatterono in un gruppo di giovinastri croati che cominciarono ad offenderli con ogni sorta di insulti. Uno fra essi, mostrando ai nostri una coccarda jugoslava, domandò se la volevano. […] [I nostri] vennero assaliti da una vera folla uscita dal Caffè Gaspic e che era preparata nei pressi.' (Menini 1925: 102)

The quote does not problematise the Italian presence in Split; rather, the peaceful sailors were attacked

and insulted for no reason. Furthermore, following the insults, they were also surrounded by an unspecified crowd that, from the author's perspective, was there prepared to sustain the insults of the young Croats. Later in the text, Menini explains that the tumult ended with the intervention of the allies. After this episode, a commission of inquiry was set up and decisions were described in the following way:

> 'Con grande indignazione, ma senza stupore per me, come al solito gli alleati diedero ogni torto a noi e ragione agli jugoslavi.' (Menini 1925: 103)

It is no surprise to him that the allies decided against the Italians, even if he finds the decision inexplicable. Menini records these practices as common behaviour for the allies, as they were favourable towards the other parties who were contesting Italian presence over the territory. The reasons for this attitude are never properly elaborated upon; only once does he provide a reason for the existence of an anti-Italian machine, writing that:

> 'Si aveva l'impressione che tutto questo apparato difensivo costruito contro di noi derivasse dal fatto che, dopo Vittorio Veneto, si temeva la nostra grandezza.' (Menini 1925: 45)

Menini was unable to explain any reason for this attitude, other than the fear of Italian greatness. This reasoning has a political meaning, as it enhances the vision of Italy as the victorious nation, which even the former allies were working against to undermine its power. This narrative, describing sentiments that entered the collective perception of the First World War and which were eventually exploited by Fascism, encouraged the vision of a 'mutilated victory' as a feature of national history.

3.3.1. Yugoslav Identity: the Construction of an Enemy

Menini mainly describes the Yugoslavs throughout a narrative of conflictual situations, addressing them with a certain degree of confusion as Serbs, Croats, Yugoslavians, or Slavic people in general. These people appear in the text in essentially two forms: either as institutions, which are often precisely represented, with the proper names of the protagonists; or as a crowd of agitators, often depicted through pejorative terms, like a rabble. Menini gives a leading role to the Serbian institutions, and the central Yugoslav government is often called the Serbian government. Nevertheless, he describes the crowds as composed of Croats and Serbs, which he appears to use as synonyms. Both the crowds and the institutions, even if represented through slightly different patterns, mostly existed within one specific reality: that of the 'anti-Italian machine.' The Yugoslav anti-Italian actions are the

lens through which Menini describes the locals, maintaining that these people were affected by an atavistic hatred against the Italians (Menini 1925: 53). This hate has a national meaning, as Menini, describing the Yugoslav press, writes:

> 'I giornali jugoslavi erano sempre intonati, dalla prima all'ultima parola, ad una campagna bassa, lurida e feroce contro l'Italia, sembrando che ciò fosse necessario a mantenere la compagine del nuovo Stato.' (Menini 1925: 104)

Following the Italian anthropology of the period – which did not acknowledge the Yugoslavs' as a proper nation (Puccini 1996) – the author argues that anti-Italian feeling was the only glue that held the new Yugoslav state together. This feeling achieves a concrete form in the continuous episodes of the crowd's aggressions against Italians. These episodes are extremely numerous and constitute a large part of the text, though the narrative pattern is always similar: he proposes that crowds of Serbs and Croats assault groups of Italians for no apparent reason.

An interesting example of this is the description of Menini's visit, with a friend of his, to the Roman ruins of Split; during this visit, they encountered the usual crowd, and he writes:

> 'La ragazzaglia e facce patibolari e donne infuriate ci si stringevano attorno. Tutti comprendemmo che l'affare si metteva male, ma imperterriti […] seguitammo ad esaminare i capitelli romani. Allora la folla si fece maggiormente minacciosa e ci assalì a bastonate, ombrellate con urli degni dei patagoni, non dei moderni, ma di quelli che assalirono il capitano Cook due secoli e più fa.' (Menini 1925: 82)

This quote provides a few suggestions about the author's idea of the Yugoslavs. He identifies their shouting as belonging to another time and another place: the aboriginal people of two centuries earlier. The 'denial of coevalness' and the appeal to imaginative geography about the Orient, which are able to legitimate a specific discourse about the degree of civilisation of a place, are two themes that were already common with the writers on the area that preceded Menini, as elaborated in the previous chapter. It is interesting, however, to note how Menini labels these features onto a specific national identity, suggesting how the author constructs a racist imaginary about Yugoslav identity in the text.

Before entering the topic properly, it is necessary to form a premise: that the representation of the crowds and masses in scholarly publications between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century often focused on their barbaric aspects (Palano 2002). A good example of this is the philosopher Ortega y Gasset's book, firstly published in 1929 (1994). It is impossible to deny the influence of these representations on the author. However, through the text, the Serbs and the Croats

are often associated with the concept of barbarism and violence, even outside of crowds. For example, Menini describes the physical appearance of the Serbian soldiers as providing an unusual aesthetic effect in a country used to polished Austrian civilisation:

> 'in quei giorni era tali e quali come quando vennero dai campi di battaglia e se si aggiunge il loro aspetto balcanico, facevano in un paese abituato alla raffinata civiltà austriaca di tipo latino – tedesco, un effetto davvero strano.' (Menini 1925: 64)

Alongside these folkloristic representations, the author constantly recalls violence as a structural feature of the local population. For instance, he describes his successes in dealing with the local inhabitants and the consequent tranquillity of the Italian minority as follows:

> 'Non dico che incidenti non ne avvenissero più, chè il croato è sempre croato ed a cambiargli la pelle ci vorranno dei secoli.' (Menini 1925: 145)

Menini does not specify the features of the Croats that are impossible to change in a short time, but he does imply that the Croats had the capability to provoke incidents as part of their nature, of their own 'skin', as he suggests in the second sentence. The patronising tone that emerges from this quote is quite common. For instance, during Menini's stationing in Split, D'Annunzio occupied Rijeka, and the echo of this action was strong in Split, where:

> 'I bravi croati rimasero avviliti e questa volta non osarono muoversi nè agitarsi. Bisognava vedere il loro spavento che rasentava il comico! […] Vi fu un vero disorientamento perché, come ho più volte ripetuto, pensavano "bono italiano" ma non si sa mai che alla lunga anche questo potesse dare qualche brutta zampata.' (Menini 1925: 160–61)

From the author's perspective, the Croats were scared by the possibility of the arrival of D'Annunzio in Split. The idea that the actions of the poet were not destined to stop in Rijeka but would continue towards the occupation of the whole of Dalmatia seemed to be concrete in Menini. The description of the Croats' fear is irreverent, and seems to prove the author's thesis: that they can only understand violent manners. The image of the 'bono italiano' is quite relevant though, as it again addresses the concept of the Italians as the kind rulers, who should nonetheless be feared. Furthermore, it recalls, indirectly, the unspecified superiority of the Italians with regard to the Croats. The former are good merely for their attitude, but the latter should nonetheless be fearful because, if they wanted to, they could endanger the freedom and the very existence of the Yugoslavian state. Moreover, the topos of

the ‘bono italiano’ and the fact that, as Menini seems to suggest, if the Italians behaved in a more violent way they would be more respected, would tragically resurface during the Italian occupation of Yugoslavia under Fascism. During that period, general Roatta issued a command, called ‘Circolare 3C’, where he invited Italian soldiers to abandon their attitude of ‘Bono Italiano’ and behave harshly against the local population (Gobetti 2013: 79–84).[35]

To conclude, Menini had no direct interest in providing a comprehensive account of Yugoslav habits or attitudes – he conceived them only as the Italians’ antagonists for the Dalmatian territory. Intriguingly, in the text, he never questions his own presence in Split – a city which was not supposed to be Italian – nor the meaning of the presence of an Italian warship for the Yugoslavian people. Rather, the author one-sidedly registers the action against the Italians, and from these actions addresses a few insights about the features of the Yugoslavians. The latter emerge as a violent group that perpetrates violence against the Italians and can understand only violent behaviour. Furthermore, the anti-Italian feeling is the only element that cements their existence as a nation. Both these elements will surface again in the analysis of Dei Gaslini’s text, used as arguments in the conflictual dialectic between Italians and Yugoslavs that the author entailed.

Menini’s text predominantly differentiates itself from D’Annunzio in the specific articulation of the conflict between Yugoslavs and Italians. His perception of the historical and political Italian rights over the area inevitably clashed with the presence of an autonomous Yugoslavian state, which successfully challenged the Italian rights. In the books previously analysed, such as those by Baldacci or Mantegazza, the Romans and Venetians were widely represented as the civilising entities that fought against barbarism. This distinction – between empires and barbarism – becomes, in Menini, contemporary. The representation of violent crowds, composed of Serbian and Croats youths, directly recalls the figure of the barbarian, while the Italians in the text are directly associated with order, beauty and civilisation. Menini’s account openly shows the strength of literary representations of the past, and how easily and effectively they can be translated into descriptions of contemporary reality. In this sense, the author provides one of the first accounts of the self-perception of Italians within an occupation, indirectly providing the proof that, just as Venice did, Italy can construct a civilisation in the area. Menini thus pushed the elements of D’Annunzio’s representations further, providing a more direct association between Italy and Venice and conveying proof of Italy as the rightful occupier in the region.

[35] An analysis of the Italian atrocities in Slovenia was articulated by Del Boca (2005: 237–64).

4. Race and Identity: the Autobiography of Beatrice Speraz

Another account that provides some interesting reflections on the notion of Italianness in the eastern Adriatic, constructing it through the exploration of personal identity, is the autobiography by Beatrice Speraz, entitled *Ricordi della mia infanzia in Dalmazia*. She was born in Dalmatia to a Dalmatian father and an Italian mother, but lived the great majority of her life between Milan, Bologna and Florence. Speraz started an intense publishing activity as a novelist in the 1870s, collaborating with the newspaper *La Nazione*. She gained great success at the time (Colummi Camerino 1994: 39–40), although her publications were mainly concentrated in the late 19th century, and she belongs to the cultural milieu of popular Italian literature of the period. Speraz adopted various pseudonyms, including Livia or Donna Isabella, but the most common is Bruno Sperani. This pseudonym is the translation of her name into that of an Italian male, though there is no specific reason for its use. In one autobiographical article, published on *Cronaca Rossa* in 1887 (1887: 7–8), authored by Bruno Sperani, the author addresses her use of various pseudonyms without denying her identity, commenting on her last publication:

> '*Numeri e Sogni*, l'ultimo lavoro di Bruno Sperani ha rivendicato l'artista tanto immeritatamente bistrattata fin dal suo esordire. Noi non ci occuperemo più della sua nuova opera […] ci basta constatare il plauso unanime che ne è venuto dalla stampa di tutta la penisola – ci occuperemo unicamente e brevemente di lei, di Beatrice Speraz.' (Sperani 1887: 7)

Speraz declines the adjectives about Bruno Sperani in the feminine, but from the wording of this quote, it seems that her success could be associated, to some extent, with the use of a male pseudonym. Nevertheless, Speraz considers herself a writer who can go beyond her usage of pseudonyms; in the article, she addresses the interest of the public and critics in her pseudonyms in this way:

> 'Una cosa che sommamente dispiace a Bruno Sperani, forse a cagione della sua indole stessa fiera e robusta, è la moda invalsa oggidì di cercare sotto lo scrittore l'uomo o la donna.' (Sperani 1887: 7)

Speraz reveals a sensitivity to the role of gender in publications that is unusual for her time, claiming that it was only her writing ability that enhanced her success, and her gender should be entirely meaningless. This was quite a courageous statement: she was probably aware of the advantages that could be obtained by adopting a definitive male pseudonym, nevertheless, she used it only partially, never

publicly hiding her gender and often describing Bruno Sperani using female adjectives. A few lines after this quote, she provides a clue to the reasons behind her pseudonyms, asserting how 'Bruno Sperani è timida nelle relazioni sociali. Nessuno conosce quanto le sia costato […] esporsi ai sarcasmi del pubblico' (Sperani 1887: 7). Therefore, from her perspective, the use of a pseudonym could mitigate the impact of her relationship with the public. Moreover, the facile alternation between her real name, her male pseudonym, and her female pseudonyms shows a gendered meaning. The author credits her success to her ability, claiming that she would obtain good recognition from the public and critics regardless of the pseudonym chosen. In the same article, Sperani adds a further element about her biography, concerning her origins:

> 'Nata da padre slavo di origine plebea, da madre latina di origine aristocratica, ha subito e subisce con una intensità spesso dolorosa, le attrazioni e le repulsioni delle due razze che si incrociano in lei.' (Sperani 1887: 7)

This quote shows how the author felt divided within herself due to the different origins of her parents, which could lead to some speculation about her Italianised male pseudonym. Even if Speraz did not draw an explicit connection, the choice of a name like Bruno Sperani could be easily conceived as the expression of her Italian side. *Ricordi della mia infanzia in Dalmazia* seems to wholly confirm the words of the author about the irrelevance of her gender, as it is the narration of the memories of a female child, presented as the self of the author, who is named Bruno Sperani. The text does not address this putative gender contradiction, and it does not affect the use of language nor express any detachment between the author and herself as a child. Furthermore, in this book, there are no connections between the Italianisation of her name and the identity conflict inside her, despite the fact that she openly presents the contrast between her Slavic and Italian origins as a relevant issue. Although the surname Speraz itself is already an Italianisation of Sperac, her real surname, it is possible that her being both Yugoslav and Italian could have influenced the choice of Bruno Sperani as a pseudonym. Furthermore, the publishing industry might have played a role in suggesting the use of a male pseudonym, as female autobiographies were usually excluded from the canon (Fleig 2019: 54–63). Moreover, Speraz published her novels and articles in Italian, and in the early pages of her autobiography states how 'Nella piccola casa dove io sono nata, tutti parlano l'italiano; io non comprendo altra lingua e neppure la mia mamma' (Sperani 1915: 6). Even though this statement is not entirely true, as she worked as a translator from German for the publisher Treves (Zambon 2006: 164), it reinforces the idea that, despite her internal division, she felt she belonged to the Italian cul-

tural environment. Additionally, the autobiography often aligns with Menini and D'Annunzio's statements on the Italian language and culture as autochthonous and hegemonic in the Dalmatian region. The text frequently asserts the primacy of Italian culture and language, indirectly polemizing against the German language teaching imposed by the Hapsburg Empire (Zambon 2006: 170). Therefore, when looking at her autobiography and her concern about social and gender themes, it seems plausible to conceive that her use of pseudonyms is related more to gender than to her national identity, as she already embraced her Italian identity even outside the fiction of the pseudonym. She wrote all her publications in Italian, the language she learned was German, at the time the Dalmatian language was about to completely disappear, and, apart from her first years of childhood, she spent all her life in Italy, with the Italian family. Therefore, when looking at her autobiography and her concern about social and gender themes, it seems plausible to conceive that her use of pseudonyms is related more to gender than to her national identity.

Before the publication of her autobiography, Speraz published several novels and articles that, within a realistic setting, express a social critique of the exploitation of workers. The author was a socialist, and her ideology emerges strongly in her writings. Nevertheless, Speraz's novels complied with the logic of mass consumption, adopting a communicative writing style characterised by plethoric structures, intricate plots and incoherent conclusions (Colummi Camerino 1994), and aiming to entertain the largest possible number of readers (Romani 2006: 14–15). While these aspects are in line with most novelists of the period with whom she is often associated, like Neera or Matilde Serao, Speraz was able to propose some original themes through her development of characters. Within a literary context that mostly depicted women inside the domestic space, Speraz articulated female characters whose destiny is measured against the ideal of domestic femininity. In her most famous publications, like *Nell'ingranaggio* (1885), *Tre donne* (1891) or *La fabbrica* (1894), Speraz problematises the relationship between woman and man within the familiar context, addressing marriage as an institution that is structurally oppressive for women. Therefore, her female protagonists are usually women who gain awareness of their oppression, and subsequently try to find happiness outside of the traditional social rules. Behind this narratological configuration, the author articulates a political proposal of female emancipation based on divorce and instruction. Furthermore, Speraz was particularly successful in a socialist cultural environment, where Turati, Ghisleri and Cameroni wrote enthusiastic critiques of her publications (Colummi Camerino 1994: 76). Her autobiography, which she published almost at the end of her writing career, contains some of the features of her novels, but it also conveys a representation of her Dalmatian and Italian identities from a personal perspective that belongs to both.

Ricordi della mia infanzia in Dalmazia, published in 1915 and 1923 by Antonio Vallardi and authored by Bruno Sperani, narrates the childhood of the author as a little girl, from her birth to her departure from Dalmatia. Speraz introduces the book as a collection of childhood memories, which are consequently vague and uncertain; the imaginary that Dalmatia is able to evoke within the authors' mind is difficult to pinpoint (Sperani 1915: 5–6). Despite the introduction, the author articulates a detailed account, reporting dialogues and anecdotes with a certain degree of accuracy. The main theme is Speraz's stay in Dalmatia, between Salona, Split and the surrounding islands, and her departure for Italy when she was still a child. The narration revolves around the dialogues and interactions that she had with her family, accompanied by various digressions about the current situation of Dalmatia, historical details, and archaeological issues that characterise the area. Looking at the main themes that surface from how these issues connect, it is possible to divide the text into two main sections. The first addresses issues related to her knowledge of the history of the area, obtained mainly through tales by her grandfather and her aunt. The second looks at the history of her parents and their departure from Dalmatia. This section omits the historical connotations, with a predominance of melancholy and nostalgic feelings. Through these two sections, Speraz addresses the construction of her identity, as a child born to an Italian mother and Dalmatian father, which indirectly conveys a portrayal of the relationship between Italy and Dalmatia. Through the analysis of her process of identity-making, as displayed in her autobiography, this section aims to explore the issues of national identity and power at the core of this chapter.

4.1. History and Dalmatian Identity

The text's first section narrates how the author started to learn the history of her city and its people. Within this narration, the connection between Dalmatian and Roman identity is revealed as the main interest of the author's childhood. This connection is constructed through language – she affirms that she only speaks Italian – and history. Recounting the history of her hometown, Salona, she describes the arrival of the Romans as follows:

> 'Lungi dall'opporgli resistenza, i Dalmati l'accolsero amichevolmente. Questo fatto prova che gli abitanti del litorale erano in maggioranza Greci protetti da Roma e Romani emigrati.' (Sperani 1915: 12)

Speraz delineates a connection between the Romans and Dalmatians as belonging to the same population, therefore their arrival was not perceived as an invasion. Furthermore, the text translates the presence of the Romans on a personal level through the author's curiosity, reporting that:

> ‘Mi colpì ancora l’eterno nome. [‘The Romans’] Una colonna, una iscrizione, un muro, un arco, tutto era romano. Ed io da capo a domandare: «Papà, chi sono i Romani?…»’ (Sperani 1915: 18)

The child is impressed by the fact that everything around her seemed to be constructed by the Romans, even though she does not know who they were. Her ignorance about the Romans introduces the main narrative pattern of the first section, which is based on her asking her family members about the history of the Romans. Her maternal aunt satisfied most of her curiosity, and through the aunt’s narration, the events related to the Romans acquire an emotional dimension. For instance, the figure of Diocletian triggers a deeper feeling in her:

> ‘Sentirmi ripetere che quel grande imperatore era nato a Salona […] mi dava una profonda commozione. Quando mi avevano raccontato le fiabe mi ero divertita, ma raramente commossa e non avevano destato in me alcun entusiasmo. Invece la realtà tangibile «fu qui, qui visse» eccitava ogni mia facoltà.’ (Sperani 1915: 25-26)

The fiction of the fables was pleasing to her, but was unable to evoke deeper emotions, as the history of Rome did. The territorial continuity between her and the Romans is the feature that triggers her most vivid excitement, evoking concrete feelings. When her aunt starts to narrate to her the barbaric invasion, Speraz’s sympathetic attitude towards the Romans is even reinforced. Describing her reaction to hearing about the barbaric invasions, she writes:

> ‘Nella mia piccola testa si formava il concetto di una vita nobile e grandiosa, di uno stato eroico e felice, che i barbari avevano distrutto, come avevano distrutto Salona. barbari! … Non so bene quale idea io mi formassi di loro; di certo li odiavo.’ (Sperani 1915: 30)

The author admits that the history of Rome was idealised in her mind as a child. Nevertheless, it is the barbarians who are represented as destroying both Rome and Salona. The conflicts with the barbarians become a constant theme in her description of the area’s history. These descriptions were always mediated by a member of the author’s family: while it was the aunt who narrated the Romans, the broader history of the place was usually narrated by her father. She addresses the arrival of the Croats in Salona in this way:

> ‘Salona cadde in potere dei Croati. Mio padre si soffermava a lungo quando giungeva a questo punto […] e mi narrava con molti particolari in qual modo e con qual coraggio Salona avesse resistito alla funesta invasione. […] Quella gente vile non poteva vincere

la gente dalmata così abile e coraggiosa.' (Sperani 1915: 37)

Her father is often portrayed as the representative of Dalmatian identity, always trying to teach his daughter the importance of her origins, of which she should be proud (Sperani 1915: 54). The voice of her father articulates the difference between the Dalmatians and Croats in terms of bravery and cowardice. While the arrival of the Romans was peaceful, reaffirming the connection between them and Salona, the Croats, and the Turks after them, are represented as the arrival of barbarism. The Turks offer Speraz the possibility to introduce the history of Venice into the frame; she emphasises how Dalmatians and Venice were unified in saving Europe from a Muslim invasion and how the Dalmatians 'rimasero poi fedeli a Venezia fino all'ultimo respiro della repubblica' (Sperani 1915: 38–39). Her articulation of the relationship between Venice and Dalmatia ignores the fact that the Dalmatian soldiers were also widely used by Venice in wars within Italy (Mallet 1984: 69–87), and proposes a connection between the two entities based on the recurrent topos of faithful Dalmatians.

Speraz's account of the history of the area develops the same theme that was already analysed by D'Annunzio and Menini: it displays a solid cultural and linguistic connection between the two sides of the Adriatic which still has agency over the present, as the child's emotional reactions show. Nevertheless, the author articulates this from a Dalmatian perspective, asserting the difference between the barbarian Croats and the Dalmatians, and emphasising the metropolitan value of Dalmatia within the Roman empire, as the excursus on Diocletian shows. However, one would be wrong to consider these accounts a mere description of the tales and histories that her relatives told her as a child. The constant merging of histories and feelings triggered by those conversations reveals the process of acquisition of identity that she undergoes. This process can be associated with what Cavarero, in her research on autobiographies, views as a desire for unity (Cavarero 2000: 39). The latter is only achievable, in the context of autobiography, through a negotiation with other lives and other stories (Anderson 2001: 117–18). In this sense Speraz, recalling her memories, shows practically the same stages in the acquisition of her identity as a child does through her relationship with the world. Within the text, Speraz displays her identity-making process as being enhanced by a relational practice with her relatives, showing the centrality of what Cavarero has identified as relationality in fulfilling the desire for unity of the self (Guaraldo 2012).

Furthermore, this book consists of memories that, following Cavarero's theory, had various possibilities for narration, constituted by the diverse narratable self, and in the act of writing they became a specific narrated self, already shaped by the relation between the author and the imagined

audience (Anderson 2001: 118). As a consequence, all the descriptions that are related to the acquisition of identity should be conceived as a crystallised history of her relationship with the world, a world which is partially described in her memories but also that partially lay outside her, in the public she imagined for these memories. From these negotiations, Speraz articulates her identity by displaying the history of the area where she was born. This history highlights the noble origins of the Dalmatian population, which are determined by their connection with Venice and Rome and their fights against the barbarians. The author displays a conflictual dimension based on the contrast with the barbarians that indirectly associates both Italy and Dalmatia as non-barbaric identities. Furthermore, through this dimension emerges an idea of Dalmatian identity that is different from the surrounding demographic context – made by Croats and Turks – and more deeply related to Italy than to the Yugoslavs. These descriptions reveal a series of unfolding processes of acquisition of identity that go unquestioned, from the Dalmatian identity to the identity of a child who grew up believing herself to be a part of the history and identity that she was acquiring.

4.2. Arrival in Italy and Personal Fragmentation

The Dalmatian identity that Speraz constructs through the relationality with her relatives is eventually problematised in the text when she leaves Dalmatia, and her grandparents, following her mother's desire to return to Italy. To understand the dynamics that questioned her Dalmatian identity, it is necessary to focus on the events that preceded their departure.

Before their departure for Italy, the entire family participated in the wedding of a relative of Speraz's grandmother in a city close to Split. This was perceived, by the child, as a chance to visit the country and give a last glance at Dalmatia. For the occasion, she was dressed up in a traditional Dalmatian dress, and Speraz remembered the happiness that this event generated in her. The author describes the sensations that she felt during the journey towards the wedding, providing a series of cheerful descriptions of the majesty of the country. The coastline is addressed with adjectives like 'marvellous' and 'extraordinary' (Sperani 1915: 76–77), and the entire narration seems to be committed to representing a moment of pure joy triggered by both the beauty of the place and the interactions with her family. The latter accompanied the pleasant vision of the area and plays a dominant role in her description of the marriage; for instance, Speraz describes her arrival in this way:

> 'Fui presa, portata via da un gruppo di donne; coperta di baci, caricata di dolci, di fiori. Erano le parenti della nonna, era la sposa con la sua famiglia che mi festeggiavano così.' (Sperani 1915: 81)

She was entirely involved in her familiar context and was celebrated as a part of it. These images, recalling a sense of intimate joy and feasting, where everything seemed to be in its proper place, are suddenly disrupted a few passages later. Within the marriage scene, she describes her mother dancing and her father looking at her completely charmed, at which point she describes him:

> 'Era un uomo alto e magro […] ma tutto insieme il tipo era quello della razza slava, la razza odiata in Istria. Per ciò tutti i parenti della mamma erano desolati da quel matrimonio.' (Sperani 1915: 83)

The perception of the family as united and celebrating suddenly disappears. This disappearance is caused by the physical appearance of her father, represented as a Yugoslav, a race that her mother's family hated and rejected. This quote introduces an image of the family as utterly divided, which subsequently develops:

> '«Senza di lei [her aunt]- diceva la mia nonna materna – mia figlia non avrebbe mai sposato quel barbaro.» E io fui sempre per loro la figliuola del barbaro: oppure la Montenegrina. Triste cosa essere il frutto dell'unione di due razze che non si somigliano affatto e che non si amano; io ho sentito sempre in me stessa questo dissidio.' (Sperani 1915: 83)

The internal and immanent contrast within her own identity only emerges after she mentions the Italian part of her family. Her father, who helped her to define her own identity as a Dalmatian – in contrast to the barbarians – is eventually himself called a barbarian by the Italian part of the family. The connections with Italy, which she, as a child, proudly perceived as a part of her identity, exposed the author to an exclusive attitude from the Italian identity; however, she is not entirely a part of this identity as she was also generated by 'a race that is hated by the Italians'. This shift in the perception of Dalmatia, provided by the Italian part of the family, is not problematised further in the text; she appears to wholly accept this conflict, which will remain unsolved within her.

In her profile published by *Cronaca rossa*, Speraz used almost the same words as the section above, though the article was published almost thirty years before this text. The main difference between these two descriptions is their starting point: while the article is written by a successful adult writer describing herself, the book is written by a mature, successful writer describing her emotions and feelings as a child. The words and phrasing are almost the same, and both quotes conclude within the contradiction personified – yet not synthesised – by her. This lack of synthesis could be conceived as a difficulty in the act of creating an identity that occurred to Speraz when the process became more

dialogical. As described by Nancy Miller, memories often hesitate to establish a clear distinction in the relation between subject and object, mediating the inner and external worlds (Anderson 2001: 113–14). Within this context, Speraz described two identity processes that overlapped, creating a difficult mediation between the world outside her; the first is shaped by her Dalmatian origins, the second by the judgements of her mother's family, and her own identity is thus fragmented.

This fragmentation might indicate an experience of trauma related to her national identity and her experience as a migrant from Dalmatia to Italy. The concluding pages of the book are dedicated to a description of her departure, and indirectly confirm the notion of trauma. The departure's narration takes on a deeply nostalgic tone, with moving conversations between the author and her grandparents in which, for instance, she asks them to go with them, to which the grandfather replies:

> '«Non è possibile, bimba: noi vecchi dalmati siamo come questi ruderi, dobbiamo restare e morire dove siamo nati.»' (Sperani 1915: 88)

This is the last time that Speraz depicted her grandfather speaking, providing a sense of unalterable destiny for the Dalmatian part of her family. In the subsequent pages, she describes the departure itself, recalling moving images of her on the boat with her father and her mother waving to the grandparents, who watched them disappearing at the horizon. The book ends by maintaining the nostalgic tone of the last pages:

> 'Tutto quello che io amavo, che era il mio mondo, si confuse improvvisamente, perdè ogni carattere, ogni distintivo e sparì dai miei occhi… per sempre…' (Sperani 1915: 92)

The departure means something definitive and irreversible; she was going to Italy, never to return to the land where she had grown up. The voices of the people around her, hidden in the melancholy of the final pages, are recalled in a quite vivid and moving way, resembling an age of life that will never return. These voices, personified by her Dalmatian grandparents, in the context of a book that just a few pages earlier addressed that side of the family as barbaric, could easily be identified with her Dalmatian side, and thus her barbaric side. These voices are destined to disappear once she reaches Italy. Viewing these representations of family relations, one could argue that she, indirectly, was representing the part of her that she decided to dismiss completely to embrace her Italianness. This is not expressed openly in the text, but the complete disappearance of the Dalmatian side of the family during her journey to Italy could provide an instance of unresolved trauma, which led to her dismissing the Dalmatian side of her family.

To conclude, within this text Speraz proposes a process to describe the formation of an identity

that merges two antagonistic nationalities. This merging surfaces as an ongoing conflict with her own national identity, which is based on a connection that relies on a representation of the past, but at the same time a fracture, due to the intimate and deep differences perceived between the Italians and the Yugoslavs. The Italian context assumes the power to define the part that it was unable to accept as barbaric, despite the efforts that her father made to distinguish the Dalmatian identity and barbarism.

Within the lack of synthesis between the Dalmatian and Italian sides of her family, it is possible to distinguish how her departure from Dalmatia generated a trauma of displacement. Madeleine Hron argues how the translation of trauma into literature takes various forms, mainly dictated by language, culture, genre, and the constitution of a target language. These elements are particularly true in trauma related to migration and physical displacement, where the host culture and country largely determines the suffering of the migrants (Hron 2018). Speraz's text translates the trauma as the lack of a unique national identification, her entire identity – constructed on the identification between Dalmatia and Rome (or Venice) – eventually collapsed upon discovering that this identification does not work. Even within the inner circle of her family, she does not have a unique identity; she cannot be Italian as well as Dalmatian.

The conflation of both the lack of recognition and the departure from Dalmatia constitute a trauma in the author, who finds herself in between two identities, where the one who accepted her disappeared, while the other, who exposed her fragmentation, is the only one that remains. This trauma shows a relationship between Italy and Dalmatia that expresses deep cultural imperialism, where one identity cultivates a peer unification with the motherland, and the latter, once in contact with it, is firmly excluded from a peer relationship. To deny the recognition of the colonised subject's identity within the motherland is a typical feature of colonial relationships (Amighetti and Nuti 2016), including within Italian colonialism (Deplano 2018b), but in this text the denial does not stem from the state's institution, but rather within the intimacy of the family. Speraz's writing adds an inward-looking perspective on the representation of the eastern Adriatic; the subjective dimension in this text became predominant, providing this research with further elements that occurred in the creation of this discursive narration. *Ricordi della mia infanzia in Dalmazia* lacks the aspects of the unequal relation between occupiers and occupied as indirectly described by Comisso; it also lacks the military and racist aspects embedded by both D'Annunzio and Menini. Nevertheless, this text articulates an image of Dalmatia which is perfectly coherent with the ones analysed so far. Despite Speraz's family being partially Dalmatian, she reiterates topoi and stereotypes typical of more nationalistic authors. The autobiography deploys the same images and descriptive structures about the past of those territories that are embedded in not only Menini and D'Annunzio, but also in much earlier texts such as

the works of Mantegazza or Baldacci.

The historical significance operates on a subjective level, influencing the identity-making process of the protagonist. Once her identity as a Dalmatian is established, this same identity causes a conflict within her when her Italian grandparents recognise her barbarian side. The description of the identity conflict inside her emphasises the efforts that the authors previously analysed made in defining otherness. To address this aspect, it is useful to recall Cavarero's theories on how autobiography functions. Within the negotiation that the author does with herself to describe her own life, there is already a choice of what to narrate, based on the relation with the public and the surrounding society (Cavarero 2000: 136). Viewing Speraz's work from this perspective, it seems clear that, among the various possible 'narratable' selves, she chose to portray a conflictual image of her identity, a conflict she associates with the power to define that the Italian side of her family held over her. The ability of those belonging to Italian culture to recognise and define their close relative as a barbarian, while the latter was raised with the awareness of being something different, shows us that, despite the putative relation between the two sides of the Adriatic, reality is perceived following a hierarchical model. The latter model is structural within Italian culture, as it encourages the grandparents of Beatrice Speraz to recognise and define her as the daughter of a barbarian.

5. Conclusions

This chapter delves into the works of four authors who have published accounts of their direct experiences on the shores of the eastern Adriatic. These texts offer a diverse range of perspectives on the relationship between the Adriatic and the region, revealing both distinct perspectives and recurring patterns in their depictions. Notably, D'Annunzio and Menini, who played significant roles in Italian expansionism towards the other shore of the Adriatic, explicitly advocated for Italy to occupy it. Their reasoning contains similarities in how they articulate Italian historical rights over the area, as well as diverse patterns – for instance, only Menini denounces the aggressive Yugoslav attitude.

Nonetheless, in their expansionist discourse, these authors intertwine nationalism and expansionism, framing the latter as an immanent phenomenon within the first. D'Annunzio argues that Italy's arrival in Dalmatia was a reclamation of what historically belonged to them. Menini supplements the historical rights with a perspective of the Italian attitude, which itself destines them to legitimately control the area. In essence, these authors represented Italian expansionism in the Adriatic as necessary to achieve national unification. In the European political climate of the time, where the principle of national self-determination played a pivotal role in shaping post-war borders, these

authors perceived expansionism as the only way to achieve this national self-determination. Intriguingly, they did not conceal the imperialist element embedded in their reasoning; rather, they explicitly demonstrated that expansionism was a structural element within their conception of Italianness. By drawing upon the legacies of Rome and Venice and emphasising the innate qualities of Italian soldiers involved in the occupation, they conveyed the idea that Italian identity was structurally predisposed to deploy imperial practices in the Adriatic.

Comisso and Speraz did not have the same political agenda as the previous two authors, and their narratives primarily explore their sensations and subjectivities. Nevertheless, their accounts elaborate an exploration of how they perceived the dynamic between Italians and Yugoslavs, revealing a hierarchical perception of national differences. Comisso depicted an image of Rijeka under Arditi's occupation as a place where the standard social conventions did not apply to Italians. For instance, he presented scenarios where he possessed superior knowledge of the area compared to the local population, and could even engage in religious debates with priests. Consequently, the relationship between Italians and locals is asymmetrical, rather than as peers. In Comisso's portrayal of the occupied city, being Italian endowed one with features that placed them at a higher cultural and physical level when compared to the Yugoslav otherness. Meanwhile, Speraz narrates her personal experience of the unequal relationship between Italian identity and her national belonging. She indirectly demonstrates how her Dalmatian identity, constructed through relationality as an identity which shares historical and cultural roots with her Italian identity, is perceived as barbarian by her own family. These authors perpetuate various signs of an imperialistic relationship between the two groups, which goes largely unchallenged and unquestioned. Comisso and Speraz represent Italian superiority, yet they do not problematise it: rather, it is depicted as an obvious or natural fact. Comisso illustrates a scenario in which the protagonist knowingly holds power over the national otherness and utilises it to mock them without questioning his attitude. Speraz, conversely, does not directly challenge the views of her Italian grandparents; she does not reject their perceptions. Instead, she confines her Dalmatian identity to a distant past and territory that she would never again visit.

In summary, these sources, in accordance with their individual sensibilities and experiences, either directly practiced or indirectly exposed an imperialist construction of the human and geographic reality of the eastern Adriatic. Within this discourse, they ascribed various features to Italian identity, suggesting that Italianness was inherently hegemonic and imperial. By either masking expansionism as nationalism, or displaying a national hierarchy where Italy occupies the pinnacle even when beyond its borders, contributes to shaping an image of Italian identity that is characterised by an intrinsically expansionist trait, and asserting an Italian superiority within the Adriatic context. This

superiority is not asserted in terms of exclusion but in terms of a hierarchy between Italian national identity and Yugoslav national identity. Although different from the Italian administration of the Aegean islands, which sought to legitimate their dominion on the basis of the similarities between the diverse national groups (McGuire 2020: 20), the Italian authors analysed here found their claims on a shared secular imperial history, with a clear national hierarchy at its basis. Glenda Sluga, in her essay about the Italo-Yugoslav border in the city of Trieste, argued that perceiving the relations between neighbouring national groups in terms of exclusivity necessitated establishing firm borders between Italians and Yugoslavs (Sluga 2001: 6). Nonetheless, by looking at the representations analysed so far, and taking into account the whole Adriatic space, is it possible to notice that these authors do not claim a space only inhabited by Italians. Rather, they refer to the historical imperial hierarchies putatively established on that shore by the Venetian and Roman authorities. This hierarchy is constituted by the traditional national division between Italians, usually inhabitants of the urban centres, and Yugoslavs, usually inhabitants of the countryside. Importantly, some of these patterns persisted into the era of Fascism and played a central role in the regime's discourse regarding the eastern Adriatic.

As I will explore in the fourth chapter, Menini's discourse on Italy's ability to cultivate foreign lands would be appropriated by Fascism in its rhetoric concerning the Bonifica. It would assert how its revolution would give the local populations a better attitude towards work, providing further arguments for the establishment of a Fascist model of society. Furthermore, the historical arguments these authors put forth were also absorbed by Fascism in its imperialist discourse. Lastly, these sources demonstrate that the eastern Adriatic, with its unique history and social composition, supplied various tools to the Italian national discourse, facilitating the conception of Italy as the metropolis of the Adriatic. Thus, throughout their experiences on the other shore of the Adriatic, these authors reveal how the specificities of the region allowed them to view these territories through a centre-periphery paradigm. Within this context, the eastern Adriatic is represented as a geographic reality where the Italians perceived themselves as representatives of the metropolitan power in a peripheral space. D'Annunzio's portrayal of the Dalmatians, Menini's glorification of the Italian occupation, Comisso's liberty to behave without any regard for social rules, and Speraz's identity construction, shaped by interactions with Roman history, collectively conveyed a centre-periphery relationship. This dynamic will be analysed in the coming chapters, as it became more articulated in the development of the military occupation.

Chapter III

Fascism and Imperialism towards Nationally Hybrid Regions

Considering the eastern Adriatic region as a geographic unit, in a period which spanned the years from 1910 to 1943, allows us to observe how the entire coastline was subjected to the various Italian expansionist projects organised during that period. In the previous chapters, this thesis has focused on the patterns of representation used by Italian authors to describe the region, highlighting how, among various writers, many arguments recur and are applied to different geographical spaces. However, the area was heterogeneous, with diverse geographical and social realities that posed different issues for the Italian authors who were attempting to represent the region. By examining how Italian authors explored this heterogeneity, it is possible to delineate two main geographical areas: Albania, and the coastline of former Yugoslavia. In the primary sources of the thesis, Albania is portrayed as a peripheral space, a young and weak nation, in which Italy nonetheless had diverse interests, and aimed to establish a protectorate. In contrast, the former Yugoslavia's coastline hosted an Italian minority that, from the authors' perspective, had to contend for its space against a Yugoslavian majority, presenting this area as a nationally hybrid space. Within the scope of this thesis, this heterogeneity presents an intriguing opportunity to focus on how literary production during a Fascist regime dealt with hybrid and peripheral spaces, both of which were subjected to the Italian expansionist attitude, and were conquered within a span of two years. The objective of this chapter is to explore how Italian writers of the period who visited the former Yugoslavian coastline during the Fascist era represented the region. Before articulating and presenting the research's main issues, it is worth briefly investigating the historical context that this chapter examines.

The relationship between Italy and former Yugoslavia's coast, especially the Dalmatian and Julian regions, from the aftermath of the Versailles Treaty (1919) and the Rapallo Treaty (1920) to the collapse of Fascist domination in 1943, has garnered scholarly attention in recent years, especially in historical analysis. Alongside the publications related to specific aspects of this theme, such as Luciano Monzali's essay on Italians living in Dalmatia between 1914 and 1924 (Monzali 2007) or Larry Wolff's book *Venice and the Slavs* (2001), which emphasises the role of the Venetian heritage and the narrative of 'vittoria mutilata' in early Fascism's claims (Wolff 2001: 355–56), one of the most systematic works is Marina Cattaruzza's publication in 2016. This text explores 150 years of Italy's eastern border, from 1866 to 2016, focusing on crucial historical processes relevant to this thesis. Cattaruzza underscores how, after Versailles, Italy expanded its borders further eastward, increasing its contact with other national identities that had previously lived under the Hapsburg empire.

Consequently, Italy's Adriatic policy entered a new phase after 1925, with the Italian government attempting to denationalise these minorities. This effort led to the closure of cultural associations, theatres, and schools. In the second half of the 1920s, around five hundred Slavic language associations were forced to close. This denationalisation and subsequent Italianisation aimed to reconstruct the Italian identity of the provinces, which, in the regime's view, were Italian from both a geographical and historical perspective (Cattaruzza 2016: 127–30).

The further Italian invasion in April 1941 and the subsequent establishment of an Italian administration have often been overlooked in the study of the major events of the Second World War. Nevertheless, Francesco Caccamo and Monzali edited a collection of essays (2008) that examines various Balkan regions occupied by Italy. A study focusing on the Italian military operation in the region was also published by Maria Teresa Giusti and Elena Aga Rossi in 2011. This text delves into the years between 1940 and 1945, with particular emphasis on the operations after the armistice and in the aftermath of the war (Rossi and Giusti 2011). Regarding the Italian conquest, administration and withdrawal from the former Yugoslavian territory, Eric Gobetti published one of the most comprehensive studies, entitled *Alleati del nemico* (2013), highlighting the territories' ungovernability from the beginning due to local resistance. To counter the guerrillas, the Italian army resorted to terrorist policies against the civilian population, including the infamous 'Circolare 3c' (Gobetti 2013: 79–84), encouraging soldiers to behave as if they were conducting a colonial war. Gobetti's research also underscores the failure of Italian attempts to establish civil administration in the area, where it was impossible for the Dalmatian governor, Giuseppe Bastianini, to deploy civil administration or attract investments, companies and migrants from Italy. The aspects related to cultural production in the area within the framework of Italian imperialism, however, remain largely unexplored. While there are studies examining Italian travel writing in the Mediterranean broadly (e.g. Burdett 2010b), and how the Balkans were discursively constructed by Western European culture (Todorova 2009), there are only a few that specifically address how the Italian discourse of power represented its European annexation. For instance, Valerie McGuire examines the discursive practices of occupation employed by both Liberal and Fascist Italy in governing the Aegean territories (McGuire 2018b, 2020). Tommaso Chiarandini investigates the racist stereotypes developed surrounding the Yugoslavs in the twenty years preceding the Italian invasion (2022). Furthermore, Davide Rodogno, in his essay about how Italian soldiers in the Balkans narrated the war and encounters with the Yugoslavs, explores some of these issues, focusing on the soldiers' diaries (2004). However, a specific focus on how Italian intellectuals during the Fascist period represented a hybrid region – such as the Dalmatian and Julian regions, which were subjected to a strong Italian expansionist project – has yet to be developed.

Examining the accounts of intellectuals from the time regarding former Yugoslavian territories means exploring how the Italians represented their relationship with the Yugoslavs as two conflicting national identities. These literary experiences serve as a valuable source for understanding the discursive strategies employed by Italian authors in constructing this type of geographical space. These strategies offer insights into the functioning and influence exercised by Fascism's discourse of power on the representation of a territory that had already been subjected to long-term Italian expansionist desires. In other words, this literature provides a perspective on not only how Italian imperialism influenced the representation of these places, but also how Fascism's ideology operated within that context. Therefore, this chapter aims to question the sources in two ways: first, it investigates how Italian intellectuals of the time discursively constructed the Adriatic, and its coastline, as a geographical space, examining their perceptions of the territory and their positioning in relation to it. Second, it seeks to understand how Yugoslav otherness is represented within these texts. How do the Italian authors relate to it, and how does the representation of the Yugoslav identity connect to how region itself is represented? Through answers to these questions, this chapter aims to explore how Fascism's discourse influenced the ways in which these authors creatively elaborated the Adriatic's social and geographical reality.

Among the various writers who engaged with the Adriatic, it is interesting to focus on those who became directly involved in the narration of Fascist expansionism and the colonial enterprise even in geographic contexts different from the Adriatic one. Through an analysis of the works of authors like Arturo Marpicati, Giovanni Comisso, Mario Dei Gaslini, and Luigi Federzoni, I will explore the insights that can be gained concerning the attitudes deployed about other national identities within the specific cultural, political and social context of Fascism. In 1929, Dei Gaslini and Comisso published, respectively, *Aquilotti sull'Adriatico* and *Gente di mare*, which were accounts of their travels through the Adriatic. In the year prior, the publisher Alpes released the second edition of *Itinerario Adriatico, piccolo romanzo di una vela* by Arturo Marpicati, originally published in 1922. Furthermore, after the Italian invasion of Yugoslavia, Federzoni, along with Zanichelli, published a collection of articles based on his travels in Dalmatia around 1910. This collection included a supplement that explained the meaning of Italian annexation.

These texts were considered valuable pieces of writing in their time, and some of them are still in print today. They can be viewed as conventional narratives, since they contain elements of adventure and travel writing, of fiction, in-depth character delineation, and a strong presence of the author. Nevertheless, due to the circumstances in which they were produced and their narrative con-

text, these texts can also be approached through a contrapuntal reading, seeking the imperialistic elements that surface within the texts. In other words, this chapter aims to explore how these texts convey an imperial understanding of the area and the otherness implied in the narrative. It underscores how these writings can also be perceived as elements of an imperial and Fascist episteme that shaped Italian attitudes toward the region. My contention is that, in narrating this space, the authors employed different strategies to address the national heterogeneity of the area while maintaining common meanings.

These meanings essentially revolve around two key themes: the Adriatic as an Italian space, and the Yugoslav population as being inferior to the Italian one. Nevertheless, analysing the diverse strategies deployed by the authors to construct these two meanings will provide insights into the complexity and heterogeneity underlying Italian imperialist discourse and its interaction with Fascism's ideology. Regarding the latter, this chapter highlights how, in their writing, some of the authors demonstrated discursive elements that are at the core of the so called 'New Consensus' (Griffin 1998) understanding of Fascism. Roger Griffin argues for a broad conceptualisation of Fascism as a 'revolutionary form of ultra-nationalism' (Griffin 2002: 24). This definition, influenced by a culturalist approach, challenges the notion of Fascism as a purely reactionary force and emphasises its revolutionary and palingenetic aspects as the key elements in understanding Fascism as a heterogeneous phenomenon with the capacity to exert creative power over reality (Griffin 2012).

This chapter's analysis demonstrates how the authors, in articulating their own discursive strategies to represent the area, harnessed the palingenetic and modernising force of Fascism and its organic concept of the nation, to elaborate, strengthen, and reinvent the Adriatic region and the Italian imperial attitude toward it. The chapter articulates three main sections. The first will explore how Comisso, Marpicati and Dei Gaslini constructed the Adriatic region as an entirely Italian space that was domestic to them. The second will focus on the different strategies deployed by these three authors to describe the Yugoslav presence on the very same territory that they portrayed as Italian and at their disposal. This section will elucidate how these authors depicted the Yugoslav identity as distinct from their own, and highlights that Marpicati and Dei Gaslini were unable to include the Yugoslavs within their conception of the Adriatic, whereas Comisso created a specific subaltern space for them and their relationship with Italians. Finally, the last section will examine Federzoni's text, the only one published after the Italian annexation. It will illustrate how one of the most prominent supporters of irredentism blended Fascist and imperialist elements within his articles, and how Fascist discourse enriched the discursive elements at his disposal for engaging with the Yugoslavs.

1. Perceiving Home: Mastering the Eastern Adriatic

Comisso, Marpicati and Dei Gaslini provided numerous insights about how they perceived and located themselves in the Adriatic context. They described their experiences in the Adriatic, whether fictional or otherwise, narrating attitudes and situations where they felt at home. Regardless of being in a foreign country, these authors exhibit a deep and unwavering confidence in depicting the land as familiar to them, a place where they do not feel displaced. It is possible to argue that, to some extent, they are showing behaviours and perceptions about the eastern Adriatic that display their knowledge and subsequent authority over the area, which, as sustained by Bhabha (2004: 94–120), is a crucial element in the creation of a colonial subject. However, the authors employ different narratives and ideological structures in describing the eastern Adriatic as their domestic space. Among these differences, various narrative patterns can be identified that sustain an imperialist attitude towards the area. Simultaneously, these patterns may reflect varying degrees of alignment with the Fascist ideological apparatus. The following sections will analyse how these texts functioned in the literary construction of this region as a space domestic to the Italians.

1.1. The Ambivalence of Comisso's Adriatic

When *Gente di mare* was first published by Treves, Comisso had already begun his career as a travel journalist (Duncan 2002: 54). In 1922, he spent part of the summer on a fishing vessel of Chioggia, during which he travelled between the two sides of the Adriatic and composed the notes from which he wrote *Gente di mare* (Damiani and Naldini 2002: lxxiv). Awarded the literary prize *Bagutta* in 1929, this was one of Comisso's most successful books (Damiani and Naldini 2002: lxxiv), with several subsequent editions, the latest of which was published in 2020 by *La nave di Teseo*.

Gente di mare is a collection of short novels divided into two sections. In the first, as noted by Bertacchini, the author portrays a new reality that he discovered (Bertacchini 1954) – a reality in which the sea is an overwhelming and demiurgical presence that shapes attitudes and beliefs, determining the pace of life for the people described by Comisso, with the latter living at the mercy of the sea.[36] In the second section, the author positions himself within the sea-shaped context he previously delineated. In this part, Comisso challenges his previous descriptions of the sea, depicting it as an entity under his control. One might argue that the two sections display an ambivalence in the perception of the Adriatic's reality. This ambiguity allows the author to simultaneously represent the Adriatic

[36] The representation of the sea constitutes one of the aspects of this text more explored by the critics (Lorenzetti 2021).

as both hostile and domestic. The narratological element that underpins the sea's ambivalence is the author's presence in the text. When he locates himself within this reality, it suddenly becomes domestic. The sea shifts from controlling the entire area to being easily domesticated, indirectly highlighting the author's ability to possess and control the entire area. The ambivalence in the portrayal of the sea can be clearly identified in some examples from the first section of the book:

> 'Tutti parlano a voce alta con la stessa intonazione come fossero a bordo dei loro velieri tra il vento che disperda i loro comandi.' (Comisso 2002a: 95)

In this passage quoted from the first novel of the book 'Una città di pescatori,' the author notes that the way people communicate is deeply influenced by their life on the sea. Comisso describes the streets of the city and notices how, even on land, they continued speaking as if they were on a boat. In this description, there is a sense of mockery in his words - the image of all the people of the city shouting as if they were on a vessel shows how deeply influenced these people were by their relationship with the sea, to the extent that they could not change their attitudes even when on land. All the characters in the novel position themselves in relation to the sea. For instance, in the novel 'Osteria di Pescatori,' Comisso describes an inn as follows:

> 'Arrivarono i primi venti di marzo […] e le vele vennero dischiuse e i pescatori ripresero il mare. La vita riprese come dopo un letargo, adagio […] Il banco del vino riprese il suo lavoro […] l'inverno, il maledetto inverno se ne era andato e le prue dei loro bragozzi dipinte di angeli suonanti erano ritornate a ornarsi di spumeggianti mustacchi nella corsa veloce.'(Comisso 2002a: 193)

In this quote, the life of the inn is dependent on the sea; it seems that during winter, the wine was not supposed to be drunk or served, as life is strictly and only related to the availability of the sea and the work of fishermen. The sea is also represented as a violent entity that requires great effort and claims human lives. For instance, many people represented had a relative who had died at sea (Comisso 2002a: 207). Describing the general relation of these people with the sea, Comisso writes:

> 'Ma la gente di mare non è una gente facile alle trabocchevoli gioie, anche se a volte il mare con la sua salsedine inebrii come un mostro. Nel mare vi è per loro sempre celato il senso della morte e dell'incomprensibile infinito a dare malinconia.' (Comisso 2002a: 219)

As this quote suggests, these novels depict a continuous struggle between the people and the sea, conveying a contradictory relationship. On one side, the sea evokes thoughts of death, while on the other, it could be a refuge for those in need. For instance, in the fourth novel, the protagonist Mario is fascinated by the prospect of a safe and prosperous life in the countryside. Eventually, he loses everything and decides to embark on a ship. The author describes this event as follows:

> 'Andò al porto e accordatosi con un padrone di veliero si ingaggiò per l'imbarco. La sua buona stagione era finita, ora incominciava quella di tempeste e di nebbie. La ricchezza era venuta per lui, ma per una stagione breve.' (Comisso 2002a: 125)

The sea allowed him to find work, albeit without particular fortune. Comisso stated that the days of richness were over, and the season of fogs and storms had begun, the sea prevented him from living a good life; it only allowed him to survive. The first section of the book delineates a social and geographical reality, that of the 'People of the sea', which is completely shaped by the relationship between the people and the sea. In the following section, this relationship drastically changes, with the power dynamic between the sea and the people being somewhat reversed, and the latter able to exert control over the former.

The second section is the episodic narration, conducted in the first-person singular, of Comisso's first-hand experience on a sailing ship in 1922. As argued by Duncan, Comisso's written production is committed to constructing a home for the author (2002: 61), and this section could be understood from this perspective. In describing his sailings in the Adriatic, he narrates the sea and its surroundings as a reality in which to position himself. As noted by Bertacchini, Comisso displays an attitude of wanting to examine his abilities by participating in the life he described in *Gente di Mare* (Bertacchini 1954: 430). Within this participation, the author envisions an Adriatic that is comfortable for him, and where the tragic efforts of the people of the sea remain peripheral to the narration. Even if those efforts do not disappear completely, they are rarely associated with the author's experience. Once he has situated himself within this world, Comisso describes the feelings and images that are contradictory to those in the first section. For instance, in the first pages, he describes his arrival on a solitary coast as he began to explore the surroundings:

> 'Il parco terminava poco oltre davanti a campi stupendi di una fertilità biblica, distesi fino alle colline boscose e subito mi prese il desiderio di attraversarli per godere del loro contatto. […] Rimasi a godere di questa visione di terra promessa e l'aria accaldata e ferma, così diversa da quella del mare respirata per tanti giorni.' (Comisso 2002a: 246)

The sea, which previously constituted an entire season of 'storms and fogs', now leads the author to a place that evokes heavenly imaginary. The 'biblical fertility' of the fields and their capacity to provide some kind of pleasure to touch is a surrealistic feature that describes a world where there is no need to work or exert oneself. Even simply touching the fields becomes a form of physical pleasure. The 'promised land' was there, a few metres away from the dock where they landed, which the author immediately had access to. To express the feeling of reaching a 'promised land' is a common feature in Italian travel writing about the colonies (Burdett 2010b: 122–23). A few lines later, Comisso adds:

> 'Uno sparo […] mi fece capire con molta noia che il luogo era abitato e ritornai allora nel parco per vedere chi fosse entrato in quella solitudine che ormai mi apparteneva.' (Comisso 2002a: 246)

Comisso expresses the desire to possess this heavenly place, and is annoyed by the possible presence of other people who might violate his possession of it, even though he has just arrived there for the first time. The possession of a pleasant land, reached via the sea, is a pattern often perpetuated in the text. For instance, a few pages later, while they were sailing alongside a rocky coast, Comisso writes:

> 'E la distesa incessante delle rocce […] ci aveva tenuto sempre nel desiderio di partire presto da quei luoghi per ritornare alle nostre terre fresche di acque e dense di campi rigogliosi. Ma quando cominciammo a vedere la costa pianare formando penisole coperte fino al lembo del mare da fitti boschi di pini e insenature arcuate e dolci, non potei trattenermi dall'esprimere il desiderio di fermarci per camminarvi.' (Comisso 2002a: 254)

Regardless of the location, the author seems capable of finding pleasant places almost everywhere. It is not a matter of a specific place, but rather of Comisso's capability to imagine a likeable place for himself. This perspective also characterises his relationship with the sea. When Comisso enters the sea, it takes on different characteristics from those described in the first part, even in dramatic situations. For instance, one of the first episodes narrates how they were sailing toward an unspecified city when a storm began. The storm created several problems for the ship, with the powerful winds and growing waves causing issues with keeping the ship steady and on the correct route. The author had no real knowledge of sailing; however, the other members of the crew were always in control of the situation. For instance, after sunset, the crew was discussing the weather conditions and how to land in the city, and the author noticed that '[e]rano certi di non avere sbagliato la rotta neanche di mezzo miglio' (Comisso 2002a: 259). Further, while the storm was growing, Comisso described the captain of the ship as he gave orders:

> ‘La voce del capitano si era fatta chiara, calda, forte: sonante. Pareva dominato da un estro ventenne, lirico. Tutti agili come saltimbanchi si posero al loro posto. Anche il capitano aiutò.’ (Comisso 2002a: 261)

In the previous section, there is another paragraph describing the loud voices of the sailors. In this latter paragraph, however, the tone is completely different. The captain’s voice becomes louder, emphasising his authority over the entire crew. This time, instead of displaying awkwardness, the voice represents a form of power over the destiny of the ship in the face of the storm. Within the text, Comisso reports a dialogue with the captain as follows:

> ‘Il capitano prima di ritirarsi venne da me per dirmi che non vi era da temere […] E concluse con il dire che sul suo veliero era sempre egli padrone.’ (Comisso 2002a: 262)

The captain reassured the author, expressing his mastery of the ship and the conditions around it. The captain can control the sea, and they are eventually able to arrive safely in port despite the storm. Episodes, like this one, where the author and the crew of the ship demonstrate a complete knowledge and mastery of territories and the sea, express a narrative of control and appropriation of the area that is crucial to the author's representation of it as domesticated. The knowledge of the region displayed by the ship’s crew is another fundamental element in the construction of this narrative by Comisso. For instance, there is a novel, entitled ‘Rade di Fortuna’, which concerns the knowledge and usage of the natural harbours in Dalmatia. These harbours are hidden at first glance, but the vessel’s crew knows all of them – they know their names, have anecdotes about them, and use them as shelter in case of storms (Comisso 2002a: 304–8).

Looking at these examples, it is possible to note how the author, in the process of locating himself in the Adriatic context, reverses the images that he previously constructed about the sea. The constant negotiation between the people and the sea seems to change the terms that describe it once the author starts to narrate his own experience. The context changes qualitatively; it becomes a provider of pleasant and heavenly spaces and, at the same time, is perfectly known, intelligible and controlled by Comisso and his friends. Knowledge, mastery and pleasantness constitute the pillars around which the power relationship between the people and the sea is overturned, creating a literary Adriatic that becomes a comfort zone for the author and his friends.

It is thus possible to state that Comisso, as was illustrated about different authors in the first chapter, was creating his domestic space through a series of categories and arbitrary reasoning that

recall Said's imaginative geography. In his analysis of Orientalist discourse, Said identifies imaginative geography as a way to represent a geographical reality, in his case the orient, which 'legitimates a vocabulary, a universe of representative discourse peculiar to the discussion and understanding of Islam and of the Orient.' He adds that this mode of representation does not aim for accuracy but 'to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are for Europe' (1978: 71-72). Comisso, in narrating himself within the Adriatic, constructs a geographical space that is functional to his presence within it and control over it. How the author describes his discovery of a promised land, or the complete mastery demonstrated by the vessel's crew during the storm, legitimates the reader's understanding of the Adriatic region as being at the complete disposal of the author. Therefore, Comisso proposes an ambivalence between the everyday life of the people of the sea, which is depicted as miserable and subservient to the Adriatic, and his own adventures in the very same place, indirectly suggesting how an Italian man and an Italian ship's crew can overcome the difficulties imposed by the sea.

Based on these points, I would argue that Comisso, in his attempt to portray himself within the context of *Gente di mare*, deploys a narrative of possession about the reality he describes that shows a relation between him, his companions, and the Adriatic in which the latter is subjected to their will and needs. The process of subjectification of the space not only shows the appropriation of the area, but is also a functional space in which to locate the asymmetrical encounter with otherness, as will be analysed further in this chapter.

1.2. Marpicati's Domestic Sea

In his *Itinerario Adriatico*, published in four editions between 1922 and 1943, Arturo Marpicati deployed a possessive attitude towards the Adriatic, revealing an imperialist discourse legitimated through his arbitrary usage of history. The author's interpretation of history also sheds light on his political views and attitude towards the Adriatic. Marpicati participated in the occupation of Rijeka and, in the 1920s, embarked on a political career within the Fascist party, ultimately becoming the vice-secretary of the National Fascist Party until 1934. Alongside his political career, Marpicati pursued a writing and academic activity during which he supported Fascism and irredentism through his writings (Quagliarini 2008). Notably, *La coda di Minosse* (1925), perhaps his most famous work, glorifies the psychology of Italian soldiers during the Great War (Moll 2022). Similarly, *Saggi di Letteratura Italiana* (1933) glorifies the putative xenophobic aspects found in Leopardi's *Paralipomeni della Batracomiomachia* (Lanfranchi 2011). However, *Itinerario Adriatico* focuses mainly on irredentism. It serves as a travel account, narrating the experiences of the author and his friends on a

cutter as they journeyed between Rijeka, Zadar and Venice. Marpicati describes their travels within the Adriatic, including regattas, visits to the countryside, and boat journeys. As he narrates their movements, the author consistently reaffirms his national identification as Italian, thereby personifying, to some extent, an Italian geopolitical consciousness, especially in response to the presence of nationalities foreign to him. In the early stages of the book, a literary construction emerges of the Adriatic as something familiar and domestic, both to himself and to Italy. This discourse is sustained by the author's choice of specific adjectives and motifs. He portrays these territories by emphasising the dominance of past empires and locating them in proximity to Italy. For instance, he refers to Venice as 'la dominante' (Marpicati 1922: 11) or 'colonizzatrice sapiente' (Marpicati 1922: 165) and Roman architecture is characterised by a 'carattere dominatore' (Marpicati 1922: 34). These expressions specifically evoke a scenario of dominance and are linked to the presence of Italians. In describing the beginning of their cruise, the author writes:

> 'lo laveremo [the cutter], mentre sui canali adriatici, finalmente, due pretti nomi italiani, Gabriele D'Annunzio ed Enrico Millo, squillano con la signorile armonia de' bei nomi di Venezia Dominante.' (Marpicati 1922: 11)

In this passage, the contemporary Italian leaders, D'Annunzio and Millo,[37] who were actively working to establish Italian dominion over the Adriatic, are harmoniously represented alongside the Venetian past. The use of Venetian history reinforces the sense of possession, of the canals and of the sea itself. From Marpicati's perspective, the Adriatic will be Italian due to the work of D'Annunzio and Millo. These claims recur throughout the text, with the author further expanding the sense of possession in describing their freedom of movement between the two sides of the Adriatic. In narrating their constant movements in the region, he writes:

> 'Non abitiamo in nessuna delle case dove voi dormirete stanotte. La nostra terra ora è l'acqua. Noi possediamo un tesoro immenso che anche voi vedete e avete a portata di mano, ma non lo capite tutti, non lo sentite […] il mare!' (Marpicati 1922: 37–38)

Marpicati openly asserts ownership of the sea as he perceives it. In this book, the sea is never portrayed as dangerous or powerful; rather, it is presented as a geographical space controlled and domesticated by the author. The Adriatic is a place where the author can feel at home, a place he views as a

[37] The military chief commander of Italian Dalmatia at the time (Gemignani 2010).

treasure. This sense of possession, amplified by keywords such as 'understanding' and 'feeling', enables the author to feel at ease with sleeping on the cutter. Marpicati expresses feelings towards the Adriatic that, despite the different narrative tools used, align with those expressed by Comisso. The tameness of the Adriatic is a perception that is conveyed by both authors when recounting their own experiences, and serves as a means to evoke a sense of possession of the sea.

Nevertheless, the Adriatic region was neither wholly Italian nor under their complete control. Rather, it was a fragmented region with various national groups asserting the legitimacy of their presence in the territory. This aspect was not ignored by Comisso or Marpicati. Just as Said noted that representations of the Orient aim to depict it as both 'alien' and 'for Europe' (Said 1978: 71–72), similarly these two authors, in crafting their imaginative geography see the Adriatic as a space for them, but at the same time acknowledge and represent the elements that are foreign to them. They do not appeal to exotic features of the territory, as Todorova argues that the exoticism of the Balkans was rarely appealing to Western European literature (Todorova 2009: 14). Instead, they identify the alien aspects in the presence of the Yugoslavs. Their mastery over the Adriatic and its domestic qualities are eventually disturbed by the presence of the Yugoslav otherness. I will further explore the strategies employed by the authors to represent this otherness below.

1.3. Dei Gaslini's Holy Homeland

Mario Dei Gaslini, one of the most important colonial writers of his time (Burdett 2010a: 11–12), reiterated the narrative of possession concerning the eastern Adriatic, casting it in a clearly Fascist light that envisioned a specific location for Dalmatia within Fascist society. As noted by Gentile (1993: 37–44), Fascism bore a vision of itself that was akin to a secular religion, establishing a belief system centred on the promise of creating a new modern society and achieving greatness for the Italian nation. These beliefs often appealed to language and imagery that were closely linked to the holy, fostering a perception of time that revolved around the idea of living in modernity. In essence, the regime sought to construct a system of collective beliefs in which Fascism would propel the Italian nation toward greatness, expansionism, and modernisation. Examining this system of beliefs, Fascism could be understood as a messianic eschatology, where those within it shared a collective sense of living in an accelerated timeline that was leading up to a new modern society (Burdett 2010a).

In the literary expression of this belief system, colonial literature, as shown by Burdett (2010a: 7–8), played a significant role. In this context, Dei Gaslini's work is no exception, as we will analyse further in the following paragraphs. Dei Gaslini recounted his journey to follow a demonstration by

the so-called volunteers in Zadar. This demonstration was conducted by Italians to reaffirm the Italianness of the Dalmatian territory, and the author accompanied the volunteers from Ancona to Zadar, documenting the parade and his visits to the surrounding areas. Dei Gaslini titled the text *Aquilotti sull'Adriatico* and published it in 1929 with Unitas. At the time of publication, Dei Gaslini was already one of the most renowned figures in colonial literature and a former colonial soldier. He served as director of *Esotica*, a monthly publication dedicated to colonial literature. In 1926 he published *Piccolo amore beduino*, which received the award for the best Italian colonial novel of the year, further enhancing his popularity (Casales 2020). This novel, along with Dei Gaslini's broader body of work, perpetuated an exotic primitivism when describing colonised subjects, reinforcing an orientalist dichotomy between Western and Eastern cultures (McLaren 2006: 114).

Within the Adriatic context, these elements were somewhat blurred, as the Balkans were perceived by Western European observers more as a space in between the West and East, not distinctly Oriental enough to evoke exotic fantasies, yet not fully aligned with the West (Todorova 2009: 15–16). Nevertheless, Dei Gaslini employed a description of the events in Zadar that undeniably supported an imperialistic approach to the region. The author conveys this approach by adopting Fascist values, vocabulary and perspective in his descriptions. Dei Gaslini portrayed the relationship between Dalmatia and Italy as intrinsically linked to the sacred dimension. For instance, in expressing the emotions evoked by his travels, the author writes:

> 'Infine la grandiosa visione della Patria che non muore mai, e non si sa che cosa sia, ma annoda con un grande nastro tricolore i destini di tutte le sue terre, […] i mari delle sue genti e gli eroismi dei suoi apostoli. […] a Zara l'Italia è passione e la passione è fede disperata che affronta e aspetta il suo avvenire.' (Dei Gaslini 1929: 10)

The homeland is represented as an immortal entity capable of uniting all its people, territories, and heroes, the latter being referred to as Apostles, providing assonance with the Catholic imaginary. Having defined the essence of the homeland through these evocative images, the author then describes what the homeland represents for Zadar, portraying it as passion and faith in the future.

The theme of Dalmatia faithfully awaiting its future is recurrent in the text, with the future symbolised by its annexation to Italy. For example, in describing a map of the area, Dei Gaslini states:

> 'Quelle macchie di colore vogliono precisare il luogo dove l'Italia finisce di governare e quello dove ha sempre governato e dove per ora non governa più' (Dei Gaslini 1929: 56–57)

By emphasising that these territories used to be Italian,[38] the author leaves a temporal indication, with the use of 'right now' (per ora), letting the reader imagine that the situation could soon change. The narrative is saturated with faith in a glorious future. For instance, in describing one of the numerous speeches during the celebration, the author addresses the 'balilla milanesi' as 'eredi di una grande storia e futuri artefici di un immancabile avvenire' (Dei Gaslini 1929: 52). The future is portrayed as an inevitable moment when the nation's greatness will be realised, a future that seems tangible and imminent. Moreover, the demonstration itself assumes a religious role, as seen in the description of the procession:

> 'Il corteo si allunga lentamente sotto al sole, […] esso ha qualcosa di nomade e eroico […] e la sua mescolanza di indigeno e di grigio verde, gli dà l'espressione caratteristica di un rito che ricorda talune crociate di cavalieri.' (Dei Gaslini 1929: 55)

The author chooses to describe the procession, which claimed the Italianness of the area, with the adjective 'nomadic', as it needed to constantly move in the area because the process of Italianisation of the region was yet to be accomplished. At the same time, Dei Gaslini was a colonial writer, he knew that the Italian army at the time (1929) was engaged against the nomadic tribes of Libya, to secure control of the entire country. Moreover, equating the procession – organised by Italians to assert the Italianness of Dalmatia – with the crusades establishes a connection between the struggle for the Italian Dalmatia and the fight for religion. This connection is reinforced throughout the text when the history of Dalmatia is depicted as a history of martyrdom (Dei Gaslini 1929: 50).

The representation of significant political actions through religious metaphors was a fundamental aspect of Fascism's representation and aimed to enhance a religion of the nation (Gentile 1993: 41–43). Dei Gaslini imbued Italy and Dalmatia with concepts like martyrdom and faith, both of which play central roles in the author's belief in the future. By describing a procession of Italians in a city under Italian rule, Dei Gaslini thus expanded the boundaries of Fascism's religion into Dalmatia. He viewed the region as an integral part of the future and modernisation that Fascism would allow Italy to achieve. From Dei Gaslini's perspective, literary appropriation of the eastern Adriatic hinges on two key elements: arbitrarily designating Italy as Dalmatia's homeland, and placing Dalmatia within the Italian trajectory of time, a trajectory directed toward Fascism's modernisation. Fascism had a profound relationship with the concept of time, especially the future, as it consistently expressed a

[38] Territories were, in fact, Italy never ruled as Italy but which were under the dominion of Venice.

vision for the future of the Italian nation that was oriented towards its own modernity. Fascism assumed a palingenetic role for the Italian nation, envisioning a revolutionary transformation of the state that would lead to modernity and glory (Burdett 2010b: 2-3). Within this framework, Fascism emerged as a catalyst propelling the nation toward modernity (Burdett 2011). In a regime where culture was systematically organised to support Fascism's discourse of power (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 17-18), the idea of a national rejuvenation leading to modernity seemed concrete and imminent. Therefore, Dei Gaslini associates this tension towards modernity with the role that Italy would play in the Adriatic at the culmination of this palingenetic process. In this text, Dalmatia takes on a dual significance: it is both a region that Italy must conquer, and a region that will be enveloped in Fascist Italy's march toward modernity.

To conclude, these three authors constructed a geographic reality in their narratives, presenting a region outside of Italy as intimately familiar to them. They possessed extensive knowledge of this territory and felt they could master it entirely. By reading these texts from the perspective of their imperialistic elements, one could argue that these authors perceived the Adriatic as an inland sea. This does not imply Abulafia's definition of it as an area marked by intense trade and communicative exchanges (Horden and Purcell 2006), but rather as a territorial space open for conquest. In other words, through their narratives, it becomes apparent that these authors did not see the Adriatic in terms of connections. Rather, following Gekas and Borutta understanding of the Mediterranean (2012), it is possible to frame it as a space ripe for colonisation. From these concepts and from the acknowledgement of the fact that Fascist Italy, since 1925, started an intense activity of Italianization of the Slovene and Croat minorities within the Italian borders (Cattaruzza 2016: 127–30),[39] arises a fundamental question: was there a space for a national otherness in a place that they mastered as if it were their own home? Were the Italian authors capable of conceiving a space to live alongside the Yugoslavs without employing practices of Italianization? Croatians, Serbians and Slovenes constituted the vast majority (Monzali 2007: 98) in the territories visited by the authors during their travels throughout the Adriatic. The next section will explore how the imperialistic elements, as depicted in their descriptions of space, relate to encountering otherness.

[39] This activity was particularly aggressive, as explored in the introduction to this work, and aimed at the erasure of the Yugoslav identity of these minorities and their subsequent Italianization. This policy of forced assimilation, as Cattaruzza notices was 'a feature of Fascism's totalitarian program' (2016: 136).

2. Constructing a Border: the Exclusion of Otherness.

The authors travelled through territories that underwent various border shifts between 1919 and 1924 and, demographically, these areas were foreign to the Italians. As noted by Hobsbawm, the European borders created by the First World War contained heterogeneous populations, preserving elements of the previous political and territorial constructions while changing the paradigm in addressing them. These groups went from being oppressed populations in another state, to being oppressed minorities within a larger nation-state (Hobsbawm 1990: 133–34).

Despite the demographic differences in the region, it is possible to argue that the authors considered the Croatian, Slovene or Serbian populations as a racially different minority living in Italy. An examination of how the Yugoslavs surface in the texts of Comisso, Marpicati and Dei Gaslini underscores the marginal role played by national otherness in their narratives. Yugoslavs seldom appear in these texts, and when they do, they are consistently subjected to deep racial characterisations, which is achieved through the frequent association of the term 'Slav' with pejorative adjectives. For instance, Comisso reports conversations with his companions who refer to the Yugoslavs as 'nati di cani' or as brigands (2002a: 294, 2002a: 319). Dei Gaslini addresses them as 'un nemico che non ha navi nè storia' (1929: 9), while Marpicati depicts them as 'ruvidi incivili eredi dell'Austria' or as 'porchi de S-ciavoni' (1922: 177,196). There is no doubt that the Yugoslavian citizens represented an otherness to the authors, an otherness that is often identified as racial. Racial differences, in identity discourses, served as both a powerful identity maker (Loomba 2015: 112) and an opportunity to imaginatively construct an otherness that stood in contrast to a racially homogeneous identity (Bennet and Royle 2016: 283). Consequently, following the scholars' understanding of travel writing in Fascist Italy, an analysis of the literary representation of encounters between these two identities reveals how the authors positioned themselves through the observation of others (Burdett 2009: 16). In essence, an examination of the descriptions of encounters with the otherness presented by Comisso, Dei Gaslini and Marpicati in the 1920s provides valuable insights into how the system of values and ideas embedded within Fascism influenced their works and their perception of reality (Burdett 2009: 15). Furthermore, it offers an understanding of how these authors envisioned the relationship between Italians and Yugoslavs within the Adriatic, and how they locate themselves within this geographical space.

2.1. Racial Incompatibilities, Marpicati and Dei Gaslini's Descriptions

In describing his cruises within the Adriatic, Arturo Marpicati was not immune to the irredentists' rhetoric. For instance, the author complains about the Yugoslavs drowning the symbols of Venice

(1922: 177), and Paulucci and Rossetti – two soldiers who sunk a military ship donated by Austria to the newly born Yugoslavia in 1918 – are called heroes (1922: 44). In the early pages, Marpicati describes how he happened to be in Trieste while the Fascists burned the Narodni Dom, a Slovenian cultural centre. This event was one of the first appearances of 'squadrismo' (Cattaruzza 2016: 100–101) and is described as follows:

> 'Quell'incendio non lo potremo dimenticare più. Tutta la piazza Oberdan stipata di una moltitudine quasi placata e gioconda come dinanzi a un rito espiatorio. […] Uno svolìo di faville, di ceneri, e una fantastica luce rossa, un caldo sole notturno vampante su tutta Trieste. Brucia una roccaforte degl'ingrati ed ostili jugoslavi, piantata nel cuore di Trieste italiana. Nella piazza […] la moltitudine assiste mugolando di contenuta ebbrezza.' (Marpicati 1922: 59)

The author admires the power of the fire, and he represents the blaze using vocabulary that recalls religious rituals. The fire, at night, is a warm sun capable of enlightening the entire city of Trieste, and all the adjectives related to this action are positive and majestic. The act is depicted as an expiatory ritual, with the people witnessing it looking euphoric. The author tries to trigger an understanding of the metaphorical meaning of this action, an action that is a religious ritual through which a symbol of another national group – the Yugoslavs – is removed from an Italian place. The removal of this 'stronghold' of the Yugoslavs is directly linked with the Italian nature of the city, as this action allowed the city to become more homogeneous, from a national perspective. Viewing Emilio Gentile's interpretation of Fascism as a secular religion of the nation, which was depicted as such from its early stages (Gentile 1993: 37–41), Marpicati's characterisation of this event results particularly significant.

The usage of a lexicon that appeals to the holy dimension of action against the national heterogeneity of the city shows how, in 1922, the author was able to articulate elements that would become standard within Fascism's discourse. The description entails a representation of the Yugoslav culture that chimes with Fanon's view about the destiny of the national culture of the colonised subject. This culture, under colonial domination, is systematically contested, and to survive it needs to be clandestine (Fanon 2007: 190–91). The fire does not directly expel the Yugoslavs from the city, but in the author's view it symbolises a legitimate attack against a national culture that cannot exist within the Italian city of Trieste. The quote depicts the Yugoslavs with pejorative adjectives such as 'ingrati' and 'ostili'. The author does not provide a reason for using these adjectives; rather, he links them to the national characteristics of these people as Yugoslavs.

Moreover, this quote also contains an element that is central to studies about the relationship between coloniser and colonised: the legitimate violence from the former towards the latter. Within this geopolitical context, it is impossible to maintain that the Italians were colonising Yugoslav territory. Nevertheless, the author constructs a relationship between these two groups of people that contains a dynamic of colonisation. Marpicati does not investigate the legitimacy of the act; rather, from the vocabulary used, it seems that for him this violence was just and deserved. This aspect recalls what Said argued about the use of objectivity in the colonial context. Analysing *Heart of Darkness*, Said observes how 'the real power of the observer […] could pronounce on the reality of native peoples as from an invisible point of super-objective perspective,' and throughout this perspective, the European observer can 'reconstruct them (the natives) as people requiring a European presence' (Said 1994: 167–68). Within this consolidated vision, as Said addresses it, the victim of imperialism must accept the objectivity of the coloniser, or disappear.

The burning described by Marpicati was a response to the killing of Tommaso Gulli, which occurred in Split, an event explored in the previous chapter within the analysis of Menini's diary. In the conflictual space of Dalmatia, this act appears to have been directed against the potential occupation by Italy. Therefore, the fire could signify a legitimate punishment against the Yugoslav population, which was contesting the possibility of being annexed by Italy which, in the author's perspective, was more civilised than the Yugoslav state. In light of the Yugoslavs' unwillingness to recognise Italian superiority, the only solution to this dispute, for Marpicati, was to assume that the national hybridisation of the Adriatic space – as a space where both Italians and Yugoslavs lived – was unrealistic. Marpicati assumes the – putative – incompatibility between Italians and Yugoslavs some pages later when describing a dialogue that he had with an Italian couple he met near to Zadar:

> 'Il capitano Mandel sostiene, a parer mio, con molta giustezza, l'opinione che un accordo vero e proprio di buoni vicini non avverrà giammai tra noi e i jugoslavi. Troppi abissi, dalle profonde diversità dell'indole e della cultura, alle opposte mire politiche, ci separano e ci divideranno irreducibilmente.' (Marpicati 1922: 150–51)

This quote describes the differences between Italians and local populations, differences in attitude and culture that are irreducible. In 'The Other Question,' Homi Bhabha articulates his theory of colonial discourse, arguing that 'the construction of the colonial subject in discourse […] demands an articulation of forms of difference' (2004: 96) that are both racial and sexual. Bhabha contends that difference plays a structural role within the construction of colonial discourse, and within the latter,

the colonial subject, fabricated as such, is not entirely knowable (Byrne 2019: 155).[40]

However, in this context, the ambivalence of this form of knowledge is useful to understand the process of differentiation in the text. All the authors considered employ similar patterns, though it is particularly clear in Marpicati's quote. It conveys an articulation of differences, on the basis of which both Italian authority and its legitimacy are demonstrated. For example, Marpicati employs racial differences to construct a clear, albeit intangible, border between Yugoslavs and Italians. He does not need to provide proof when he states that, based on these differences, Yugoslavs and Italians can never be good neighbours. Moreover, he depicts Yugoslavs as 'removable' from the spaces that Italians perceive as theirs, adding a further colonial layer to his text. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said analyses the role of the civilizing mission within Conrad's novel, showing how narrating and historicising the strangeness of otherness is equivalent to 'the desire to "exterminates the brutes" who may not be cooperative or may entertain ideas about resistance' (1994: 166). In Marpicati, there is no specific articulation of a plausible Italian civilisation featuring the Yugoslavs. However, by enunciating the differences – proposed as historical facts – the author establishes their inferiority to the Italians. The Yugoslavs are too different to maintain their contiguity with Italy peacefully, generating a problem for the author's vision of the Adriatic. He denies a possible proximity between the two entities, but provides no direct solution to this closeness. Nevertheless, comparing the tone of the two quotes cited here, one might argue that Marpicati perceived the Narodni Dom fire as an exemplary way to relate with the Yugoslavs. Based on these textual examples, it is possible to contend that the differentiation between Italians and Yugoslavs implies both a hierarchical and geopolitical meaning, which concur in manifesting the necessity to exclude Yugoslavs from the Italian sphere. Marpicati, in articulating this discourse, employs images and concepts typical of Fascism's discourse and its featuring of the cult of the nation. Despite the introduction of these elements, Marpicati's text articulates, at the same time, topoi coherent with the representations of the Adriatic previously explored. The text narrates a territory shaped by the Venetian heritage, and where the author can feel at home, leaving no safe and legitimate space for Yugoslavs.

---

[40] Ambivalence is added by the fact that the colonial discourse articulates the colonial subject but, at the same time, is not able to entirely know it. This entire discourse is elaborated in 'The Other Question' (Bhabha 2004: 94–120). The ambivalence of this form of knowledge is crucial to understanding Fascism's colonialism in Albania, as will be explored in the next chapter.

Dei Gaslini's *Aquilotti sull'Adriatico* employs a discourse that creates a difference in hierarchical meanings between Yugoslavs and Italians, but articulates it differently. The author establishes a binary opposition between Italians and Yugoslavs, describing the latter with concepts like contamination, violence and barbarism. The text describes the author's brief excursion towards the border with Yugoslavia. Upon arriving at the Yugoslav border patrol, he writes:

> 'E certo, venendo da Zara […] questo incontro pare una contaminazione di tutto ciò che è bello, nostro e gentile: lingua, nobiltà, arte e Patria.' (Dei Gaslini 1929: 70)

The presence of the Yugoslavs at the border is perceived as a 'contamination' of everything that the author sees as 'ours' and, at the same time, beautiful. It is particularly interesting, though, that the Yugoslavs' presence at the border is also perceived as a contamination of the 'Patria' – the nation, the homeland. The idea of contamination itself triggers the concept of homogeneity, an element at the core of Fascism's nationalistic rhetoric, and Dei Gaslini seems to perceive Yugoslavia as capable of contaminating the homogeneous nature of the Italian nationality. The comparison is taken further in the following example, which also seems to set up a binary opposition between 'us' and 'them':

> 'Due antenne mostrano due bandiere, la *nostra* e la *loro*. Il tricolore è gagliardo: si agita, sbatte le ali contro le guide […]. La bandiera slava, invece, è tutta spiegazzata e umiliata, e si ripiega intorno al moncone di legno che la regge, quasi con un significato. Che il vento adriatico sia pungente e virile solo per i vessilli d'Italia? […] La caserma italiana fiancheggia la strada un lato: la baracca, di fronte, occupa l'altro.' (Dei Gaslini 1929: 71–72)

Dei Gaslini compares the border between Italy and Yugoslavia in a way that could seem somewhat childish, trying to find nationalistic meanings in all the objects displayed. The Italian building is a barracks while the Yugoslavs live in a hovel; one flag is waving, the other hanging limp. In this quote, it is evident how the author is trying to construct a binary opposition between Italy, represented as beautiful and noble, and Yugoslavia, which is depicted through pejorative adjectives. Even though this quote provides some concrete elements that differentiate Italians and Yugoslavs, these elements sit between irony and metaphor. The rhetorical question, suggesting, in a masculine way, how the

Adriatic's wind only supports the Italian flag, is uncanny, as it represents an odd coincidence,[41] in a way that is so unrealistic to seem ironic. However, this layer of irony is surrounded by the construction of the Yugoslavs through negative patterns. The text constantly represents Italians as more civilised than Yugoslavs, and within this context, even an odd fortuity, such as the one mentioned, shows and reinforces the difference between the two identities displayed here. This disparity is further reinforced when Dei Gaslini describes a document redacted by the Yugoslav authorities to instigate anti-Fascist actions. In this section, the author addresses the notion of 'comitagi,' a violent group used, in his opinion, to create incidents against the Italian authorities:

> 'Questa organizzazione, detta dei c*omitagi*, particolarmente favorita da eccezionali circostanze (quali il carattere profondamente brigantesco degli abitanti, l'abitudine alla guerriglia, il disagio economico, il rabesco di razze diverse, […] il prepotere dei serbi sui croati e la attrezzatura militare a scapito di ogni libertà civile).' (Dei Gaslini 1929: 104)

In this quote, it is interesting to note the relation between cause and effect entailed by the author. The – putative – initiatives against Italy are motivated by various immanent features of the Yugoslavs and, alongside a series of racial stereotypes, the author mentions the heterogeneous racial composition of the Yugoslav state. The lack of national homogeneity is perceived by the author as a feature that could lead to more violent behaviour and, in the next pages, Dei Gaslini adds:

> 'A me sembra molto più grave il proposito di aggressione e la barbarie dei mezzi escogitati per raggiungerla: tanto grave che la Jugoslavia dovrebbe essere radiata dal novero delle Potenze civili e boicottata, anzi combattuta, in ogni campo e con la maggiore energia.' (Dei Gaslini 1929: 113)

The tone that the author uses to describe the Yugoslavs quickly escalates to claim open warfare against them, as they are an entity that should not exist among the other civilised nations. Dei Gaslini deploys, as in the most common colonial writing, a pattern that entangles both civilisation and race to claim and justify actions against the Yugoslavian state. What Dei Gaslini's publication attempts first is to involve Dalmatia within the specific time frame of Fascist Italy, locating it within the concept of the motherland, allowing it to wait for its future, full of faith. Subsequently, he excludes the Yugoslavians

[41] To represent an odd coincidence is one of the ways in which the uncanny is articulated (Bennet and Royle 2016: 36–37).

from this perspective. This exclusion is then pushed forward, arriving at the idea of waging war against them; for Dei Gaslini, Yugoslavia is a reality that, just by its proximity, can contaminate the Italian nation and that, furthermore, is plotting against Italy.

By contrast, according to the author, Italy emerges as a homogeneous and civil nation. The means these two authors use to confront the Yugoslav presence reveal two patterns, strictly related to each other: the articulation of identity as difference; and in turn, this difference informs, as Bhabha argues, a discursive practice of cultural hierarchisation (2004: 96). The latter allows the Italian observers to exercise a form of classification when describing the Yugoslavs. On this basis, Italians are civilised, while the others are not, and they can rightfully expel the otherness from their cities and represent this expulsion as holy. These patterns, as previously discussed in relation to Said and Bhabha, are typical within the articulation of colonial discourses and representations of the colonised subject. Nevertheless, it is necessary to reaffirm how the geopolitical situation in which these authors were travelling was not that of a colonial empire; rather, the geographical region was fragmented and contested by the two nationalities involved.

Within this perspective, it may be possible to frame one preliminary role of the Fascist discourse of power in this context. The frustration of Italian aspirations in Versailles was one of the first arguments claimed by Fascism to form a consensus (Wolff 2001: 355–56); furthermore, the Fascist understanding of the nation, as both an organic unit (Griffin 2012: 6–7) and 'a higher spiritual identity' (Burdett 2010b: 2), plays a role in fostering Italian expansionism in the region. The authors published their text in different years, 1922 and 1929; consequently, the elements typical of Fascist rhetoric are not distributed equally between the two texts. Nevertheless, the sacred dimension of the Nation is clearly articulated by Marpicati in the episode about the Narodni Dom, in which the metaphorical expulsion of the Yugoslavs from Trieste is represented as an expiatory ritual. The sacral level achieved by this description shows how the Italian nation was conceived by the author, but it also provides an original frame for the relationship between Italians and Yugoslavs. Within this frame, the fight for those territories, from the Italian perspective, is legitimated by the sacred value of the nation; expanding the nation's borders towards territories that were perceived as legitimately Italian became a process that could also be represented and justified through the sacral value covered by the Nation. Dei Gaslini reiterates this conception of Italy while also adding a further dimension, conflating the concept of a glorious and modern path towards the future with the Italian expansion in Dalmatia.

To conclude, when looking at these authors and their textual examples, one might argue that in the representation of a nationally hybrid geographical unit such as the eastern Adriatic, these books propose a perspective which coherently merges elements from Fascism's discourses with imperial

ambitions. The union of these two elements triggers a productive quality of the first, fabricating the discourses, perspectives and values that bolster the legitimisation of Italian claims towards the Adriatic. This further legitimisation of Italian expansionist claims does not seem to be directed outside the nation, but rather inside. The Fascist focus on the holy value of the Nation, and the glorious future that is waiting for Italy and Dalmatia within it, seems functional to strengthen the internal consensus about these themes, rather than convincing anyone outside Italy. As a consequence, is possible to argue, on the basis of these texts, that the productive quality of Fascist discourse within this context functioned as a way to enhance the idea of Italians as the legitimate dominators of the region. Alongside the usual arguments used to reiterate the Italian legitimacy, illustrated in the previous chapters, Fascism's vision of society allowed the authors to produce a reality in which the expansion of Italian sovereignty over Dalmatia would have meant one step towards the national re-birth fostered by Fascism, and the enlargement of the nation's holy space. In other words, Fascism displayed its productive capability within these texts, allowing them to produce more arguments and perspectives concerning the Adriatic, all of which serve the same purpose – to provide more heterogeneous discursive arguments to support Italian expansion.

2.2. Comisso and the Yugoslavians: Encounter with the Subaltern

Comisso distinguishes himself from the other two authors by his literary relationship with Fascism. As explored in the previous chapter, his narrative does not align closely with Fascist discourse. Instead, within his texts, some elements of the latter results are undermined (Duncan 2002). Therefore, *Gente di Mare* does not openly present a Fascist perspective when describing the Adriatic. Rather, Comisso recounts his encounters with the Yugoslavians, revealing a subaltern positioning of the latter through a discourse that warrants a closer examination. This subaltern positioning in Comisso's text revolves around two key concepts used to describe these encounters: difference and exploitation. The difference lies between Italians and Yugoslavs, evident in the numerous pejorative terms applied to the latter, underscoring the distance perceived by Comisso's companions from the otherness. This divergence also emerges as differences in taste, attitudes and habits that are revealed during these encounters. For instance, Comisso's companions ran contraband as a way to supplement their meagre incomes from their usual trade. Prior to their departure, Comisso describes the landing of the illegal goods, mostly clothes and shingles, in the following manner:

> '«è roba di fondo di magazzino, ma per i croati è una manna dal cielo.» […] Erano berretti con larghi tondi e piccoli frontini […] Il capitano voleva che ce ne scegliessimo per noi, ma nessuno pensava di abbandonare il proprio cappello di paglia.' (Comisso 2002a: 267)

These berets are, as the captain admits, objects that remained unsold but are, at the same time, a 'Manna from heaven' for the Croats. The objects rejected in Italy would be highly valuable goods in Croatia and, in describing this difference of perception, the author establishes a hierarchy between the tastes of the two identities he represents. This hierarchy is emphasised a few lines further on, when the author specifies that they refused the berets even when offered them for free. This description embeds an evaluation of Croats' taste as people who appreciate objects that the Italians would reject even when they are without charge. This difference is reiterated in another episode when Comisso enters a Yugoslavian house and writes:

> 'In un angolo una tavola rotonda di grossa pietra, tutta di un pezzo, stava sopra un ceppo di colonna. Credevo un lavoro di primitivi, ma la vecchia mi spiegò che suo marito l'aveva fatta per lei come regalo di nozze.' (Comisso 2002a: 276)

The difference in taste is again hierarchised through the notion of temporality. As outlined by Fabian, the 'negation of coevalness' was a common way, within anthropological writings, to create a distance between the observer and the observed (2014: 37–70). An object that Comisso perceived as something produced by primitive people turns out to be a valuable wedding gift crafted by the husband. The different tastes underscore a difference in temporality, whereby the author establishes his position concerning the otherness. Furthermore, this difference is consistently linked to national characteristics. The first quote of this paragraph gives one example, but the binomials which connect Yugoslavs with pejorative adjectives are pervasive throughout the text. The first time that a 'Slav' is encountered in the text, for instance, he is described as follows:

> 'Su di una piccola barca che veniva dal mare, un uomo remava in piedi e cantava una canzone lamentosa. «Maledetto slavo, sentilo come miagola» disse Angelo da prua.' (Comisso 2002a: 253)

The singing man is immediately identified by his nationality, and this identification results in him being labelled as a 'damned Slav.' Throughout the text, it is nearly impossible to find this national identification unaccompanied by pejorative adjectives. When the national identity is not explicitly stated, the author employs the concept of 'us and them' (Comisso 2002a: 276) to delineate the differences between these two groups. Like the two previous authors, Comisso constructs the Yugoslavs in terms of how different they are from Italians.

However, he approaches this task differently. While the adjectives associated with the Yugoslavs are not challenged or questioned, Comisso attempts to justify the hierarchy he proposes between

Italians and Yugoslavs. The difference in taste, exemplified by the Croats' appreciation for the berets, already represents a different stance. However, the primary area where this difference, and consequently hierarchy, is demonstrated is through the contrasting perspectives through which Italians and Yugoslavs encounter each other. These encounters often revolve around contraband exchanges, and their descriptions exemplify the other concept Comisso uses to position the Yugoslavs as subalterns, namely exploitation. For instance, Comisso describes the sale of the berets to people living on the other side of the Adriatic as follows:

> '«Voi avete roba più buona della nostra e sapete che noi la desideriamo, ma adesso ci portate tutta roba scarta. Io però me ne intendo e non pensate di imbrogliarmi». Il capitano si strinse nelle spalle: «Cosa volete che vi dica, venite a bordo a vederla. Per me è roba fina». E l'uomo […] venne a bordo con noi. I berretti non mancarono di fargli impressione e il sacco fu venduto.' (Comisso 2002a: 276)

The same berets rejected by the author and his companions are now being sold as high-quality items. The captain dissimulated the quality of the goods, while the buyer stated that he was an expert and would not be fooled. Nevertheless, the anecdote ended with the subject being fooled in the exchange and acquiring all the products. This episode illustrates the ease with which the Italians can deceive the Yugoslavs to increase the value of their trade. This pattern is repeated in another episode when the ship sails alongside an island inhabited by woodcutters. One of them approaches the ship in a small boat, and is described as follows:

> 'L'uomo in piedi pareva vacillare e teneva la testa costantemente china. «Ànno remi piccoli come stuzzicadenti questi slavi e per fare strada devono farli girare come ruote di bicicletta.» L'uomo […] rimase davanti a noi timido e spaurito con il volto consunto che rammentava i prigionieri di guerra della sua stessa razza.' (Comisso 2002a: 282)

The woodcutter approached them, and they recognised his identity immediately; even his physical appearance was linked to the others of the 'same race'. The man attempts to trade wood for roof shingles, and the ship's captain tries to take advantage of him. Their negotiation unfolds as follows:

> '«La vostra legna è tagliata male, umida e mi ingombra a bordo, è meglio che ve ne andiate.» Allora l'altro diminuì il numero e parlò della sua miseria, […] e per fare presto, visto che il vento lo portava lontano, ridusse il numero a poche decine. Il capitano sorrise perché lo aveva visto cedere al numero che egli voleva e con il gesto di togliersi un

> seccatore ordinò al marinaio di prepararle. […] Ma quando l'isolano se ne andò il capitano mi disse che i due quintali di quella legna, che era di ottima qualità, li aveva avuti per una presa di tabacco.' (Comisso 2002a: 284)

The entire exchange is unbalanced from the start, with the woodcutter depicted as desperate and willing to accept any conditions. The captain, on the other hand, initially undervalues the wood but eventually concludes the deal on his terms, proudly noting that the wood was of excellent quality and had been obtained for 'a presa di tabacco,' metaphorically meaning nearly for free. The Yugoslav assumes the role of the exploited, and from the very beginning he is characterised by his nationality, which encloses him inside a subaltern role with respect to the Italians.

In both these episodes, the trade exchanges significantly favour the Italians, while the Yugoslavs can merely accept the condition astutely imposed by the Italian crew. The difference between the two national groups is mainly proven on the common ground of the encounter. One group dictates the terms of trade, while the other, despite offering some verbal resistance, ultimately has no choice and ends up being outwitted by the Italians. While the Croat is depicted as lacking the ability to distinguish between quality and discarded products, the woodcutter is represented in despair from the beginning, with no choice but to accept the Italian's conditions. These encounters illustrate two different perspectives: the Italian one, equipped with both material and cultural tools to exploit the otherness to their advantage, and the Yugoslav perspective, which can only accept the conditions imposed upon them. Following Ania Loomba, within colonial discourse the mode of articulation of a racial difference also depends on the aim of the observer (2015: 117–18). Looking at Comisso's account, one might argue that he articulates the Yugoslavs' difference as a means to undermine their agency. In other words, by describing the Yugoslavs as different, yet at the same time ready to be exploited, the author accepts their presence within 'his' eastern Adriatic but, in doing so, he subjects them to Italian needs.

In Comisso's work, the Adriatic is a place created for the consumption of Italians, and within it, the otherness is relegated to a subaltern role. In the field of postcolonial studies, particularly in the works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha, and the Subaltern Studies Collective, the concept of subalternity plays a crucial role. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1985), Spivak explores the figure of the subaltern in terms of exclusion, arguing that this figure is defined by its exclusion from representation in 'both political and aesthetic senses' (Thomas 2018: 862–63). Within this framework, Spivak suggests that the subaltern is perpetually silenced by domination (Loomba 2015: 229–30) and focuses on the possibility of the postcolonial historian to recover the voice of the subaltern (Young

2004: 201–2). This definition and approach to the subaltern are challenging to coherently apply within an analysis of Comisso and in a context like the Adriatic of the 1920s. The geopolitical context did not entail traditional colonial domination, and this analysis aims to scrutinise the modes and patterns of representation of the otherness within the Italian imperialist discourse, while Spivak questions the very possibility of representation itself.

Furthermore, in Comisso's narrative, despite its limited agency, the otherness attempts to voice its resistance to Italian dominance. Within this context, the subaltern is not understandable through Spivak's framework, but does share some features with the theoretical construction of the concept as presented by Gramsci in Notebook 25. According to Gramsci, as Peter D. Thomas argues, the subaltern is included in the integral state in the sense that it is enclosed in its role within the state (2018: 863–64). Anne Freeland, in her analysis of the subaltern in Gramsci, argues that 'subalternity designates instrumentality, a lack of historical personhood and political autonomy, a greater degree of subjection to the laws of historical necessity' (2020: 196). Comisso represents the Yugoslavs in this specific manner – fulfilling the Italian crew's necessities and desires, without the capacity to escape their fate. They are not autonomous, as they tend to respond to the protagonist and his companions' requests. The laws of historical necessity, in the context of *Gente di mare*, are for instance exemplified by the Italian crew's ability to act indifferently toward the woodcutter's product and to successfully sell the berets that were previously rejected.

One might argue that this hierarchical representation could be attributed to social class differences between the two groups. Even though the vessel's crew is never portrayed as particularly wealthy, often relying on various stratagems to increase their income, it is conceivable that both the Croatian family and the woodcutter belong to less wealthy social groups. However, as Freeland asserts, the notion of subalternity is not synonymous with class, it is supplementary to it; the subaltern results in 'a category in which class is necessarily supplemented and traversed by other social conditions' (2020: 197–98). In the Adriatic space configured by Comisso, these other social conditions that contribute to the creation of a subaltern subject are related to the articulation of their national identity as different. Although trade interactions may suggest a class disparity between the two entities, which is not denied here, the author employs additional representations to suggest their subalternity. For example, the fact that the captain and the crew already knew in advance that the Croats would appreciate the berets, or the perception of the wedding gift as something not belonging to contemporaneity, are elements indicating that the relationship between Italians and Yugoslavs extends beyond mere dialectical interaction between entities from different social classes. Instead, it is characterised by asymmetry, as the author introduces various elements highlighting the Yugoslavs' inferiority.

Within Comisso's ability to envision an Adriatic with a subaltern subject lies the fundamental difference between him and the other two authors explored thus far. Based on the textual examples provided, both Marpicati and Dei Gaslini construct an Adriatic through Fascist and imperialist discursive patterns, in order to exclude the Yugoslavs from this space. For these two authors, the Adriatic must be Italian, and when crossing it they encounter another piece of the motherland which is entirely Italian. A Yugoslav otherness, inside this whole, is perceived as a contagion, an enemy to expel from the area. In contrast, Comisso constructs an Adriatic that is nationally heterogeneous, and this heterogeneity does not pose a problem. In his encounters with the Yugoslavs, Comisso does not find a dangerous and uncivil enemy, but rather a subaltern subject that accommodates his needs. For Comisso, crossing the Adriatic is not merely a journey to a place that he can possess, but also an encounter with a national entity that he perceives as hierarchically subordinate, and he behaves accordingly.

Comisso thus describes dialogues between himself and Yugoslavs that are non-conflictual. For instance, the only encounter that does not involve trade is when they arrive at the island of Novalja, and the author goes fishing with two young local boys named Vieco and Ante. The description of their day together, including sailing, and fishing, and the relationship the author forms with them, seem to contradict the discourse he employs about the Yugoslavs. However, several factors must be considered. First, this encounter is between an adult man and two children, possibly resulting in less pronounced national characterisation and allowing the author to express paternalistic feelings. Secondly, the language barrier between the author and the children is significant. The author notes:

> 'I due non capivano e dovetti spiegarmi a gesti; sorridevano in uno sforzo d'intelligenza e continuavano a tenere le mani immerse, strette alla rete.' (Comisso 2002a: 300–301)

Language remains a barrier throughout the episode, preventing them from speaking directly, with the author observing them from outside. During the return trip, they try to enhance the communication:

> 'Continuò a parlarmi in slavo sicuro che lo potessi comprendere, ma non era possibile. Allora con tutte e due le mani modellò attorno al suo corpo la forma di una donna e con gesti espressivi mi fece capire che voleva sapere se ero ammogliato.[42] […] Le parole […]

[42] This is one of the very few times that the theme of marriage surfaces in the sources analysed. Consequently, there is not much evidence to develop an understanding of it based on these sources. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that, at the time of this text's publication, Fascism had not yet implemented racial laws. Indeed, marriage between Slovene women and Italian men was somehow supported by the regime within the logic of assimilation (Cattaruzza 2016: 136).

ormai erano comprensibili sull'orlo delle nostre pupille. Ogni pensiero era subito inteso come tra amici stretti da tempo.' (Comisso 2002a: 302–3)

The gestures were able to overcome and cancel out the distance between each other, suggesting a shift towards a more genuine relationship among friends. However, upon returning to the land and sharing the fish among them, Comisso says: 'Non volevo, cercai di spiegare che ero andato con loro solo per divertirmi' (Comisso 2002a: 303). This statement aligns with the initial empathy the author felt toward the boys, motivating him to join them for fishing (Comisso 2002a: 298). The pillar around which this event revolves is the author's decision to go with them, subsequently finding a peer relation with Ante and Vieco. However, this relationship took off only when the two Yugoslavs abandoned their language and started to explain themselves through gestures. The final sentence quoted here reveals that he was not there for fishing; rather, for Comisso, this was just entertainment. Despite the author positioning himself sympathetically, the primary concept underpinning his encounter with the Yugoslavs remains consistent with his previous portrayal – the Yugoslavs can participate in the author's enjoyment at his discretion, but they end up being part of the amusement itself, rather than autonomous people.

Despite the differing roles attributed to the Yugoslavs, Comisso's conception of them is not substantially different from that of Dei Gaslini and Marpicati. He employs a representative discourse which denies them any autonomous existence, and at the same time precludes a proper involvement in the Italian sphere. Comisso accepts the presence of the otherness but denies it agency, beyond serving Italian needs. In other words, the otherness does not challenge the territorial appropriations but exists on the margins, to be exploited and used by Italians. Comisso's otherness is simultaneously completely subjected to Italian influence and aligned with the literary construction of the Adriatic previously analysed. The captain's attitude in the storm, as well as in negotiation with the woodcutter, illustrate this approach: in both situations he is self-confident about his ability to master the situation and achieve his goal from the very beginning. In both cases, the situation unfolds in accordance with his expectations. Comisso's geographical space is one where he exercises agency, and he and his friends are the sole entities with this capacity. The other people who existed in this reality, if they had a different nationality, were subjected to their agency. Comisso seems to imagine an Adriatic where he can create a porous margin to locate a subaltern subject that can be exploited and used, representing nothing more than an exploited reality. The subjectivity and agency of the subaltern do not exist in Comisso's Adriatic, and the edge of the margin is a shifting border that can include or exclude the otherness to its liking.

3. Federzoni's Dalmatia: From Nationalism to Fascism

The previous sections have focused on authors who represented Dalmatia as a territory that, despite having a strong Yugoslav presence, would eventually become Italian. Dalmatia, as we have seen in the texts by Dei Gaslini and Marpicati, was already perceived as entering a Fascist political and historical perspective due to its Italianness even before the Italian invasion in April 1941 (Gobetti 2018). After the annexation, Luigi Federzoni (1878 - 1967), one of the most important figures of the early Fascist period, who was the first minister of the colonies under Mussolini, wrote an account of the territory that looks at the period before and during the rule of Fascist Italy. Federzoni was an intellectual and a journalist in his youth, mainly working for the newspapers *Il Resto del Carlino* and *Giornale d'Italia*. He published books on art criticism, humorous novels, three comedies, and various novels inspired by D'Annunzio and Alfredo Oriani. Oriani had a deep influence on Federzoni's political activity, which became his main occupation with the foundation of the ANI (Associazione Nazionalistica Italiana). Federzoni expressed his political engagement primarily through journalistic work, conducting investigations to demonstrate the Italianness of various territories, such as Lake Garda and Dalmatia. Federzoni's journalism leaned toward the imperialistic, far right positions and supported the ANI's orientation towards far right movements. He entered parliament in 1913 with a Nationalist list that aligned with the far right of the political spectrum and was eventually involved in Mussolini's government, where he was appointed Minister of the Colonies. After this, Federzoni became the Minister of Domestic Affairs and, at the end of his mandate in 1928, he became a senator until 1939. Furthermore, he played a prominent role in the development of Fascist culture, becoming the director of 'Nuova Antologia' and president of *Accademia d'Italia*, two institutions that were crucial in supporting the regime. After the regime's collapse, he faced legal proceedings, was initially condemned, and later amnestied, allowing him to spend his final years in Italy (Albertina 1995). Federzoni was a significant personality within Fascist culture and politics, studied mainly for his support of Italian irredentism (Monzali 2007: 79–80) and his role as Minister of the Colonies (Ryan 2015).

His journalistic work has also received some scholarly attention. In her work on Italian imperialism in the Aegean, McGuire highlights the importance of Federzoni's *L'Italia nell'Egeo* (1913) in understanding the discourses and representation evoked by Italian intellectuals to celebrate the annexation of the Dodecanese. According to McGuire, Federzoni interpreted the annexation of the Dodecanese islands as an act of liberation from the Ottomans, asserting that 'Italy would be an ideal ruler, uniquely positioned to understand and reinstate the importance of Greece's ancient past' (McGuire 2020: 75). During his Aegean tour, Federzoni enthusiastically celebrated Italian victories,

diverting attention from the difficult situation in Libya and reassuring Italian readers that landing in Rhodes was akin to arriving on Italian homeland. He argued that the 'eastern question' in Greece should be solved through further Italian expansionism in the Aegean (McGuire 2020: 75–76). In this context – with Federzoni describing the Dodecanese in a way that served nationalist and imperialistic claims – his publication *L'Ora della Dalmazia* becomes interesting. In 1941, at the request of the editor Zanichelli, Federzoni published a collection of his articles written for *Giornale d'Italia* about Dalmatia after his 1910 visit to the region. To this corpus of articles he added a final document after the annexation of the territory in 1941. This document is particularly interesting as it allows for an analysis of the testimony of one of the most important Italian authorities in irredentist and Fascist culture, offering an account by the same person of these territories before and after the Italian conquest. The text provides useful insights into how the territory was initially constructed to align with nationalist and irredentist claims that Federzoni actively supported, and how these territories were described from a Fascist perspective.

3.1. Italianness Outside Italy

The first articles in the collection are based on notes from Federzoni's journey in Dalmatia in 1910, which he published between 1910 and 1925. In these texts, the author describes the area through nationalistic and irredentist patterns and claims. Federzoni's articles thus exhibit many similarities with the works of D'Annunzio, Benini, Marpicati and Ratti, which we have already analysed in the second chapter. Common literary themes and motifs recur in these authors' writings, such as portraying Dalmatians as faithful, or describing the inhabitants of the region as hoping for an Italian victory in Lissa. Federzoni examines Dalmatia through three main themes: the Italianness of Dalmatia, accusations against the Yugoslavs, and a portrayal of the relationship between Yugoslavs and Italians as conflictual. In the following section, these themes will be briefly analysed, focusing on the narrative patterns used by Federzoni to support his political discourse about Dalmatia.

The Italianness of Dalmatia, as previously seen, was a common feature highlighted by most Italian authors when describing Dalmatia in the first half of the 20th century. Federzoni employs nationalistic arguments, emphasising the region's imperial history to demonstrate its Italianness. For instance, he argues that the entire region bore the imprint of Roman and Venetian history (Federzoni 1941: 47), or that Venetian rule had generated wealth and glory for Dalmatian cities. Federzoni attempts to place the region's past within an Italian framework, depicting the empires as having imbued these territories with their Italianness. Alongside historical arguments, the articles describe the territory as Italian using geographic elements. For example, Federzoni notes how:

> ‘Si suole riconoscere dai più che la Dalmazia indiscutibilmente italiana per la sua positura e per la sua configurazione naturale, per la tradizione della storia e della cultura, non meno che per le ragioni imperiose della vita economica, […] senza comunicazioni col retroterra balcanico.’ (Federzoni 1941: 8)

This quote uses a geographic notion to assert that the territory was naturally aligned with Italy, rather than being a piece of land connected to the Balkans. The proximity between Italy and Dalmatia was also acknowledged by other authors of the same cultural milieu, such as D’Annunzio, who in his early work *Novelle della Pescara* illustrates how close the two shores of the Adriatic were, and how Dalmatia was a familiar space for people living on the Western Adriatic seaside (D’Annunzio 1992: 79-369). Federzoni believed that Dalmatia’s ‘natural configuration’ confirmed its Italian identity, enabling cultural, historical, and commercial connections on the sea between Dalmatia and Italy. This concept is reiterated in another article, where Federzoni emphasises that: ‘Tutta la vita della Dalmazia, infatti, si esplica sul mare […] il mare la avvicina naturalmente alla penisola italiana’ (Federzoni 1941: 53). As previously noted, the Adriatic was perceived, by authors like Marpicati and Dei Gaslini, as an ‘inland sea’ in the sense of a territorial sea that can be controlled. In this context, Federzoni shares a similar perspective on the Adriatic as a geographic feature that reveals something about the territory’s nationality. The notion of an ‘inland sea’, as constructed by Abulafia (Horden and Purcell 2006), could be applied more broadly here, not only to conceive the Adriatic as a sea with intense trade exchange between the two sides but also as a space through which to construct a national character. Federzoni represents the Adriatic as an actor that provides a geographic connection between Italy and Dalmatia, one deep enough to ensure that Dalmatia is an appendix of Italian territory, and a place where Italians can exist as if in Italy and, at the same time, express the imperialistic features of their national identity, features legitimated by the historical and imperial exchanges between the two shores.

While representing the region as Italian, Federzoni does not ignore the fact that the majority of Dalmatian inhabitants had Yugoslav origins. However, he represents the Yugoslavs as the barbarous and aggressive enemies of the Italian population in the region, labelling them as Italophobic. Federzoni argues that Yugoslavs lacked a distinct culture, with all their books being mere translations of Italian works (Federzoni 1941: 9), and he deems their language artificial. Elaborating on these concepts, Federzoni aimed to challenge and discredit the notion of Yugoslavia as a nation. For example, in describing a Yugoslav poet, Ivan Gundulic, Federzoni writes:

> ‘Due prinicpi […] sono bastati ad assicurare al poeta la venerazione della “Narod”: l’unità

> etnica e morale di tutti gli Slavi e l'indipendenza totale degli Slavi balcanici. Si può ragionevolmente contestare la possibilità di attuazione di questo secondo postulato e, più ancora, il fondamento obiettivo del primo.' (Federzoni 1941: 11)

In this quote, the author suggests that it is impossible for the Yugoslavs to establish themselves as a nation. By emphasising the absence of a unique national feature among the Yugoslavs, Federzoni aims to underscore the legitimacy of Italian rule over the region, asserting that Italians were the only proper nation aiming to rule over the territory. Federzoni indirectly claims that Italian is the sole national character present in the area, while the Yugoslavs are:

> 'Plebi rurali che in Dalmazia per la loro selvatica ignoranza non hanno nè ebbero mai […] una coscienza nazionale di qualsiasi specie?' (Federzoni 1941: 104)

Federzoni seems to sustain an idea of the national character as something immanent in a determined population, not as a construct but rather a natural feature. Holding this idea provides the author with a further legitimising tool to assert the rightfulness of the Italian prevalence in the territory: the national character. While other authors expressed the inferiority of the Yugoslavs compared to Italians, Federzoni directly denies the existence of a national character among the Yugoslavs, arguing that their lack of literary history unequivocally denies them a national identity and, therefore, any rights over Dalmatia.

Federzoni presents the contact between Yugoslavs and Italians as conflictual. He affirms at various times how Italianness was fighting an epic battle for its self-determination (Federzoni 1941: 20), and how this battle was unfair because the Yugoslavs had many more instruments and help from the Austrian government, while the Italian authorities did not help the Italians who lived there. The description of this conflict in Federzoni's articles also assumed a class dimension, as how the two different communities were described also underlined their different wealth and origins. It is historically acknowledged that, despite being a minority, the Italian communities in Dalmatia were the wealthier part of Dalmatian society and direct descendants of the Venetian patriciate (Cattaruzza 2016: 7–10). The author uses this fact to highlight the difference between the two populations in this way:

> 'I contadini rozzi, senza storia, senza lingua letteraria, senza esperienza di traffici marittimi, forti del proprio numero e della propria ingenua fede […] là dove esse [the Yugoslav masses] sono maggioranza, come in Dalmazia, la costituzione […] dà agli inferiori la possibilità di divenire in breve tempo i padroni.' (Federzoni 1941: 41)

Federzoni locates the conflict between the two populations in an unequal frame in which, for the Yugoslav people, it is impossible to be considered equal to the Italians. In this quote, the author deploys the concept of Yugoslav inferiority as something that could not be recognised by institutions, as the constitution would lead them to prevail in the elections, but which nonetheless remains true and recognisable when evaluating the national features of the two groups. The Yugoslavs were peasants, while the Italians belonged to the urban bourgeoisie; the Yugoslavs do not have a history,[43] while Italy has a rich history; the Yugoslavs cannot trade on the sea and, in previous articles, he had already sustained how the sea bonded Italy and Dalmatia together.

The dichotomy between rural Yugoslavs and urbanised Italians became a recurrent theme in Italian literature about the area, from the works of Ruggero Timeus and Attilio Tamaro. Marta Verginella argues how this dualism acquired a meaning that goes beyond mere demographical observation, conflating the civil with the urban and the uncivil with the rural (Verginella 2008). Federzoni is no exception, and within this derogatory description of the Yugoslavs, the Italians emerge as the only entity capable of being the legitimate and proper ruler of the area. Federzoni constructs an image of Italian national character as being capable of bringing culture and civilisation to the region, labelling it with various qualities that would prove the necessity of Italian dominion over Dalmatia. The author regards the fact that the Yugoslavs outnumber the Italians as meaningless in relation to Italian wealth, culture and history. Therefore, despite a conflictual representation of the relationship between Italians and Yugoslavs, Federzoni's interest is not related to constructing a nationally homogeneous region, but rather to establishing a clear hierarchy between the two entities. Similar to what could be understood from Comisso's description of the Yugoslavs, Federzoni adopts a perspective that does not need to locate the local population outside the borders of the region, yet claims an Italian superiority which is, from his perspective, a given. The articulation of this concept becomes particularly interesting when Federzoni describes the Italian invasion of Dalmatia and its subsequent effects on the region.

3.2. A Fascist Society for Everybody?

When Italy invaded the Yugoslavian kingdom in April 1941, only 9% of the population in Dalmatia was Italian. In the other territories annexed through the same military action, this percentage was even lower (Gobetti 2013: 15–16). Federzoni does not ignore this proportion, and in describing Dalmatia after the Italian invasion of Yugoslavia, he deploys a series of frames through which to interpret the

[43] A concept also stated in Dei Gaslini's text (1929: 9).

relationship between Yugoslavs and Italians in the new geopolitical situation. These frames provide further insight into how the discursive representation of the relationship between Italian and Yugoslavian identities functioned.

On May 18th, 1941, Federzoni wrote the last article of this collection, entitled 'La Pace Adriatica' (The Adriatic Peace). Within the article, he does not abandon his previous ideas about Yugoslavia, reiterating in the first lines how the construction of Yugoslavia was an anti-Italian move, orchestrated by the United States, France and Great Britain (Federzoni 1941: 153). Nevertheless, at the same time, the author accounts for a structural change in the relationship between the two shores of the Adriatic. The first sign of this change is given by the title, which immediately evokes a pacification. Federzoni had already addressed the concept of peace in the first articles of the collection, where he affirms how 'pace è parola priva di senso in queste terre del dolore e dell'odio' (Federzoni 1941: 72). Nevertheless, in 'La pace adriatica' peace has a completely different meaning, showing that peace on the Adriatic was eventually achieved, and the article tries to explain how that was possible. Federzoni describes the new phase of the relationship between Italy and the eastern Adriatic through some typical rhetorical elements of Fascist discourse. These elements aim to glorify Fascism and illustrate how its arrival revolutionised the connections between the two Adriatic coasts.

Federzoni underlines Fascism's successes and the improvements that it brought to Italy through two main strategies: first, he compares it with Liberal Italy, highlighting how the politicians of the Liberal period sacrificed the Italian people of Dalmatia to maintain the friendship between Rome and Belgrade. Mussolini, instead, 'salvò nazionalmente Fiume, il 27 gennaio 1924 con l'annessione' (Federzoni 1941: 158). This article portrays Mussolini as the saviour of the Italian nation, a person capable of defending the Italian interests even in territories like Rijeka, originally located outside the Italian border but which were perceived as Italian. Second, Federzoni provides an exaltation of certain crucial features in the discourse deployed by Fascism to describe itself. The author glorifies the ability of the Fascist regime to fulfil national territorial aspirations (1941: 156), which had been frustrated for decades and were only achieved within Fascism, with its palingenetic quality. Moreover, Federzoni underlines the speed of Mussolini's action against Yugoslavia (1941: 153) and the salvific meaning of this action for Dalmatia itself (1941: 162). The achievement of peace between the two sides of the Adriatic, and the subsequent splitting of the region between the newborn Croatian state and Italy, for Federzoni represents a victory of the Roman and Christian civilisation, and is depicted as:

'sarà durevole, fra due popoli, due idiomi, due culture, aventi una stessa fonte di civiltà:

> la Roma di Cesare e di Cristo. […] La Dalmazia assumerà una funzione essenziale per la reciproca comprensione e la più stretta cooperazione fra i due paesi.' (Federzoni 1941: 167)

This quote functions on two levels: it legitimises the Croatian state as an interlocutor for Italy, whereas, as previously explored, Yugoslavia was not. It also provides a Fascist frame for achieving peace in the Adriatic. Federzoni assigns to the Croatians features he denied them when they were unified as a Yugoslav country. In describing the Croatians as a population with not only a language, one of the most important features in imagining a nation (Anderson 2016: 84–85), but also a culture, Federzoni legitimates their authority, asserting that they share the origin of their civilisation with Italy.

Federzoni also mentions a religious element as the source of civilisation for both Italy and Croatia, which could be interpreted as an attempt to differentiate Croatia from Serbia, which is consistently depicted as the real enemy of Italy (1941: 154). On a second level, this quote fabricates a Fascist frame through which to read and locate the achievement of peace and the new relationship between Croatia and Italy. The evocation of a common Roman heritage and a new role for Dalmatia articulate this Fascist frame. Federzoni represents the Roman past of Dalmatia as proof of its Italianness; labelling both Italy and Croatia as products of Rome is thus coherent with the image of a newly pacified Adriatic. This discourse reiterates, on one side, the association between the Roman Empire and Fascism. On the other side, it proposes a series of patterns regarding the Roman heritage of the place, which were already part of the Italian discourse about the Adriatic, like the analysis made in the first chapter about Mantegazza and in the second about Speraz and D'Annunzio has shown. Meanwhile, foreseeing a primary role for Italian Dalmatia in the newly pacified context echoes the ability of Fascism to enhance changes and dynamism, creating the condition for a new stage, or a new era, of the relationship in the Adriatic. Once it has been established that the invasion allowed the author to differentiate his judgement between different groups of Yugoslavs, accepting Croatia as civil and reiterating the barbarism of Serbia, it is necessary to further question how the relationship between Italy and Croatia was constructed, and how the latter was imagined inside this relationship.

In describing how the Croatian state was now an ally of Italy, Federzoni gives a crucial role to the figure of Ante Pavelić. Pavelić was the founder of the Ustascia, a Fascist political group which was economically supported by Italy between 1925 and 1934 (Gobetti 2013: 9–14). The Italian institutions provided him with logistical support when he was wanted by the Yugoslav police, training for the members of his group, and assistance in organising terroristic attacks against the Yugoslav authorities (Conti 2008: 15–20). As a consequence, Pavelić was a figure who was well–known and approved

by Italian political authorities. Federzoni addresses him as follows:

> ‘Uomo di severa indole, risoluto nell’agire, ma riflessivo ed equilibrato nel decidere, egli rappresenta un tipo umano ben diverso dal temperamento infantilmente impulsivo e irresponsabile dei facinorosi che dominavano […] l’ambiente governativo. Pavelic non è e non vuole essere un balcanico.’ (Federzoni 1941: 155)

The author praises Pavelić’s personality, as he seems to be much different from the previous rulers of the region. Federzoni describes him only through compliments and, by enunciating his qualities, he provides a disavowal of the geographical area that Pavelić belongs to. The author denies him his origin, asserting that this man has nothing to do with the Balkans. The denial of Pavelić’s origins shows a racist representation of the Balkans’ populations, which are depicted as childish, irascible and impulsive, following various stereotypes that were circulating in Western Europe about the Balkans (Todorova 2009: 183–217).

However, through this process of denial, he indirectly affirms how the relationship between Italy and Croatia would not have been possible with someone of the same origins. Pavelić was formed in Italy, he was heading a Fascist party that took its inspiration from Italian Fascism and its (putative) revolution; as a consequence, he is not a regular person from the Balkans. Rather, the Italian experience allowed Pavelić to escape the typical qualities of those with his origin. This denial has a positive value and acquires a further dimension when Federzoni describes the relationship between Pavelić and Italy:

> ‘Ante Pavelic, […] conosceva l’Italia ed era in grado di valutarne la civiltà e la potenza. […] Il suo programma ha un alto contenuto politico ed etico, ed è l’organizzazione della sua patria nello Stato; è la creazione di questo nuovo Stato, secondo i principi ormai collaudati dall’esperienza storica delle Potenze totalitarie, con gli opportuni adattamenti al carattere e alla struttura sociale di un popolo contadino.’ (Federzoni 1941: 154–55)

Federzoni bestows upon Pavelić the ability to understand the scale and power of Italian civilisation, and on this basis, he would be able to project the organisation of the state of Croatia based on totalitarian experiences. The agreements that followed the collapse of the Yugoslav kingdom established an Italian king, from the Savoy family, as king of Croatia, and Aimone d’Aosta was chosen. He was, however, never interested in being king, and did not exercise any kind of regal power (Gobetti 2013: 20–21). Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember this arrangement because it can help us to add a further element in understanding Federzoni’s praise for Pavelić’s attempt to construct a nation state.

This would not only be a state modelled on the totalitarian model that Pavelić learned in Italy, but would also have been a formal nation state under an Italian authority.

This concept of Croatia constructing itself within an Italian frame is reiterated in a sentence further on in the quote, where Federzoni praises the attempt, also because it will adopt the 'opportuni adattamenti al carattere e alla struttura sociale di un popolo contadino' (1941: 155). The author is essentially affirming how Pavelić's project is worthy for two reasons: he was taking as a model the totalitarian experiment of Fascism; and he recognised the real nature of his country as rural, being related to agriculture. To recognise Croatia as a country made by peasants has a specific political meaning in the economy of the discourse deployed about the eastern Adriatic by Italian authors in previous years. This political meaning is related to the difference in class between the Yugoslavs and Italians in Dalmatia, where the former were represented as peasants and thus inferior to the latter. Pavelić's political action is here discursively located in the role that the Italian discourse was claiming for Yugoslavs: the role of the peasants. Therefore, it is possible to argue that Federzoni saw in the newborn Croatian state an entity that was able to recognise the advantages of a Fascist society, but also to remain in its place – to not pretend to achieve Italian levels, but rather recognise its nature as rural. Moreover, this praise of Croatian Fascism reiterates the historical relationship between urban centres and rural peripheries, often emphasized in the texts analysed in this work. This relationship allocates Italians to the urban, civilised context and the Yugoslavs to the rural, uncivilized countryside. It serves to establish and demonstrate the existence of national hierarchies within the same territory, and it also suggests a way to include the Croatian Fascist state within Italian Fascist imperialism, an inclusion organized around a spatial division between centre and periphery. This inclusion based on a spatial division was not an original invention elaborated during the Fascist period. Instead, it was a recurring theme in the irredentist discourse since the late nineteenth century, a theme that assigns the urban centre the right to rule over the countryside, as the latter is perceived to lack the means to guarantee its own wealth and growth (Chiarandini 2022: 23).[44]

To conclude, in this text Federzoni provides an image of Dalmatia and the relationship between Italians and Yugoslavs that changed over time. In the beginning, it was dominated by the rep-

[44] However, on a practical political level, Italian authorities had to adapt to German necessities and plans for Croatia. The Italians tried to enter into trade agreements and articulate an economic expansion in Croatia but with very limited successes (Rodogno 2006: 244 -248).

resentation of a constant struggle between Italian civilisation and Yugoslav barbarism; after the invasion, the picture of Dalmatia and the relationship between Italy and Croatia changed structurally. It is worth noting that this change occurred due to the split among the Yugoslavians, between Croatians and Serbians; Federzoni labels the latter with most of the derogatory adjectives used to describe the Yugoslavs as a whole, while the former are spared these descriptions. Furthermore, within the Adriatic peace described in the article, there is little space for the Serbians; they are only mentioned as the true enemy of Italy, but most of the Serbian territory was controlled by Germany, therefore the Serbian presence does not represent something that Federzoni had to confront. Nevertheless, it is interesting to look at how the author featured the concept of peace and the Italo-Croatian relationship connected to it. This article shows how Ante Pavelić, for the author, represents the merging of Fascism's principles, as he was organising the state based on totalitarianism, with the acceptance of the role that Italian stereotypes labelled over the Yugoslav population in Dalmatia.

The decisive element in the transformation of the Dalmatian situation and the improvement of the relationship between Italy and Croatia can be found in Fascism. It is Fascism that provided Italy the chance to demonstrate, on a practical level (with the invasion of Yugoslavia), the common Roman origins between Croatia and Italy. It is also within the Fascist frame that Croatia, through Pavelić, was developing as a state. Federzoni delineates a pacific frame that is thus caused by Dalmatia's inclusion within Italian borders, and because the Croatian leader was developing a Fascist state, with the awareness of the limits of his population. Fascism thus emerges as the regime of truth, the element capable of providing a coherent frame in which to locate the repetition of the stereotype about Croatia.

In this context, the model of colonial discourse and representation of the colonised subject theorised by Bhabha is particularly useful: the construction of a colonial stereotype is based on an ambivalent process of recognition of difference and its disavowal (Bhabha 2004: 94–103). Looking at how Federzoni constructed the image of Croatia and Dalmatia, pacified and on good terms with Italy, this process is shown quite clearly: the different nature of Croatians, or Yugoslavs, from Italians, is at the same time recognised and undermined. For instance, Pavelić has to contrast typical Balkan characteristics in order to be recognised by Federzoni as a good person, and yet these systematic differences between Balkan people and Italians eventually disappear when the author glorifies the common origins between Croatia and Italy. In this context, the semantic frame that makes this process of recognition and disavowal possible is Fascism's idea of society and imaginary. It is the arrival of Fascism that created a (putative) new scenario, making it possible to live during a time when national claims are fulfilled. When looking at this text, it is thus possible to argue that it was Fascist rhetoric

that provided the author with the necessary tools to involve, with a putative coherence, a part of the Yugoslav otherness within the Italian and Fascist frames.

To understand this productive and revolutionary function of Fascism's discourse, it is useful to look at how Comisso configures the relationship with the Yugoslavs. Both Federzoni and Comisso eventually accept, in their vision of the Adriatic, the contact between Italians and Yugoslavs. Comisso achieved this by fabricating a subalternity, one that must be constantly maintained (the vessel's crew constantly addresses them using pejorative adjectives while the subaltern tries to propose resistance), and which fulfils its role of being subjected to Italian actions and needs.

Federzoni, on the other hand, shows how the acceptance of Fascist civilisation would allow a barbaric population to redeem itself and recognise the role that the author wanted it to occupy as its own. The productive force of Fascism, within these examples, relies on the opposite perspective that these authors assign to the national otherness that shares the Adriatic space with them. While Comisso ascribes them a specific function, Federzoni glorifies the work of Pavelić in constructing a new state, which would lead Croatia towards a Fascist and totalitarian society. The different perspectives of the two subjects rely on the possibility, for Federzoni's Croatia, to achieve its own dimension within Fascist society. In other words, the palingenetic quality of Fascism allows the author to literarily create a reality in which the Croatians are, at the same time, following their path towards a Fascist society and acknowledging the value of Italian civilisation within the Adriatic. The creative power of Fascism allows the author to construct an Adriatic reality which could simultaneously sound appealing to the Croatians and reinforce Italy's value as the metropole of the entire Adriatic region.

4. Conclusions

To conclude, Comisso, Dei Gaslini, Marpicati and Federzoni deployed their visions of the Adriatic and the relationships between the various nationalities. Their discourses revolve around the perception of the Adriatic as a space controlled by the Italians and the need to establish a structural differentiation between Italian and Yugoslav identities. This differentiation involves the disavowal of the latter by means of a parallel delineation of Italy as the legitimate owner of the region. The discourses employed in these texts began to exhibit traces of eschatological thoughts concerning the future of the Italian nation and its relationship with the eastern Adriatic. Although Italy, before 1941, maintained control over a few cities and islands along the eastern Adriatic coast, these authors did not hesitate to represent the entire region as being under their complete control. They implied different notions in deploying these representations, but all of them incorporated the entire region under their mastery, which they describe as a collective feature of the Italian nation. Marpicati, Dei Gaslini and

Federzoni openly claimed it, while Comisso depicted his companions – all Italians – as being capable of controlling the eastern Adriatic reality.

Nevertheless, the presence of the Yugoslav otherness created a question of identity and homogeneity in the representation of this collective mastery, and the authors addressed this issue through different strategies: Dei Gaslini and Marpicati both foresee a future in which Italy will be the master of the entire region, but they do not place the Yugoslavs within this vision. Meanwhile, in their process of Italianisation of the Adriatic, Comisso and Federzoni do not completely exclude the national otherness. However, they do not negotiate the differences between Italians and Yugoslavs, which remain unchallenged in all the texts. Even when the Croats were integrated into Fascism's perspective, as in Federzoni's case, they were not assimilated; instead, they accepted the rural role assigned to them by the Italians.

Furthermore, within these texts, it is possible to understand the productive power of Fascist discourse in supporting and amplifying the heterogeneous arguments that these authors deployed to sustain the Italian imperialist stance in the Adriatic. For example, Dei Gaslini's text illustrates how, while in Italy Fascism was able to cultivate a religion of the state by adapting and revitalising certain collective beliefs of the Christian religion (Burdett 2010a: 4–5), in a contested and nationally diverse space like the Adriatic, the organicist conception of the state could instead be useful to assert the complete exclusion of the otherness from the designated territory (Griffin 2012: 6–7). Alternatively, Fascism's palingenetic capability enables Federzoni to consistently celebrate the new relationship between Italy and Croatia as a triumph of Roman civilisation, even though in previous years he had portrayed the Yugoslavs as the uncivilised enemies of Italy. In this context, the functionality of Fascism's discourse relies on its ability to discursively create a reality in which the nation becomes a sacred, organic whole that cannot tolerate any national otherness within its borders. Nevertheless, the adoption of a Fascist government allows the former enemies to be coherently recognised as heirs of the same civilisation as Italy. Fascism's concept of society thus generated various discursive tools that offered additional frameworks for interpreting reality and legitimising Italian imperialist ambitions.

There is one last element to examine regarding the question of authority. All these authors articulate a hierarchical relationship between Italians and Yugoslavs, and within this articulation all of them exercise, or aim to exercise, a form of authority over the Yugoslavs. This authority could necessitate an exclusion of the Yugoslavs from a semantic or geographic field. Alternatively, authority may entail an unfair trade agreement, as we have seen in Comisso's case, or the acknowledgement of Fascist Italy as the political model to follow, as in Federzoni's. In 'Signs Taken for Wonders' (Bhabha

2004: 145–74), Homi Bhabha analyses and questions colonial authority, understanding it as an authoritative system of distinction and difference imposed by the colonial intervention (Ginsburg 2009). Bhabha locates the creation of hybridity within this system, understanding it as a process that is barely avoidable, a feature able to 'display the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination' (Bhabha 2004: 159). Following Deridda's construction of difference, Bhabha traces the origin of hybridity in the 'disjunction produced within the act of enunciation' of the colonial power (Bhabha 2004: 153). The essay contends that the colonial moment establishes a clear binary distinction between the coloniser, who holds authority, and the colonised, who is subjected to authority. The former exercises their authority through signs and symbols that have meaning and are intelligible to the latter only due to the colonial encounter (Mishra 2022). This communication between the two colonial identities, which is inevitable within any colonial domination, allows the colonised to mimic and repeat these symbols. However, in Bhabha's view, mimicry does not recreate the same symbol, but rather generates something new: the hybrid.

This chapter employed Said's conventional and standardised articulation of the dynamic between coloniser and colonised to understand the dynamics of power foreseen by these authors in their description of Dalmatia, which served to help understand their perspectives and conclusions. However, for Comisso and Federzoni, who perceived their authority as continuously functioning even in a hybrid space, Bhabha's concept of hybridity could help us to understand the productivity of how they exercised colonial power. While Marpicati and Dei Gaslini argue for the necessity of a single colonial moment that would expel the Yugoslavs from the Italian Adriatic, Comisso and Federzoni exercise colonial power through their texts. Comisso's text creates the conditions for hybridity; the poor judgement of the Croatian man who views the berets as high quality serves as an example of this. The man wanted to dress in high quality Italian products, reflecting an unequal relationship between the two groups. He further asserts that he can recognise this quality, which he sees in the products that have been discarded by Italians. The Croatian man's sense of taste could signify the hybridity of the colonial subject, who perceives the need to emulate the Italians but, when the moment arrives, articulates this emulation in his own way. Furthermore, in his portrayal of Yugoslav subalternity, Comisso displays ambivalent attitudes toward other hybrid elements. For instance, when the two young boys try to give him his portion of fish, he refuses, indirectly rejecting the meaning they assigned to that day. Moreover, in the episode with the woodcutter, it is the captain who initiates using the Yugoslav language, not the other way around.

Therefore, it is possible to argue that in his construction of the Adriatic, Comisso understands the creation of hybridity, yet with a clearly colonial function. For example, the appreciation of berets

not only symbolises the man's hybrid taste but also the possibility of profiting from it. Comisso thus posits a hybridity that is both functional and coherent with the Adriatic as a space where the Italian subject can find a subaltern entity. In contrast, Federzoni praises Pavelić's hybrid character, influenced by Italy, and his willingness to emulate Italian Fascism, which makes him alien to the Balkan stereotype and commendable from Federzoni's perspective. The culmination of Pavelić's hybridity lies in the creation of a Fascist Croatia, a state that would follow and emulate the model of Fascist Italy while articulating it in its own way. The depiction of this process does not imply a traditional colonial relationship between Italy and Croatia, but rather that the specific power structure adopted, alongside the formal subjection of Croatia to an Italian king, allows for the analysis of this relationship using this concept.

Bhabha argues that 'hybridity represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification – a disturbing questioning of the images and presence of authority' (Bhabha 2004: 162). However, the hybrid nature of Pavelić and the Croatian regime he was constructing does not evoke such feelings in Federzoni's writing. Nor is this the case in Comisso's texts, but he does depict these hybrid relationships without praise. In contrast, Federzoni consistently approves the Croatian Fascist project. Federzoni's reaction to Croatian hybridity can be attributed to two elements: first, the fact that this hybridity pushed Croatians toward their rural nature, which may be reassuring from Federzoni's perspective; and second, the choice to follow a path towards the construction of a Fascist society, demonstrating their recognition of Italy as a political model to follow.

This analysis does not seek to diminish the subversive value of Bhabha's hybridity, but rather aims to explore how Fascism, as an ideology that would lead a specific nation towards specific objectives, in its repeatability in a context that was formally subjected to Italian authority, provides elements that offer reassurance and escape the contradictions of traditional colonial forms of domination. Fascism's discourse creates a perspective for Italian observers in which it is possible, for a given nation, to follow its path toward greatness and modernity while simultaneously submitting to Italian authority. Analysing Federzoni, it becomes evident how Fascism allows for the possibility of differentiation within the process of its repetition. Croatia, inspired by Italy's example, attempted to implement Fascism within its borders. Fascism, in Federzoni's view, is the factor that empowered Italy to conquer the Balkans, and thus results in it being a symbol of Italian authority. Consequently, Croatian Fascism can be understood as a reiteration of this symbol of authority. Within this process, the symbol takes on a specific shape that renders it functional in the Croatian context. From

Federzoni's perspective, this adaptation of Fascism, from its original form to its Croatian interpretation, is not a cause for concern. Instead, it further binds Croatia to Italy. Based on this text, Fascism itself, as a form of religion of the state, seems to embrace the possibility of hybridity to expand further from the borders of Italy.

Chapter IV

Adriatic Fascism

The Italian invasion of Albania was, until a few years ago, one of the less scholarly explored aspects of the many connections between the two countries (Halimi 2017). Studies concerning the military aspects of the Second World War, such as the work of Rossi and Giusti (2011), have investigated the theme, but historical research focused on Italian Albania remains scarce, one of the most important of which is Fischer's work (Fischer 1999). Nevertheless, the author focused on German or Anglo-Saxon sources, omitting most of those from Italy and Albania. Basciani (2022) redeemed this omission, and his work constitutes one of the most complete studies on the topic. Basciani provides a detailed historical account of how, on the 7th of April 1939, operation 'Oltremare Tirana' led around 20,000 Italian troops towards Albania, as well as its subsequent developments. The invasion was followed by a formal annexation to Italy and the 'Partia Fashiste e Shqipërisë' (PFSh), or Albanian Fascist Party, was founded. This was the only Fascist party founded in the territory annexed by Italy, and was modelled on the PNF[45] (Rodogno 2006: 58); eventually, Italy established its 'fifth shore,' locating Albania within its imperial community. The annexation, welcomed with substantial indifference by other European powers, which considered it as an 'Italian Anschluss' (Fischer 1999: 9–12), was only the last step of a progressively deeper Italian interference within Albanian internal and economic policies that began in 1925, of which the constitution of the SVEA[46] (Lavdosh 2017) and the various urban planning commissioned by Italy (Capolino 2011) could constitute examples. The Italian administration of Albania deployed contradictory institutions: two institutions were supposed to express the executive power, the lieutenancy held by Francesco Jacomoni and the undersecretary for Albanian affairs (Sottosegretariato per gli Affari Albanesi, SSAA), with no clear boundary between them (Basciani 2022: 48–59). This created an unclear balance of power between the military and civil administrations, as well as difficulties in consolidating the conquests, due to local resistance, making it difficult to pacify and to exploit the region in a profitable and continuous way.[47] Davide Rodogno explores the ambivalence of this administration in his essay about Fascism's expansionism in the

[45] National Fascist Party.

[46] Society for the economic development of Albania.

[47] The main historical publications about this topic agree upon this aspect (Basciani 2022; Gobetti 2013; Caccamo and Monzali 2008).

Mediterranean. He notes how the organisation of the Italian occupation, which maintained the dualism between the Crown and Fascist party, became a point of reference for Fascist thinkers as the means through which Italy should relate with the other nationalities in the Balkans: by insisting on their national independence, albeit in a merely putative way, and by exporting the Fascist doctrine (Rodogno 2006: 59–60). On a geopolitical level, the annexation of Albania allowed Italy to counterbalance the German influence in eastern Europe, to dismiss another segment of the Versailles order, and to enhance its presence in the Adriatic, thus fulfilling one of the geopolitical aims that had been a part of Italian foreign policy in previous decades.

The Italian dominion over the area was brief, with several administrative, logistical and militarily critical points, and without any decisive economic or social advantage to the Italian population and state. Nevertheless, Italy formally established an 'Adriatic Empire', or rather made of the Adriatic what James Burgwyn called an 'Italian lake' (2005: xiv). The Adriatic, as I have tried to illustrate in the previous chapters, had featured the thwarted desires, fantasies, projects, claims and practices of Italian intellectuals and politicians since the end of the third war of independence (1866). Imagining the Adriatic as an Italian lake allowed Italians to represent themselves as the legitimate heirs of the Roman and Venetian imperial tradition, to locate themselves among the great imperial powers of Europe, and to paint Italianness as a unique, noble national feature to be recognised as civilising, modernising and a saviour of other nationalities. While this occupation could be considered a minor phenomenon, given the major historical events of the time, it nonetheless played a significant part in the construction of an imperial image of Italian identity at the time. The annexation of the eastern Adriatic, being the (putative) fulfilment of the expansionist desires that had been constantly perpetuated through decades by generations of Italians, thus played a relevant role within the economy of Fascism's rhetoric and imperial discourse. Therefore, it could also be analysed from the perspective of the cultural discourse and its relationship with the construction of national identities. Scholarship has only recently started to look at Fascism's expansionism in the Adriatic, exploring, alongside the traditional historical analysis, aspects related to the racist attitudes and politics deployed by Italians against the Yugoslavs, such as Chiarandini (2022). A perspective that privileges the discourses of dominance, identity and cultural production concerning Italian Mediterranean possessions is articulated by McGuire (2020), which questions issues related to nation, race and Fascism in the Aegean islands before and during the regime, analysing literary representation and colonial practices. The literary and cultural aspects of Fascism's colonialism in the Mediterranean have been studied by Stephanie M. Hom (2012), who views the touristic advertising of Libya and Albania as a practice to enhance a colonial perspective of these territories, as well as by Andreas Guidi (2022), who focuses

on the island of Rhodes and its passage from being under Ottoman rule to entering into the Italian empire, adopting a trans-imperial perspective which prioritises attention towards the social history of the place, and particularly to generational dynamics and youth.

Nevertheless, a specific focus on the Italian literary representation of Fascism's Adriatic possession has yet to be developed. This chapter delves into this representation, looking at how contemporary accounts of the period described Italian Albania. The set of sources at the core of this investigation encompasses Italian travelogues about Albania during the period of Italian domination, and reports or guidelines compiled by Italian authorities to organize exhibits and fairs to display Albania as a new region of the Italian Empire. It is possible to analyse this literature as conventional writing; however, it also created a narrative that was deeply embedded in the construction of a Fascist and imperialist system of power in Albania. As explored by Said, cultural production is not detached from political power, but rather within a colonial context it can serve as an element that furthers the persistence and durability of an imperialist authority (Said 1978: 14). From this perspective, Italian literature about Albania at the time can be considered a crucial element in the development of Fascist power and its imperialist features. Therefore, these sources may provide a perspective on the workings of this system of power, giving insights into the several ontologies crucial to its ideological structure and the discourses that ensured its functionality. This literature has often been neglected in historical analysis (Halimi 2017), but to develop an understanding of the functioning of an articulated system of philosophies like Fascism it becomes a useful and interesting tool. The following paragraphs will address how, and for what purpose, this corpus will be analysed.

The previous chapters have focused on the discursive construction of the Adriatic made by Italian intellectuals, attempting to understand how this region was perceived as being rightfully Italian, while politically this was not the case. This chapter will instead analyse the Italian discourse on Albania after Italy annexed the whole region. The literary analysis employed thus far underscores the depiction of Albania within Italian travel literature as a peripheral entity. It asserts that the diverse representation patterns constructed an image of the region as reliant on Italian intervention to ameliorate its problematic and underdeveloped status. Following the invasion, Albania became formally integrated into the Italian imperial community, retaining a distinctive institutional status that preserved its nominal independence.[48] As Rodogno argues 'the illusion of Albania's independence could

[48] The Albanian Crown was unified with the Italian one in the person of Vittorio Emanuele III, nourishing the illusion of a formal Albanian independence.

be used by the regime's propagandists to launch the idea of the imperial community while also peddling Fascism's civilizing and liberating mission' (2006: 58).

However, by 1939 Fascism had already delineated legislative measures aimed at upholding the purity of Italian identity within the colonial context.[49] Consequently, the invasion of new foreign territory, inhabited by foreign people,[50] posed a challenge to the regime's pursuit of racial homogeneity. These complexities render the Italian occupation of Albania a distinctive case within the framework of Italian imperialism. Exploring the Italian representations of occupied Albania, the chapter contends that Fascism's discourse, replete with its tropes, facilitated the manner in which Italians perceived and portrayed a foreign territory under Italian dominion, illuminating how Albania was conceived as a canvas wherein Italians could observe the modernization and reforms propagated by Fascist civilisation in the country. Following Bhabha's reading of colonial discourse articulated in *The Location of Culture*, which suggests looking at the discourse's effectivity, the analysis will try to provide an understanding of the functionality of the Italian discourse deployed on the area, looking at the regime of truth in which it operates and at how it literarily constructed the occupied subject (Bhabha 2004: 94–95).

A comprehensive evaluation of the effects of the Italian discourse in displaying the occupation of the territories lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, it aims to look at how the process of subjectification of the Albanian otherness was made possible and plausible throughout the development of a stereotypical discourse that was shaped by and coherent with Fascism's conception of society. To frame these issues, it will be helpful to recall the Adriatic perspective as outlined in the introduction. Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell propose an in/of dichotomy to approach maritime histories, sustaining how 'history in the Mediterranean' only looks at phenomena that are contingent to the Mediterranean; a 'history of', on the other hand, looks at sea as the context decisive in shaping or determining a given phenomenon thanks to its coherence and distinctiveness, making it possible to study it as a unity within particular coordinates (Horden and Purcell 2006). Their approach is conceivable as a 'micro-regional history of the Mediterranean with the sea at its flexible centre'

[49] Since 1937, Fascism attempted to employ a strict racial division in the colonies, forbidding or discouraging close contact between Italians and Ethiopians (Labanca 2002: 414–15).

[50] Albanians, at the time, were subjected to various racial stereotypes within the Balkans, that represented them as inferior to other populations in the area (Baker 2018: 66–67). Moreover, Fascism's architectural and urban policies in Rodhes, at the time of the invasion of Albania, already demonstrated the impact of the regime's racial anxieties even in the Aegean context (McGuire 2020: 135–136).

(Peters 2003), in which these micro-regions have common denominators that show the distinctiveness and continuity of the entire unity at their centre (Horden and Purcell 2006: 733).

Departing from these assumptions, Sakis Gekas and Manuel Borutta have suggested how this thalassological approach, based on its history, might be functional to investigating the colonial features of maritime history even within a modern frame (Borutta and Gekas 2012). Furthermore, McGuire applies this perspective in the context of Italian expansionism in the Mediterranean (McGuire 2020: 8–12), and maintains that it may provide an original glimpse into the relationship between the Italian nation-state building process and imperialism. To implement this perspective to this research means noting how the thesis has thus far provided various analyses about how both Albania and Dalmatia were described within Italian literature, noting how the authors followed different patterns in describing those territories as they were involved within the Italian sphere of influence. These differences were dictated by the historical and political distinctions between the two territories: one was to be rescued from barbarism and needed Italian help, while the other was already a symbol of Venetian civilisation and endangered by the Yugoslav presence. The diverse discursive features of these territories may lead to considering them, following Horden and Purcell's example, as micro-regions. Displaying a thalassological approach of looking at these themes implies demonstrating how the different discursive featuring of these territories can find, within the Adriatic setting, a specific unity and distinctiveness. In other words, an Adriatic perspective would lead the research over the epistemological borders dictated by the differences in the various contexts of the Adriatic sea and tackle the unity of the discursive forces that were deployed, coherently, towards the eastern Adriatic to guarantee the legitimacy of political and national hegemony of Italy in the area. Through this perspective, the chapter employs a focus on the workings of Fascism discourse about Albania that highlights how the Italian discourse about the Adriatic displays elements of unity and distinctiveness despite the micro-regional differences encompassed in the Adriatic. The analysis will look at the development of the Italian occupational discourse towards the area, considering sources from both the literary production and cultural activities (such as colonial exhibits) that were deployed by administrative institutions to narrate Albania for the Italian public.

The chapter will maintain its focus on discursive formations, and the literary analysis will find its literary and historical motive within the assumptions of new historicism. Nevertheless, it will benefit from the use of two further theoretical concepts: the first is the apparatus, as elaborated by Bhabha within the definition of the colonial discourse, as a 'strategic articulation of coordinates of knowledge' in the exercise of colonial power (2004: 105). Previously, the thesis has underscored how diverse

Italian authors interpreted the features of the Adriatic as ideal for the development of Italian imperialism, in a context that was not featured by direct Italian dominion. The introductory section of this work elucidates how, in alignment with Homi Bhabha's acknowledgement of colonial discourse, the multifaceted representations and knowledge under scrutiny needs to be understood as ambivalent in portraying the national otherness (Byrne 2019). This understanding assumes paramount significance in the current stage of research, owing to the altered political conditions in which Italian discourse is produced and disseminated.

The texts scrutinized in this chapter no longer explore territories central to Italian expansionist aspirations; instead, they delineate regions that have now been incorporated into the Italian empire. Thus, to fulfil the objectives of this study, specifically the investigation into how Italian culture depicted the Eastern Adriatic, it becomes imperative to consider this evolution and the inquiries stemming from this transformation. In essence, this chapter endeavours to discern the manner in which Italian discourse engages with Albania within a colonial framework and the nature of knowledge propagated by Italian culture within this milieu. To delve into these issues, Bhabha's conceptualization of colonial discourse as an articulation of forms of knowledge allows a crucial recognition of how the colonizer tried to establish 'a system of administration […] and to the colonized as the 'other' so as to ratify cultural authority/superiority' (Chakrabarti 2012: 8). Consequently, Bhabha's postmodernist framework proves instrumental in comprehending the diverse nuances of Italian depictions of Albania as cultural forms produced within the displaying of a political dominion over the area and, in the case of the exhibits, as a result of such a dominion.

The second is ideology as theorised by Gramsci (2015: 1378); in his articulation of the concept, Gramsci distinguishes between ideology as the science of ideas, and ideology, as 'the system of ideas that each person possesses, which does not depend on physiological causes but on historical – political ones' (Filippini 2017: 7). He conceives the latter as a broad conceptual tool able to operate within the Marxist structure in leading a collective subject to acquire awareness about itself, more similar to a means through which to conceive the world, or a religion, than a mere political ideology (Liguori 2004). Therefore, Gramsci's ideology, following the scholarly understanding of it, plays a pivotal role in the organisation of the masses, and display of hegemonic discourses (Panichi 2020: 395-96). This chapter contends that this notion may elucidate the functionality of the mechanisms employed by Fascism's discourse to represent Albania as a place where to apply a Fascist civilization. In other words, within the context of occupation, the discourse analysis will be oriented to finding insights into how the knowledge and stereotypes used to construct the subject of the occupation were strategically organised to support the representation of a specific identity of the occupational entity.

Furthermore, the following chapter aims to argue how, at the beginning of this strategy, there was the Fascist attempt to construct itself as a form of Gramscian ideology that, in its dialectic articulation towards the Adriatic, attempted to resolve the immanent contradiction of its imperialism[51] and, as a consequence, to reinforce its hegemony.

The primary literary sources that will be considered are the accounts of three authors that directly experienced Albania shortly before or during the Italian occupation: Indro Montanelli, Pio Bondioli, and Ciro Poggiali. The Italian literature about the region played a role in showcasing the empire in Italy, but it was not the only actor to play such a role. As these territories entered into the Italian imperial community, they started to be represented in colonial exhibits and fairs, events that were crucial in shaping the colonial imaginary of Italians (Belmonte and Cecchini 2022). Looking at the archival heritage of the Italian administration of Albania, it is possible to trace certain documents, guidelines, telegrams, letters and discourses produced by the authorities to organise these exhibits. Shifting the focus towards these exhibits allows the thesis to engage more profoundly with how the eastern Adriatic was represented in Italy. These exhibits will show how Fascist institutions tried to introduce new annexations to Italians, the patterns of representation they used, and how these patterns related to those employed by literature about the same region. In other words, expanding the analysis to include colonial exhibits will help in understanding the appearance of the empire in the metropole as they allow us to gain insight into the logic behind how these territories were displayed to the Italian public (Falcucci 2020).

Specifically, the analysis will look at the guidelines, produced by the Italian authorities, directed the people working in two exhibits: the *Mostra della razza*, which was supposed to take place in Rome in 1940, and the *Mostra triennale d'Oltremare*, which took place in Naples and was closed shortly after its opening due to the war. The SSAA produced these guidelines, which were supposed to make artists and curators understand the kind of Albania they should display. Therefore, they are useful to understand which discourse about Albania was perceived as functional, allowing us to question the images through which a 'regime of truth' about Albania was constructed that would guarantee

[51] The contradiction contained in the constant pursuit of the enlargement of the Empire's borders and the fear of racial contamination. The Contradiction that, for instance, had already led Cesare De Vecchi, governor of Rodhes, to try to reshape the identity of the city, abandoning the hybridisation of Mediterraneanness and enhancing a Roman aspect of it (McGuire 2020: 136).

the functionality of the discourse in terms of ensuring its repeatability (Bhabha 2004: 95–96). Furthermore, these sources were produced in literary form – as booklets, letters, telegrams, and relations – making them directly relatable to the other literary sources considered in this chapter. The decision to concentrate specifically on the representations of Albania within the exhibits stems from two main reasons. Firstly, recent scholarly exploration (Chiarandini 2022) has delved into the Italian prejudiced stance towards the Yugoslavs during the Fascist era. The earlier examined authors demonstrated a direct and unequivocal comprehension of the relationship with the Yugoslavs, perceiving the Dalmatian territories as Italian. Beginning in 1922, Fascism found itself tasked with governing Yugoslav communities within its jurisdiction, implementing denationalization and assimilation policies. Consequently, the sources analysed already addressed a specific location for Yugoslav people within Italian borders. Secondly, Italy's expansion into former Yugoslavian territories occurred only in 1941, a period during which the exhibits were already suspended. Local resistance efforts prevented the establishment of comprehensive Italian control over the region, resulting in Italy primarily employing military administrative measures. Therefore, the state-sponsored records concerning the occupation of Yugoslavia are diverse, prompting the reliance on literary analysis and secondary sources to extract additional insights about Albania from these guidelines.

To conclude, the chapter will be divided into five sections that look at the different stages of Italian discourse on Albania. It will first address the authors considered. It will then focus on the portrayal of the Italian annexation of Albania, how the Albanians were discursively constructed by Italian literary sources, and the features that were used to describe the Italian colonial policy.

1. Achieving the Fifth Shore

Indro Montanelli (1909 – 2001) was a journalist, novelist, and a strong supporter of Fascism and colonialism, as well as participating as a volunteer in the Ethiopian campaign, which provided him with the setting of his first publications. After the war, he worked for *Il Corriere della sera,* where he remained until the early 70s, when he founded a newspaper, *Il Giornale* (Gerbi and Liucci 2011). Montanelli's literary works are studied as absolving warfare testimonies (Bartolini 2021: 63–64), as postwar sources on Italian conservative public opinion (Bartolini 2022), and a postcolonial perspective is predominantly deployed concerning his publications on Ethiopia (Forgacs 2016). The text published after he visited Albania at the beginning of 1937, where his father Sestilio was working for the Albanian king Zog to reform the Albanian school system, can also be productively read from a postcolonial perspective.

Following the suggestion of the future lieutenant of Albania Jacomoni, Montanelli published

his travelogue in April, at the same time as the Italian invasion of Albania and, editing the aspects in which he praised Zog (Basciani 2022: 39–40), was entitled *Albania, una e mille* published by Paravia (1939). Pio Bondioli (1890 – 1958), a journalist and historian who participated in the first World War on the Albanian front, was the co-founder of *Il Giornale del Popolo* and also worked for *L'Italia* (Milani 1956). Bondioli published a book entitled *Albania quinta sponda d'Italia* in 1939, directly after the invasion, to describe the territory annexed to the 'new' Italy (1939: 9). Ciro Poggiali (1892 – 1955) was a journalist for *Corriere della Sera who* published a relevant number of accounts and reportages; his most famous publication is probably related to his correspondence from Ethiopia during the Italian invasion between 1935 and 1936. His writings from Ethiopia, celebrating the new conquest by Fascist Italy, were followed by the posthumous publication of his private diary about this experience, which was one of the first sources to – despite the perspective of the author – provide an account of the atrocities committed by the Italians against the local population (Burdett 2011). Poggiali visited Albania for (in the editor's words) an extended period of time during 1942, and published about this experience as *Albania antica e giovane* in 1943 for Edizioni Roma; however, this text did not receive the same critical attention as his previous publications. While there are some similarities in the authors' accounts, their distinctive features include: both Montanelli and Poggiali enriched their narration with details related to their personal experience, and Montanelli's text in particular could be divided into two sections: the first few pages relate to his travel in Albania, where he describes his itinerary and his direct experience, while the second part is dedicated to describing the geographical and social reality of Albania. Poggiali includes plenty of details and insights about his direct experience in the text, which describe social dynamics and realities. Nevertheless, the great majority of the text is a celebration of the new–born union between the two countries. For instance, in describing the Italian invasion, Poggiali affirms how this was an answer to 'diffuso desiderio degli Albanesi che l'Italia ponesse piede sulla loro patria per […] intensificare il progresso, consolidare la libertà dei cittadini e la loro evoluzione civile' (Poggiali 1943: 46–47).

In Bondioli's text, the only details about his direct experience can be understood through the text's dedication to his companion during the First World War, who fought with him in Albania. Both Poggiali and Bondioli's accounts include enthusiasm about the union between Albania and Italy, and both celebrated this event as successful and positive for the countries involved. Montanelli, on the other hand, who at the time of writing process was (putatively) unaware of the forthcoming invasion of Albania, refers to the union only in the preface of the text; however, he does not avoid praising, in the book, the Italian help given to Albania. One further element that differentiates these publications

is how both Montanelli and Poggiali use the first person in the text, maintaining the traditional cadence of travel writing, while Bondioli's text deploys an omniscient narrator, avoids any account related to his direct experience, and only occasionally uses the first person plural to address the idea of the Italian nation. Nevertheless, all three authors share a common way of presenting the Albanian reality and use similar patterns to locate themselves and Italy within this context and to interpret Italian attitudes towards Albania. These patterns are not entirely original, but they are coherent and, in some cases, the same as the claims made by Italian travellers in the eastern Adriatic before the arrival of Fascism. In the following sections, I will explore how these authors, using common patterns of representation to delineate the relationship between Italy and Albania, further an image of Fascist society as capable of comprehending, within itself, heterogeneous realities.

2. The Durable Impact of History

In the previous chapters, an analysis of authors including Mantegazza, Speraz, Ratti and D'Annunzio revealed how the Italian travellers visiting the eastern Adriatic made a discretionary use of history to legitimise their claims for further Italian involvement in the Adriatic, and to hinge Italianness on previous imperial experience in the region. Furthermore, the myth of the Roman Empire had served as a legitimising tool for Italian colonialism since the Liberal period (Troilo 2021: 77–126), and was a constant presence in Fascism's imaginary about the colonies (Hom 2012); it also fascinated many travellers in the Italian colonies, who had the perception of traveling more in the past than in the present (Burdett 2010b: 28–30). Montanelli, Poggiali and Bondioli's accounts of Albania reiterate the attention paid to the imperial past. They systematise, in similar ways, the history of Albania as being deeply influenced by the Roman and Venetian empires, underlining how these empires disseminated a durable civilisation over the area and displayed the Adriatic as Italian. For instance, Poggiali describes the various foreign incursions that subjected Albania to 'Una lunga serie di dominatori insignificanti' while, during the Roman period, Albania began a period of prosperity (Poggiali 1943: 14–16). Alongside these recursive tropes, the authors borrowed further elements from Albanian and Italian history to narrate the annexation. The reasons for the introduction of new elements might be found in both a deeper Italian involvement in Albania, which provided new knowledge about the territory, and the new geopolitical context in which the authors operated. Regarding this last point, a reading of the texts suggests that Montanelli, Poggiali and Bondioli used these new elements to deal with two main issues: the necessity of justifying a military invasion, and coping with the racial concerns enhanced by Fascism's policies.

The first argument that these authors deployed is the brief occupation of Albania made by the

troops of Giacinto Ferrero during the First World War. The second chapter of this work already analysed a report written by the general, which celebrates the Italian actions in Albania as military but also civilising (Ferrero 1923: 10). Poggiali, Bondioli and Montanelli narrated this occupation as capable of giving some features of modernity to an ancient, antiquated country. They ascribed to Zog a putative dissipation of Ferrero's work, using it as a reason to legitimate the Italian intervention. The glorification of that brief occupation underlined the heterogeneity of Italian activity in Albania. For example, Bondioli describes that period as:

> 'Fin dai primi momenti l'occupazione non ebbe soltanto carattere militare e strategico. L'Italia aveva trovato un'Albania dilaniata dagli odi delle minoranze, dalle rivalità intestine, […] e si accinse all'opera grave e delicata di riorganizzare la vita civile e sociale, ridare alle città i servizi indispensabili […].' (Bondioli 1939: 97–98)

This quote exemplifies the consideration that those few months of occupation acquired within these texts, and provides a pattern that is reiterated when they describe the impact of Fascist Italy on Albania. This pattern consists of representing an Albanian reality that is rotten in terms of moral spirit, affected by backwardness, and lacking the most basic principles of the modern state, which is thus rescued and civilised by the Italian activities.

The second element looks at the Italian archaeological missions in Albania. In 1928, Italy sent an archaeological expedition, led by Luigi Maria Ugolini, to Butrint, where a theatre and various Roman ruins were rescued (Gilkes and others 2003). These findings, within Fascism's discourse, proved the noble origins of Albanians and their ancestors, the Illiryans, who had been entirely integrated within the Roman empire (D'Ercole 2013). These excavations drew the interest of Bondioli and Poggiali, both of whom used these to underline the common past between the two sides of the Adriatic, albeit articulated in different ways. Bondioli locates the descriptions of these excavations in a chapter dedicated to the history of Albania, attempting to exploit them for political discourse:

> 'Le lontane origini d'Albania, da quasi tutti gli studiosi stranieri sono cercate appena negli autori dell'antichità classica greca e romana e nella tradizione letteraria che fa discendere da un unico ceppo etnico tanto gli Euganei del Veneto […] quanto gli Illiri d'oltre Adriatico. Queste ricerche furono in gran parte condotte a tavolino […] secondo i gusti, le opinioni personali e, spesso, gli interessi che ne erano il movente ultimo. […] Il merito di aver lasciato da parte ogni artificiosità e di essersi portato sul terreno a verificare con lo scavo […] spetta a un archeologo italiano, giovane e ardimentoso [...]: Luigi M.

Ugolini.' (Bondioli 1939: 45–46)

Bondioli, in investigating the origins of Albania, maintains the primacy of Italian research on the theme, as they were the only ones that were conducted in the field. The description of the Italian scholar as demonstrating Fascist characteristics, as 'ardimentoso' (ardent), and as being motivated by nothing more than scholarly interest, addresses a direct comparison with the scholarly activity of other countries. Through this comparison, the author asserts the authoritative nature of the Italian investigation, resulting in foreign research being painted as inaccurate. Furthermore, the excavation is addressed as the result of:

> 'quell'accordo archeologico italo-albanese che va considerato [...] «come un riconoscimento del primato italiano nelle ricerche archeologiche in Albania», raccolse abbondanti e insperati frutti che hanno ricacciato nel mondo dei sogni gran parte delle elucubrazioni dei trattatisti. Le scoperte […] hanno pure restituito materiale preistorico che si riconnette a quello proprio della più antica civiltà dell'Italia meridionale, segnano il primo vincolo tra le due sponde adriatiche, […] «L'archeologia – ha lasciato scritto (Ugolini) – fornisce la prova più sicura che il popolo albanese ha unità etnica e appartiene ad una delle razze d'Europa più antiche, conservatasi, quasi per miracolo, abbastanza intatta fino a noi.»' (Bondioli 1939: 46–47)

This passage expresses a clear political and racial statement, which is useful to sustain an image of Italy and Albania that is coherent within Fascism's imperial and racial projects. First, quoting Ugolini, Bondioli maintains that the results of the Italian archaeological mission provide proof of the union between the two sides of the Adriatic during the pre-historical period. Second, through the Italian archaeological work, Bondioli asserts the racial purity of Albanians as a group that 'miraculously' survived as pure. When Bondioli published this text the racial laws were already in force, and the Italian cultural and political environment was increasingly worried about racial issues (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 172), with concerns about the colonial and expansionist imaginaries of Italians in AOI[52] (Duncan 2005). The description of archaeological findings provides elements that could sound reassuring to an Italian reader – that the new territorial acquisition contains a population which could be consid-

[52] Africa Orientale Italiana, the name used by Fascist Italy to identity the Horn of Africa's region belonging to its empire.

ered entirely pure – and this gained relevance as proof of the quality of the new annexation. Furthermore, a similar instrumental use of archaeology was employed by the Italian administration in the Dodecanese (McGuire 2020: 138–139). Poggiali, on the contrary, describes Butrint in a chapter that enumerates the possibilities of doing 'scorribande istruttive' (instructive visits) in Albania. Therefore, the archaeological excavations in Poggiali acquire a touristic value:

> 'L'Albania, prima dell'evento del 1939 [Italian invasion], non sembrava offrire molte di quelle risorse che si sogliono chiamare turistiche. […] Vale la pena di andare a Butrinto […] gli scavi compiuti per un periodo di dieci anni da studiosi italiani hanno rivelato costruzioni greche, romane, bizantine e veneziane di interesse spesso cospicuo.' (Poggiali 1943: 237–41).

This passage demonstrates the idea that, thanks to the Italian intervention, Albania gained an unexpected but relevant touristic value, with the excavations of Butrint forming part of this. The ambition to exploit Mediterranean colonies for touristic purposes was recurrent within Fascist Italy. Within this perspective, Albania was a valuable place for hunters and Libya was celebrated for its historical and Roman value (Hom 2012), while the Aegean colonies would provide Italian travellers with the occasion to explore the 'Levantine' aspects of the Mediterranean possession of Italy (McGuire 2018b). As noted by Hom, the enhancement of tourism in Albania was a colonising strategy based on the trope of hospitality that would, in the Italian projects, supplement the traditional means of colonisation (Hom 2012: 282). The description of Butrint given by Poggiali does not sustain the idea of hospitality, but does provide proof of the touristic value of Albania, as it lists the archaeological excavations as one of the highlights of the touristic amenities that Albania could offer. This image of Butrint within Italian perception is, for instance, corroborated by the Albanian tour organised by the *Touring Club Italiano* in April 1940, which included Butrint in its itinerary (Hom 2012: 298).

Furthermore, it is interesting to note how this site is featured. Poggiali does not recognise any role for the Albanians – Butrint is worth visiting, but at the same time, the Albanian element is absent; the site has been discovered by Italians and, above all, contains signs of the Roman domination that could be associated with Fascist Italy. Therefore, one might argue that, in Butrint, Italian tourists would have the possibility of visiting traces of their ancestors, discovered by their compatriots in a location outside Italy but at the same time under its direct control. The archaeological element eventually proves useful to fulfil various purposes, and could be compared, to some extent, with the significance acquired of touring through Libya: as a means of rediscovering analogies between the past and the time and space in which they were then living, and which they perceived as their own.

These authors, in describing Albanian history, were able to add further original elements, featured by Fascism's tropes, that served to legitimise the Italian presence in Albania. Furthermore, these descriptions allowed the authors to represent the invasion as coherent within Fascism's system of values. Therefore, the archaeological missions played a systematising role within Fascism's discourse on Albania, guaranteeing the glue between the Roman past and Fascism's Roman rhetoric, but also coherence between the territorial expansions and racial preoccupations of the Fascist regime at the time, providing a further cultural basis on which the invasion of Albania could be interpreted.

3. Disavowal of Agency and Value of The National Character

A few days after the annexation, lieutenant Jacomoni and undersecretary Zenone Benini began the removal of the Albanian civil and military administrators based on seniority, relations with the previous regime, and allegations of corruption. The Italian administration progressively established a system of surveillance, founded mainly on Carabinieri, over all the subjects considered to have contacts with the institutions and authorities of the previous state (Basciani 2022: 73–74). In the following months, confinement became a measure of punishment for dissident Albanians who were not imputable through the traditional judicial system (Poesio 2011: 11), and was widely used by the Italian administration; it was also accompanied by a progressive militarisation of the territory and an enhancement of police forces (Basciani 2022: 92). These measures show a progressive enhancement of the aggressivity of Italian internal policy in Albania as a response to their inability to maintain public order and definitively normalise the conquest. The repressive internal policies also testify to a constant anxiety and need for surveillance over the Albanian subjects, and the authors' accounts do not mention these policies.

Montanelli, Bondioli and Poggiali construct a stereotypical image of the Albanians also by asserting Albanians support for the Italian presence. These two contradictory elements – the claimed support of Albanians and the necessity to deploy an articulated system of surveillance – can be understood by looking at Bhabha's reading of colonial discourse through Foucault's apparatus. The latter is constituted by a strategic articulation of power and knowledge that support each other, existing as a 'response to an urgent need at a given historical moment'; conceiving the colonial discourse as an apparatus would thus mean that the urgent need was 'to contest singularities of difference and to articulate diverse 'subjects' of differentiation' (Bhabha 2004: 105). The colonial discourse, as an apparatus of power, disseminates a form of knowledge which contains a 'limited form of otherness that I have called the stereotype' (Bhabha 2004: 111). The colonised, within the apparatus, results in 'a social reality […] at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible' (Bhabha 2004: 101). This

frame could permit an understanding of the relationship between surveillance and representation, in the context of Italian Albania, in terms of colonial discourse. The Albanians were well understood but, at the same time, the authorities needed to adopt an intrusive system of surveillance to control the territory, showing how the discursive construction of a subjected reality was founded on a stereotype that contains both a recognition of difference and, at the same time, its disavowal (Young 2004: 184). Bhabha proposes a direct connection between surveillance and the process of disavowal that is embedded in how the colonial discourse exercises power, writing that the predominant strategic function of the latter is to produce knowledge that is able to create a space to locate and survey the 'subject peoples' (Bhabha 2004: 100–101).

In this context, as the subsequent sections will try to highlight, we may note how the construction of a stereotypical image of Albanians functions as a means to locate them in a specific cultural space, which would allow Italian readers to understand them through imperial and Fascist terms. This location functions in two ways: first, it legitimises the conquest for a Fascist audience, providing elements that make this conquest worthwhile for Fascism's values. Second, it provides an image of Albania as a country that is in structural need of obtaining help from Italy, representing it in a way that, following Bhabha, 'justifies conquest and establishes a system of administration and instruction' (2004: 101). Meanwhile, the anxiety that surfaces in the Italian administration within the region could be perceived as a response to dealing with a subject that is eventually recognised as different, as not fitting within the system of truth deployed in the discourse that described the Albanians. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesise how the relationship between Italian colonial discourse and the Albanian subject works based on the ambivalence between a colonised subject, who is stereotypically constructed in terms that are intelligible for the Italian audience, which is simultaneously not entirely coherent within this image. Within this frame, the following sections will explore how the Albanians were perceived and featured as subjects of the Italian occupation, attempting to understand how, in the exercise of colonial discourse, the Italian authors and authorities tried to produce a panoptic knowledge of Albania that would support an apparatus of power which was both Fascist and colonial.

In general, Montanelli, Bondioli and Poggiali describe the Albanians as being a primitive population, living in backwardness and unable to exploit the land's natural sources. Nevertheless, they also represent them as a young nation, one that is uncontaminated and needs Italian help to become better as a nation. The analysis will look at some examples from these representations to gain some insight into their function as well as their relationship with the continued representation of the Italian administration *in loco*. In the following sections, I will first provide a brief account of how the authors

depicted the Albanians as primitive, displaying many of the features of the authors who have previously been analysed in this thesis. I will then shift the focus to a detailed account of the representation of the national character of Albania, looking at both the authors' accounts and how the organisers of *Mostra della razza* were planning to address this feature in the Albanian pavilion.

3.1. Primitivism

All the authors write about the habits of the Albanian population, which they addressing as primitive. They construct this primitivism with the negation of coevalness, their capability to make economic progress, and the agency they have in their development. In the following section will be explored how, through the denials of coevalness and agency, the authors advocate specifically for a Fascist domination over the area, as the way to improve Albanians' living condition.

Johannes Fabian, in the postscript of *Time and the Other*, described the negation of coevalness as the result of a contradiction within ethnographic research, which carries out communicative interactions with the people it studies. These interactions require that those who study other peoples recognise the people studied as their coeval; however, Fabian noticed that when the results of the research are presented, ethnographers 'do this in terms of a discourse that consistently places those who are talked about in a time other that of the one who speaks' (Fabian 2014: 173). These authors were neither professional ethnographers nor anthropologists, but their texts often indulge in ethnographic descriptions, showing a tendency to locate Albanians as living in a different time-frame from their own, repeating some of the concepts already articulated by Baldacci and Mantegazza but articulating them differently. For instance, when visiting the city of Berat, Montanelli asserts how the city seems to be living in the 15th century (Montanelli 1939: 45), and how the Albanian population still has a medieval character (Montanelli 1939: 113). Bondioli describes how the Albanian population is mostly living as if they were in the time of Alì Tepelen in the 18th century, (1939: 158), while Poggiali uses a metaphor to describe the attitudes of the shepherds of the north:

> 'Molti di questi montanari son titolati e ostentano con fierezza le origini nobili. Questo, soprattutto, tra i Mirditi […] i cui capi richiamano alla memoria i re omerici.' (Poggiali 1943: 112)

The parallel with the Homeric world is further reiterated in the text when describing religious sacrifices that the Albanians carry out in Croia:

> 'I quali non debbono differire molto nella loro significazione, esclusa, si intende, ogni apparenza di crudeltà […] da quelli omerici.' (Poggiali 1943: 120)

The Albanian rituals in Poggiali's work have the same meaning as the sacrifices described in Homer. The connection between Homer and the Albanian customs is repeated when he describes the marriages, where he says 'si faceva così anche al tempo di Omero' (Poggiali 1943: 132). The use of this historical reference shows an attempt to frame the traditions and habits as belonging to a time that is past, and less developed. Furthermore, the Iliad and Odyssey at various times refer to different kings, such as Laerte (Odyssey, XXIV, 368) or Menelaus (Iliad, II, 243; Odyssey, IV, 24) as ποιμήν λαῶν (a shepherd of armies or populations). Therefore, associating Albanian shepherds with the Homeric world could be perceived as an attempt to locate the inhabitants of Albania within the discourse that Fascism developed about Greece. This discourse tried to underline the similarities between Italians and the Greek population subjected to Italian rule in the Mediterranean, a discourse that is summarised by Fascism's expression 'una faccia una razza' (McGuire 2020: 20–21). To locate Albanians in the past as part of a community originating within the Classical world could be considered a strategy that maintains the idea of Italian superiority, as Italy remains more modern and civil, but at the same time emphasizes the commonality of their origin with Italy.

Nevertheless, all three authors deny the Albanians the ability to progress on their own. This aspect surfaces mostly when they describe the economic activities and the land's natural resources. In describing the attitude of Albanians, Montanelli writes:

> 'Ma, parallelamente, nemmeno tenterà di migliorare la casa in cui vive e la terra che lavora, […] d'arricchire di spighe i suoi campi, di buoi le sue stalle. Perché a questa scarsa coscienza di diritti corrisponde una scarsa coscienza di doveri, una mancanza d'interessi, un'assenza di stimolo' (Montanelli 1939: 113–14)

This description is located within a paragraph where the author states the need to help Albania because it relies on a status of abandonment, and depicts the Albanians as being without any real impulse to improve their living conditions. Poggiali also highlights this lack, making a pejorative comparison between the fertility of the Po Valley and Albania:

> 'Ancora oggi che la civiltà batte le ali su ogni cielo e distribuisce dovunque i suoi benefici, il pastore albanese si isola volentieri nella sua esistenza primitiva.' (Poggiali 1943: 171)

The Albanian shepherd, in choosing between civilisation and primitivism, would by nature gladly choose the latter. Poggiali does not provide any specific reason for this, but merely states that he observes this attitude in the population; Bondioli provides a similar description in addressing Albanian agriculture:

> ‘Era e restò un'agricoltura primitiva, arretrata, incapace di evolversi e migliorare.’ (Bondioli 1939: 139)

These descriptions, more than reiterating the idea of a primitive population, deny the Albanians the ability and the will to improve their own living conditions, showing an overlap between the concepts of progress and natural exploitation that is embedded within the Italian observers. To depict the colonised subject as needy is a strategy, within colonial discourse, to justify the necessity of the colonising action (Bhabha 2004: 101), representing the latter as a means to enhance the living conditions of those who are colonised. This strategy serves as a connection between structures of knowledge and power, showing how the construction of specific knowledge, in this case the articulation of Albanian primitivism, has a direct connection with exercising power (Loomba 2015: 60–61). The denial of agency of the occupied subject, in these cases seems to advocate for deep reform, a new education.[53] Looking at the practical examples provided by these quotes, which indirectly picture Albanians as needing a foreign impulse to improve their living conditions, one might argue that these assertions advocate for a revolution or a modernization of the spiritual and material conditions. Therefore, it is possible to state that these authors were encapsulating Albanians within a stereotype, one which functions to encourage the type of foreign domination that is able to renew the population’s attitude. For Fascism’s discourse, which depicted itself as a modernising force able to reform social habits and to construct an accelerated temporality within its idea of society (Griffin 2007: 181), Albania constituted an ideal location to deploy its renewing social projects.

3.2. National Character

The glorification of nationalism was a crucial element within Fascism, both for the development of its discourse and to gain popular consensus, especially from the middle class (Hobsbawm 1990: 169). After the promulgation of the racial laws, with a further intellectual mobilisation to sustain the racial claims of the regime (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 172–73), the possibility of celebrating the pure national character of a newly annexed territory fascinated Italian travellers in Albania. Although Bondioli, Montanelli and Poggiali provided worried descriptions of the Albanian attitude, the idea of Albania as a territory with a unique national character resulted in an appealing opportunity to rescue the image of

[53] The necessity to reform and educate a group of people within a colonial context is a recurrent trait of Fascist imperialism. Even in the colony of Rodhes the Governor advocated for an education that would inculcate Fascism’s values in the youth (Guidi 2022: 68-69).

Italy as the protector of the Balkan nationalities, an image already explored in the first chapter of this thesis. All the authors expressed their thoughts about the construction of an Albanian nation. They first exposed the problems of Albanian state construction, before then showing an appreciation of this national character, which was uncontaminated by hybridity and impenetrable to foreign influence, with the implicit exception of Italy. Finally, the authors asserted that Italy was the only great power that was always committed to defending the Albanian nation.

The first theme to look at is the representation of the Albanian state's problems. All the authors note how the political power in Albania was – before the arrival of Italians – fragmented among the various local authorities. For instance, in a chapter entitled 'Qual è la piaga', which aims to demonstrate the main plague that is affecting the Albanian economy, Montanelli writes:

> 'Il problema è sempre uno e uno solo: il compartimentalismo. La vita economica albanese, [...] non sono quelli di un'economia statale, ma quelli, atonici e sconnessi e incoerenti, di tante economie familiari e tribali riunite insieme.' (Montanelli 1939: 138)

The main problem, following Montanelli, is the lack of administrative unity. An efficient central administration would, as is indirectly alluded to in this quote, resolve the Albanian economic problems, eventually setting it on the right path to overcome its primitivism. Bondioli, describing the first steps of Albania after the proclamation of independence, (1912) writes:

> 'Chi scrive è passato pochi mesi dopo per gli stessi luoghi: la devastazione generale era visibile nelle rovine intatte e ancora fumanti. […] Andandosene, Guglielmo I aveva lasciato l'Albania ancor più divisa e mutilata. […] Mancò insomma una vera unità di comando, una autorità che fondesse insieme le divergenze e desse al regno nato in mezzo a tante difficoltà un orientamento politico e amministrativo.' (Bondioli 1939: 86–87)

The author describes the riots that exploded after the nomination of Guglielmo I of Wied as King of Albania, a king imposed by other European powers who was never able to exercise any authority. Bondioli, along with Montanelli, frames the lack of a central administration as the principal Albanian problem. This element also surfaces when the authors discredited the rule of Zog, the Albanian king who was consistently financed and supported by Fascist Italy until April 1939. Bondioli provides many details about his misrule, and addresses him as 'Zogu si conservò insomma il bey di una volta e come tale si comportò' (Bondioli 1939: 171). The 'bey' are the local regional leaders of Albania; Bondioli uses the term in a derogatory way to represent him as one of the perpetrators of Albanian fragmentation.

Despite the fragmentation, the texts constantly repeat how the Albanians' features remained immutable and insensible to the foreign dominators, a characteristic the authors celebrated in their travelogues. In the first chapter addressing the history of Albania, Poggiali maintains that:

> 'Pochi altri paesi come il territorio albanese ebbero a sopportare implacabili lotte fomentate dai paesi più forti che se ne contesero il predominio. […] Romani, bizantini, slavi, veneti, turchi, hanno gareggiato nel contendersi quel lembo di terra. […] tuttavia, esempio quasi unico nel mondo, gli Albanesi hanno saputo sempre conservare, magari celato nelle più riposte gole delle impervie montagne, il germe e l'anelito della propria nazionalità.' (Poggiali 1943: 9–10)

The preservation of their nationality is something unique and precious, able to valorise the entire population. This description articulates an Albanian nationality that hid its vitality among the impervious mountains, indirectly implying that, within the Italian frame, this vitality no longer needs to hide. Furthermore, Montanelli frames the continuation of their nationality in contrast with the arrival of the Slavic populations, stating that:

> 'La signoria bulgara […] cadde da sè, e l'influenza slava dileguò senza aver impresso sull'Albania alcun segno durevole. Centro della irriducibile resistenza nazionale furono […] le tribù guerriere del nord.' (Montanelli 1939: 55)

To affirm that the Slavic culture did not influence the immanent nature of Albania is relevant within the historical context of the period. The creation of the Yugoslav kingdom, which contained some of the territories that Italy hoped to gain after the First World War, was perceived as an act against Italy (Gobetti 2013: 5–30), and Fascism deployed a specifically anti-Yugoslav policy from the beginning of its rule. The battles between Albanians and Slavic populations reaffirm the character of Albanians as, first and foremost, being different from the Slavic. Second, they propose a parallel between the Albanians and the fight that, following Irredentism's claims that are embedded within Fascism's Adriatic policy (Wolff 2001: 352–55), the Italians of Dalmatia were living to maintain their Italianness. Furthermore, the choice to represent an event between the third and fourth century AD as a 'resistenza nazionale', national resistance, with a clear mystification of the entity involved in the fight, cannot be accidental. Rather, it is a way to reaffirm the idea that the Albanian national character was already shaped and recognisable at the time, as this element could provide more value to the nature of Albanian nationalism.

In light of this contradiction between a fragmented reality that exists alongside nationhood but

is simultaneously ancient but hidden and unexplored, Italy surfaces within these texts as the only nation sincerely interested in protecting the Albanian national interest. In the emigration from Albania towards Italy during the 15th century,[54] Montanelli finds one of the first expressions of this sincere interest, describing it thus:

> 'emigrarono soprattutto in Italia, la loro seconda patria naturale, s'inserirono nella società della penisola […]. Ma questa emigrazione non fu soltanto qualitativa e di aristocrazie; fu anche un'emigrazione di massa. Quest'ultima sopravvive ancora nella Penisola, albanesi diventati leali e laboriosi sudditi italiani, ma rimasti albanesi etnicamente e linguisticamente anche ora a distanza di secoli: magnifico esempio [...] che noi italiani, che non ambiamo l'imbastardimento e il meticciato, siamo i primi ad ammirare.' (Montanelli 1939: 73)

The author refers to the Albanian emigration to Italy that followed the Ottoman invasion and the wars between the Ottomans and Skanderberg, who tried to establish alliances with Western European countries, especially Venice, the Papal State and the Kingdom of Naples. These states, from their perspective, regarded these alliances as a way to counter Islamic expansion in Europe, and Skanderberg obtained asylum for Albanians. The Albanian migrants, called Arbëresh, started to establish settlements in the territories of the Papal State, Venice and, especially, the Kindom of Naples, and these communities were integrated into the country in diverse ways. Nonetheless, it is possible to notice that these communities were granted some privileges: they had some tax exemption, were allowed to main their language, and, in some cases, to follow the Greek rite. At the same time, they were mostly destined to populate abandoned or economically depressed territories (Prato 2009). These communities maintained their language until contemporary times and, already during the liberal period, were considered instrumental in expanding Italian influence over Albania still ruled by the Ottoman Empire (Qesari 2017). As this quote shows, the existence of these communities was perceived as functional to argue that Albanians could live within Italian borders, as a minority and under Italian hegemony, providing proof of successful hierarchical inclusion in Italy. This quote reinforces the idea of Italy as the hegemonic nation of the area, capable of accepting other national groups, as minorities, within its borders, and reassures about the possible annexation of Albania.

[54] The author mentions a process of various migrations from Albania to Italy, the first recorded one happened in 1385 and the last one in 1756 (Prato 2009: 80).

Montanelli individuates the idea of Italy as the second homeland of Albanians as a natural fact, one that is unnecessary to articulate further, sustaining the idea of a connection between Italians and Albanians that seems more natural law rather than historical occurrence. The Albanians who emigrated to Italy were, interestingly, addressed through the adjective 'laboriosi', laborious, which is one of the words used to describe Italian emigrants to Ethiopia (Burdett 2010b: 121–26). Using this adjective, the author relates its meaning to the Albanians staying in Italy, as they were able to obtain this quality by living in Italy. This interpretation is due to the use of the verb 'diventare', which means to become, rather than to be. Therefore, Montanelli represents Albanians as a population to be admired for their ability to become laborious when they come into contact with Italy and yet maintain their National character. Furthermore, Montanelli, who writes from a perspective that is unaware of the annexation, constantly claims in the text that the Albanians need help from Italy,[55] whereas Bondioli celebrates the awareness that Albania demonstrated in asking Italy for help. Poggiali is even more direct, motivating the Italian arrival in this way:

> 'Da varie parti dell'interno dell'Albania giungevano frattanto sino a Roma reiterati appelli perché si rompessero gli indugi e si ponesse fine alla tirannia gretta di quel monarca. […] Il 7 aprile le truppe italiane sbarcavano rispondendo così alle provocazioni zoghiste e soprattutto al diffuso desiderio degli Albanesi che l'Italia ponesse piede sulla loro patria per difendere ed intensificare il progresso […] Dalle lontane montagne scesero sulla costa capi e gregari ad incontrar festosamente le truppe liberatrici.' (Poggiali 1943: 46–47)

The author reverses the process of annexation, making the Albanians responsible for it, indirectly confirming the idea of Italy as the protector of the Balkan nations, as if they asked Italy for help against the dictator. This representation represents the Italian troops as liberators who received a festive welcome from the local population. The Albanians asking for help from Italy is a topos in Poggiali's text, which is also articulated in terms of modernisation. For instance, in a passage that illustrates the Italian agricultural labour in Albania, he writes:

> 'Non c'era voluto molto a fare intendere a queste genti dotate di intelligenza vivida […]

---

[55] For instance, in a chapter dedicated to Albania's problems in contemporaneity, Montanelli sustains how Albania would benefit from the help of a friend nation to help to become a modern state (1939: 101).

> che cosa significa la parola “bonifica”, segnacolo di una delle tante bandiere della rinascita agitate in Albania dall’aprile del 1939 in poi. E avevano cominciato col chiedere gli aratri…’ (Poggiali 1943: 175)

This quote makes a connection between the Fascist nature of the Italian occupation, as shown by the word ‘bonifica’, and the Albanian ability to understand and ask for it as a form of regeneration. This quote underlines the importance of ‘bonifica’ as a concept, which means the decontamination of swamps, but within Fascism acquired a palingenetic meaning, as it indicates a series of measures taken to renew and deeply reshape a society. The use of the concept of bonifica suggests that Poggiali, in this passage, sustains the idea that the Albanians were so welcoming to Italian domination because they were able to understand that Italy was bringing them the concepts, theories and attitudes of Fascist society.

To conclude, the sources discursively construct Albania through a dichotomy between its fragmentation and its impermeable national character, seeking help from Fascist Italy as the actor that would reform and modernise its attitude. This construction entirely disavows Albanians of their ability to develop by themselves in modern and civil life. At the same time, the glorification of their national character, the assertive claims about their intelligence, their differentiation from the Slavic populations, and their ability – when in contact with Italy – to become laborious show how these authors perceived Albania as an incomplete reality. The incompleteness of Albania as a fierce nation incapable of achieving modernity by itself in the texts is also perceived by the Albanians themselves, as was seen from Poggiali’s quote, which led them to ask for Italian help. These depictions show a synchronic conception of Albanians, denoting the sources’ tendency to rely on a mode of representation that is typical of colonial discourse, and which Bhabha terms fixity. Fixity is the account of difference in the ideological construction of otherness, and functions as a form of identification of the otherness that ‘vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated’ as it cannot be proven (Bhabha 2004: 94–95).

The work of these authors to articulate the Albanian national character might be seen as an attempt to fix the Albanian subject in a specific frame. This attempt develops in the representation of the immutability of Albanian attitudes and qualities (for instance, in the authors’ work there is no difference between the Albanians of the 15th century and their contemporaries), and in their repetition through different texts and patterns. Furthermore, these authors rarely indulge in explaining the reasons or providing proof about the Albanian national qualities, which are nonetheless constantly pro-

posed as truths, like their impermeability to foreign influence. To understand how this mode of representation functions within Italian discourse it is necessary to look at the frame in which Albanian nationhood is fixed. This frame relates to Italian expansionism on two levels: first, it designs a role for Italy as the historical friend of Balkan nations, showing it as an appealing protector of Albanian nationality. Second, it makes the Albanian context palatable for Fascism's ideology, as it needs to construct a modern life and to unify its nation, and to show that the qualities that Fascism projected upon itself were perfectly coherent with Albanian needs.

3.4. Racial Purity and Annexation

A further insight about Albanian national features, and their meaning from a Fascist perspective, is articulated within archival sources. The Fascist regime produced an immense amount of material related to the colonies, including movies, journals, reportages and documentaries, but also exhibitions, fairs and museums to showcase the foreign territories under Italian rule to the Italian masses (Belmonte and Cecchini 2022). These materials had a crucial role in disseminating colonial discourse and knowledge, as well as constructing awareness among the Italian population about the racial hierarchies constructed within Fascism (Piccioni 2022). Furthermore, these activities produced an extensive amount of archival material related to their organisation, which nowadays can be used to understand the order of ideas behind the display of colonial exhibits, and whose image of the colonised subject was perceived as functional to sustain the Italian rule (Falcucci 2020).

Immediately following the 7th of April 1939, Albania started to be displayed in Italian fairs and exhibitions. One example of the speed of this involvement is the New York World Fair of 1939, where the Albanian section, settled before the invasion, was dismissed by Italian authorities, with some of its materials entering the Italian exhibition. Another significant example is the *Fiera del Levante*, a yearly exhibit located in Bari, in which Albania participated for several years as an independent nation, but also in 1939 as part of the Italian empire. For the 1939 edition, the Italian administration commissioned the architect Gherardo Bosio, who already worked for the Italian state in Tirana (Basciani 2022: 110–11), to plan a new pavilion for Albania celebrating the Roman and Venetian past (L'Abbate and Moscardin 2017). Alongside these exhibitions, the documentation related to the *Mostra della razza* (Race fair), which was supposed to take place in Rome in 1940 but was cancelled due to the war, is of particular relevance.

The *Mostra della razza* allows us to analyse one of the crucial contradictions within Fascism's imperialism. Western cultures between the 19th and the 20th century also constructed themselves

through the conception of racial difference (Bennet and Royle 2016: 282–83), and in the administration of its colonies, Fascist Italy exacerbated racist policies in ways that were backwards even for other colonial administrations of the time (Labanca 2002: 413–21). Fascism achieved most of its colonial conquest before the publication of the racial laws, but occupied Albania at a time when the racial laws were already in operation.

Questioning how a regime obsessed with racial purity expanded its borders without creating a contradiction could help us to understand the functioning of Fascism's colonial discourse. Considering the planning of the Albanian pavilion could thus be one of way of gaining some insights into this phenomenon. The organisation of a pavilion on Albania within the *Mostra della Razza* was not initially scheduled, and only began after a personal request was made by Mussolini to the Ministry of Popular Culture, the exhibition's organiser. The reason for this request was to demonstrate the fact that Albania and Italy belong to the same race and, as a consequence, 'gli italiani non hanno conquistato l'Albania e gli Albanesi non sono stati conquistati dagli Italiani' (see Figure 1). This request includes two elements of Fascism's discourse of power: first, as stated by Pula (2008), establishing a common racial origin between Italians and Albanians would reaffirm the potential value of Albania as a territory where Fascism's modernisation and society could develop. To claim that Albania could become a Fascist country also meant that Fascism could expand, reinforcing the credibility of its societal model that could then be taken and applied to different national contexts. Furthermore, in the regime's plans, dominion over Albania would have constituted a model for further expansion in Europe (Rodogno 2006: 57–62), a model based on the development of local Fascist societies, as the case of the PFSh could demonstrate. By demonstrating that Albanians and Italians have the same origins and, thus what happened was not an invasion, was also useful in allowing Fascist Italy to present itself as the main defender of the interests of various Balkan nationalities, an element that was crucial to legitimate Italian imperialism in the region.

From Mussolini's request, the ministry asked the SSAA to establish a local committee, directed by an Italian diplomat, Nicola Lorusso Attona (Basciani 2022: 50), and composed mainly of Albanian members, to organise the Albanian pavilion under the SSAA's supervision (see Figure 3). The main document produced by this committee is the 'Relazione Beratti' (Beratti's relation), from the name of one of the members. This document provided general guidelines on how to set up the pavilion. The report is a 20-page long document that lists various aspects of Albanian life, history and culture that could have been considered in an exhibit of the Albanian race. This document was promptly corrected by the Italian authorities working in the SSAA, as it was not only too extensive, involving too many materials, but also because it included elements about the various connections

that the Albanian 'race' had had with other populations through its history. The majority of its sections, those related to culture, history and above all about national character, were deleted through handwritten notes that stated they were useless for the fair's purposes. For instance, the relation's second section proposes a list of historical events to include in the fair that were a part of Albanian history. One of these is 'Regno Albanese di Giorgio Kastriota', a fundamental experience in the construction of Albanian national identity, which was nonetheless deleted by a handwritten note describing it as 'useless and dangerous' (Figure 4).

Furthermore, any element that could have indicated an autonomous class of Albanian intellectuals – like the sections proposed on local literature, along with transcultural contacts in the Balkans and throughout the Mediterranean, and the presence of notable Albanians in other countries – were deleted from the proposal and addressed as 'meaningless and without any racial value' (see Figures 5–6). The sections preserved were those that related to the superstitions and beliefs of the population, and the housing materials (see Figures 7–8). These sections, following the SSAA's notes, should display a comparison with the Italian element, showing the community of the two entities. The interactions between the local authority with the Italian, although hetero-directed, show a unidirectional negotiation, in which the Italian authority frustrates Albanian attempts to self-represent. This negotiation testifies to an attempt to forcefully encapsulate Albanian features within a limited representation, which was useful to represent a specific discourse of power. In 'Toward the African Revolution', Fanon describes the effects of the circulation of colonised culture within colonial discourse as 'cultural mummification' (Fanon 1970: 44), while Bhabha describes the knowledge of the colonised subject contained in the apparatus as 'arrested' (2004: 111). This archival source, with its negotiation, can be understood in these terms as showing one of the stages of the mummification of a culture, as it demonstrates a forced reduction of the self-representation of a colonised subject.

The processes of removal and comparison show a clear dynamic of power: that the representation of Albania should abandon all the scientific standards of the time in order to be objectified as a tool able to represent a certain image of itself, one that was purely instrumental to the needs of Fascism. The removal shows how discourses and images at this kind of fair were deeply shaped by political functionality, reiterating the idea of Fascism as an overwhelming force that, in its discourses, was able to shape and create a reality functional to its scope. Furthermore, the dynamic displayed in this document provides insights into the process of exploitation of the subjected reality to sustain a specific discourse. Fascist authorities were trying to perpetuate the idea of a peer relationship within the Fascist frame between Italy and Albania; nevertheless, to achieve this objective, they had to apply severe censorship to the image of Albania, leading this system of representation towards a structural

contradiction. This contradiction is first shaped by the necessity to use Albania as an example able to represent a specific image of Italian dominion and the Fascist society. It is also formed by the fact that Albania itself was not able to sustain that image and, as a consequence, it was necessary to re-shape, and recreate a specific and reduced image of Albania to fit the purposes of the regime. This document provides an example of the operation that the regime's propaganda had to maintain, illustrating how adapting reality to its purposes was necessary to develop a contradictory relationship with the objectified otherness. Nevertheless, these contradictions would be glossed over within literary descriptions of Italian domination of the area.

4. Italian Labour and Civilisation

Montanelli, Bondioli and Poggiali configured a relationship between Italy and Albania that was shaped by past experiences: the civilising peace of Rome, the fight against the Turks alongside Venice, and the military occupation of 1917. All of these created the discursive basis to narrate the occupation that began in April 1939. The positive aspects shown by the previous experiences acquired a more articulated and systematic value when the authors describe the concrete policies and activities deployed by Italy in the occupational context. In general, it is possible to frame the description of Fascist Italy's impact on Albania in terms of two main themes, which are interconnected with each other: labour and 'bonifica'.

4.1. Italian Labour and its Advantages

In the previous section, the authors attempted to show the Albanians' lack of working ability, highlighting the existence of resources that were not exploited, the lack of any desire towards the idea of progress, and, at the same time, reassured the reader about the potential of both the territory and the Albanians, arguing how, under the Italian hegemony, they would be able to develop their skills and attitude in a Fascist way. Therefore, when they describe the first effects of the union between Italy and Albania, they focused on the transformative impact of Italian labour on Albania.This aspect is a common topos in Italian colonial literature about AOI. For instance, in his articles from Ethiopia, Curzio Malaparte glorified how the Italian settlers were able to reconstruct a new 'Romagna' in Ethiopia (Malaparte and Laforgia 2023: 89–99), and looking at accounts of Italian travel in from Ethiopia it is possible to note a current definable narrative of settlements (Burdett 2010b: 118–26). Within these texts, the Italian labour in Albania acquires three main features: it is Italy's responsibility to apply its labour in the occupied context; therefore, labour itself becomes a geopolitical tool that would legitimate Italian dominance; this in turn provides a resurrection for Albania.

In the preface that Montanelli added to his publication right after the invasion, he writes:

> ‘Avevo veduto il caos Albanese. E ora licenzio il libro alla stampa a illustrazione di questo caos. […] Il primo dovere di un amico è quello di dire all’amico le sue manchevolezze. […] Spero che lo leggano con un po’ d’interesse anche gl’Italiani, perchè essi si sono ormai assunti, verso l’Albania un grave compito. Questo compito – ne siano certi i miei amici albanesi – l’Italia di Mussolini lo assolverà. Lo assolverà in pieno.’ (Montanelli 1939: 1)

Montanelli represents the Italian invasion as a response to the Albanian chaos, framing it as a relationship between two friends. The relationship is unequal, as one of the two is able not only to notice the defects of the other but also to intervene and solve them. In this relationship, two elements surface: the concept of responsibility, and the presence of Italy. First, the author states how it is the primary duty of Italy to intervene in Albania against that chaos; Montanelli does not elaborate further, but this concept legitimises the Italian intervention as an obligation of friendship, rather than an invasion. Second, the author optimistically anticipated the fulfilment of this obligation, reinforcing the concept by underlining the presence of Mussolini. This characterisation represents Mussolini as a guarantor of a positive result of the operation, reiterating the idea that only Italy can succeed in this work. In describing the annexation, Poggiali also identifies Italy as the only nation able to solve Albanian problems:

> ‘L’Italia, che in Albania aveva seminato a migliaia i suoi morti quando l’Albania era stata fatalmente teatro di lotte europee, intervenuta da sola a portarvi pace e lavoro non ebbe bisogno di fare altri olocausti.’ (Poggiali 1943: 48)

This quote refers to the Italian occupation of 1917 and moves on to affirm how Italy alone intervened to bring peace and labour without violence. Poggiali, in this paragraph, was in fact responding to the accusation of violence that the press in France and England had made about the Italian annexation of Albania, and he articulates two concepts. He first reiterates that it is Italy alone who is considering Albania. He then connects the concept of peace and work as two elements that Italy has introduced to Albania. To claim the introduction of peace in the colonial or occupied context was a topos in Fascist Italy; for instance, when visiting Libya, Mussolini claimed the *Pax Romana* over those territories (Burdett 2010b: 45–47). From these brief examples, it is possible to note how the authors addressed the uniqueness of the Italian experience in Albania, as an occupation that was distinguished by Fascism’s principles and the discourses over a country that could be considered a friend.

If Italian labour could be considered a means to provide peace, these authors do not shy away

from mentioning the advantages obtained by Italy in using labour as a tool of dominance. Bondioli, when describing the annexation says:

> 'Solo l'Italia, per la sua posizione geografica, per le sue condizioni di nazione operosa, per la stessa sua storia […] è oggi in grado di armonizzare i propri interessi e ideali con gli interessi vitali e le legittime aspirazioni del popolo albanese, i propri diritti al dominio dell'Adriatico […] con le necessità più urgenti della piccola ma fiera nazione.' (Bondioli 1939: 12)

Bondioli reiterates the concept of the uniqueness of Italy concerning Albania, and that even Italian geopolitical interests find their space in this exceptional situation. The quote describes Italy as the only nation that can develop its interests in harmony with those of Albania. Bondioli encapsulates these interests within the Italian right to dominate the entire Adriatic. From this quote, Italy emerges as exercising its expansionism in the Adriatic as a natural right guaranteed by its history, geographical position, and labour. The representation of Italy as a colonial empire that fosters its expansion through labour is derived from Crispi (Labanca 2002: 72–80), but it was only within Fascism that the conception of the Italian empire as an 'empire of labour' became systematic in Italian colonial discourse (Veracini 2018). Bondioli's quote reinforces the idea of labour as a feature of Italianness that includes an imperialist value, as through labour, Italy could develop an occupation that was convenient for the occupied and the occupiers, thus achieving the right to dominate the Adriatic. The advantages that Albania was supposed to gain mostly related to projects of modernisation, but also acquired a geopolitical value within the idea of Great Albania. Great Albania was a nationalistic project fostered by Albanian irredentists, who aimed to expand Albanian borders towards territories where a significant portion of the Albanian population lived. This project mainly aimed to include Kosovo within Albanian borders, but it also had its eyes on the Bulgarian and Montenegrin territories. When Italy annexed Albania, it also assumed its irredentist heritage (Micheletta 2008) and started to pursue the idea of Great Albania. Among the three authors, it is Poggiali who most clearly described this project after the war with Greece Italy obtained Kosovo, and he describes the event as follows:

> 'Le vicende di guerra intercorse tra il 28 ottobre 1940 e la fine del marzo 1941 ebbero tra le altre logiche conseguenze quella di portare alla realizzazione di un vecchio sogno: rivendicare all'Albania […] la intiera regione di Kossovo.' (Poggiali 1943: 163)

Poggiali affirms that the war made it possible to achieve an old dream: to give Kosovo to Albania and therefore create the 'Great Albania'. The author represents this annexation through a vocabulary that

suggests how Italy gifted the region to Albania, eventually reiterating an unequal power relationship between the two countries. The creation of Great Albania was followed by a huge propagandistic effort to show Albanians that Italy was capable of defending their national interests.[56] Nevertheless, the main concrete advantages celebrated by these authors are related to the ability of Italian labour to deeply impact Albanian society.

Montanelli, Poggiali and Bondioli describe Albania as being completely abandoned when the Italians arrived. Both natural resources and people were disregarded – the former were dissipated, and the latter were living in overwhelming and immobile tediousness.[57] To describe the Italian impact on this reality, the texts assigned Italy a demiurgical role, portraying it as an entity that was able to shape and regenerate Albania in a more modern and civilised way. Bondioli, in his concluding remarks, affirms that:

> 'Il 7 aprile 1939 si è così aperta una nuova era nella storia dell'Albania con una fase decisiva nei rapporti che, dopo tanti anni di oblio e di incertezze, riuniscono i due paesi che dominano l'Adriatico.' (Bondioli 1939: 193–94)

From the quote, the Italian invasion emerges as a palingenesis for Albania, which after years of oblivion was entering a new era within the unification between the two countries. The Italian role in creating the possibility for the rebirth of Albania is depicted, in these texts, through various qualities that can be associated with the Fascist discourse of modernity. For instance, Poggiali describes the effects of Italian labour over Albania as follows:

> 'La verità è che un fermento nuovo si è insinuato anche qui e va producendo effetti visibili. È il fermento del lavoro contrapposto all'accidia, dell'iniziativa contro il fatalismo, delle velocità contro la lentezza.' (Poggiali 1943: 244)

The author describes the relationship between Italian labour and Albania as a series of binary oppositions that list the values related to Fascism's discourse of modernity, and the attitudes depicting Albania before the arrival of the Italians. The construction of binary oppositions is a trademark of the Euro-Orientalist discourse (Adamovsky 2005), with these oppositions celebrating the qualities of a

---

[56] Despite the celebrations is necessary to notice that Italy requested a much bigger territorial annexation but was forced to settle just with Kosovo (Basciani 2022: 174–75).

[57] Poggiali articulates these claims systematically and are disseminated in the whole text (1943: 60).

capitalistic society against those that are more rural. The construction of the stereotypical inferiority of otherness is not a distinctive feature of Euro-Orientalism, but nevertheless it has been argued that this kind of depiction of otherness envisions a specific role and place for the colony in front of the metropole. Specifically, in the Euro-Orientalist case, these descriptions serve to provide a role within the capitalistic discourse for the autochthonous institutions (Adamovsky 2005). In other words, these narrations not only imply an unequal relationship, but also aim to envision a social organisation of determined reality. In the case of Italian narration towards Albania, it is possible to argue that these narrations located Albanian reality within a specific position inside Fascism's society. Within a political regime influenced by Futurism's imaginary (Bowler 1991), concepts like speed, labour and initiative reiterate a metropole – periphery framework created by the unequal ability of the two realities to express Fascism's values. These descriptions reveal how Italy was deploying a palingenesis over Albania. This palingenesis involves a way to reform the Albanians' attitude, but also exploit the natural resources of the territory. It is part of a narrative that Italian authors often deployed about colonial territories. In this narrative, the transformations that the Italian administration claimed to develop in the foreign territories were a metaphor for the palingenesis that Fascism generated in Italy (Burdett 2010b: 120). Therefore, it is necessary to notice that, in this narrative, Italy, under the aegis of Fascism, had already undergone these transformations through campaigns of agricultural, cultural and human reclamation orchestrated by the Fascist Party (Ben Ghiat 2004: 13). By implementing a Fascist society in the colonies, Italy aimed to trigger a palingenetic process even in the territories it conquered as part of its own regeneration.

Within these texts, the attempt to reform the attitudes and habits of Albanians shows an educational focus that is mainly related to the culture of work. For instance, Montanelli, visiting an Italian farm operating in Albania, addresses it as an 'Ateneo di Agricultura' (1939: 117). In describing some works made under Italian direction, Bondioli affirms how the result of this 'va apprezzato soprattutto nel senso dell'educazione sociale al lavoro e dell'avviamento del popolo verso forme di attività produttive' (1939: 143). The examples provided by Montanelli and Bondioli mainly look at the Italian perspective, but Poggiali also provides an account of Albanians being concretely influenced by Italian labour, describing several mines constructed by Italians. As he writes:

> 'In Albania s'è compiuto in breve tempo il miracolo di affezionare queste genti al lavoro della miniera, cancellando un atavismo dalle radici millenarie. È stata la forza irresistibile dell'esempio. Alcuni giovani ingegneri mandati laggiù dall'Italia, esile schiera di esperti pei lavori più duri dell'Albania da redimere […] si sentirono subito condottieri di milizie

> del lavoro disciplinate e agguerrite, qualche volta persino entusiaste.' (Poggiali 1943: 211–12)

This quote frames the principal means through which the Italians organised labour in Albania: with highly ranked Italian workers managing Albanian manpower. Poggiali describes this dynamic as a miracle because the Italians' example created affection in the Albanians towards working in the mines. The military metaphor allows the reader to imagine the Italian activity in Albania as a war against the sameness of the Albanians. Poggiali constantly reiterates this image, metaphorically constructing Italians as a militia of modernisation and labour, dislocated in Albania to fight against the population's attitude. It was a war that Italians were winning, and that would provide benefit to both the parties involved in this scenario, Italians and Albanians. Furthermore, these texts also articulate Italian labour as a means to extract resources from Albanian territory. As in the quote by Montanelli about the financial organisation of the country, Bondioli and Poggiali are both also optimistic about the possibility to gain concrete advantages from the exploitation of Albania. The annexation with Italy has, even in this field, a primary role according to Poggiali:

> 'Per secoli e secoli l'Albania ignorò praticamente quel che celava la scorza della sua terra irrorata dal sangue di tante lotte; e neppure il secolo ventesimo, dovunque prepotente e innovatore, valse a dissipare qui le ombre millenarie del caos e dell'oppressione […] Ora il clima propizio a quella rivelazione non s'è instaurato che dall'aprile del 1939.' (Poggiali 1943: 206)

It is thus the arrival of Italy that created the conditions necessary to exploit the resources of the soil. Poggiali reflects on how not even the arrival of the twentieth century provided modernisation for Albania. Rather, it was the location of Albania in Fascism's imperial community that made this goal achievable. This assertion further reiterates the representation of Fascism as an ideology able to accelerate the temporality of the state that adopts it. Poggiali also articulates how the Albanians were gaining concrete advantages from this exploitation. He describes the people working for the Italians as follows:

> 'andavano conquistandosi con la fatica assidua e ben remunerata il dono di una maggior efficienza fisica, l'affrancazione dalla malaria e dall'inedia.' (Poggiali 1943: 72)

The Albanians were, by subjecting themselves to Italian labour policies, obtaining their liberation from malaria and a new physical efficiency shaped by Fascism's conception of the body (Pinkus

1995: 82–85). Therefore, depicting the Italians as laborious would guarantee Italy a wider legitimation of its imperial policies, as this specific feature would allow Italians to deploy occupational policies that were positive, even for the locals.

These representations provide legitimacy to the Italian occupation, motivated by certain Italian national features. The texts articulate these features, merging immanent aspects of the Italian population, such as its Adriatic rights, with the improvements that Fascism has given to society. Besides legitimising, this system of representation operates as a colonial discourse in the sense that, as Bhabha has observed, binds together 'a range of difference and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization' (2004: 96). Within the economy of colonial discourse, the depictions analysed here aimed to show the evidence, in the form of differences between Albanians and Italians, that would justify the hierarchical organisation of the territory that the authors described. Furthermore, within this organisation, the authors were able to deploy the concept of Bonifica.

4.2. The Spectacle of 'Bonifica'

These texts propose 'Bonifica' as a process able to reform or redeem the material and spiritual aspects of life, and which is generated by Italian labour. This process of reformation, in Fascism's discourse, also presents the move towards the Nation in its singularity (Ben-Ghiat 2004: 13–27) as a process that would redeem national character. For instance, in showing the potentialities of Albanian territory, Montanelli states how it is necessary to make a 'Bonifica' to exploit them properly (Montanelli 1939: 103). Bondioli, in his concluding remarks, illustrates the 'Bonifiche' created by the Italians, and provides a metaphor of the relationship between these two countries, with Albania as a tree and Italy as the gardener (1939: 202). This means that the 'Bonifica' is something that is done by the gardener and which would deeply affect the life of the tree, making it something different. Among these accounts, Poggiali is the only one to explore and articulate the precise meaning of 'Bonifica' in Albania. In explaining the kind of 'bonifica' the Italians were doing, the author says:

> 'Contro questa situazione interveniva, piena di ardimento, la bonifica. Prima quella immediata, consistente nell'aggiornare le consuetudini rurali, nell'affrancarle dall'ignoranza, nel costringerle alla assiduità […] Poi c'erano i "lavori in corso" della grande bonifica; quella che prese d'assalto duecento mila ettari di terreni paludosi.' (Poggiali 1943: 68–69)

This passage belongs to a chapter that is entitled, significantly: "Punime ne vazhdim", which means

"work in progress" in Albanian. The chapter is a continuous description of the Italian efforts to modernise the country with a celebratory intention. This quote addresses 'Bonifica' as an entity that intervened against the tragic situation on the other side of the Adriatic. Therefore, it represents the Italian invasion as being deeply related to the concept of Bonifica, rather than a geopolitical action. To narrate this event through this terminology underlines the humanitarian aspect of the action, disavowing the concept of invasion and representing it as a more appealing, overwhelmingly social renovation. This renovation, for Poggiali, besides educating the Albanian population, also acquires an entertaining and spectacular value for both Italians and Albanians. For instance, in the chapter dedicated to representing Albania as a tourist attraction, Poggiali says:

> 'Le nuove generazioni, educate alla fervida scuola del dinamismo moderno, sappiano trovare ragioni di svago e di compiacimento anche nel travaglio mirabile di una terra tutta agitata la quale offre, insomma, uno spettacolo superlativo dell'operosità trasformatrice e redentrice.' (Poggiali 1943: 237)

The author holds that the new generations, who have grown up within a Fascist society, would understand the spectacular value of what Italy was doing in Albania. Within the text, this passage follows a sequence of comparisons between traditional touristic sites, such as castles or palaces, and the sites of the 'Bonifica' in which the author affirms that their value is equal. These transformations were not only for the benefit of Italian travellers and tourists; in describing the impact of the Italian administration over Tirana, Poggiali writes:

> 'I pastori, che parevano simbolizzare la vecchia Albania evocandola dalle lontananze bibliche, scrutavano a lungo, interrogavano e stupivano a sentir dire che tutto doveva essere finito in un anno, od anche prima. Si poteva paragonare il loro stato d'animo a quello di chi ha sempre abitato una dimora squallida e angusta con tante porte sbarrate e non sapeva che cosa ci fosse dietro […] ed ecco un bel giorno giungere chi reca le chiavi per spalancare quelle porte e mostra che celavano impensate ricchezze.' (Poggiali 1943: 63)

Poggiali here represents the encounter between the old, biblical and even Homeric Albania, and Fascism's modernity. He articulates this contact as a liberation from the chains of misery that were forcing Albanians to live a poor life, despite the fact that they had almost unimaginable wealth. The Italians are like a Deus ex machina that shows up suddenly, for no particular reason, to help Albania exit its misery. Faced with this process of reshaping the nature of Albanian cities, whose inhabitants are

still used to the primitive appearance of Albania, they are astonished. Poggiali here represents a pacific clash between primitivism and modernism, this clash allows the author to first state the idea that Albanians are still primitive and in need of someone to lead them. Second, the astonishment that they feel glorifies the Italian project, as the Italians are even able to assimilate primitive entities like Albanian shepherds into their modernity.

Fascism often used the concept of 'Bonifica' in its colonial discourse concerning the AOI and Libya (Veracini 2018). Although the regime deployed slightly different strategies relating to Albania, we may note how the concept of 'Bonifica' also impacted the narration of this reality. This impact emerges not only from its modernising and legitimising meanings, but also form its spectacular nature, which could fascinate – albeit for different reasons – both Italians and Albanians. The aesthetic value of rituals and mythologies within the economy of the regime's discourse was fundamental to its self-representation, which was constructed through a tight observance of aesthetic rules that constituted the signifier as well as the signified of Fascism's qualities (Falasca-Zamponi 2023: 184–85). In Poggiali's text, it seems that the concept of Bonifica took on an aesthetic value as an overwhelming process that was capable of renewing an entire reality. The author represents Bonifica as not only redeeming, but also as an enjoyable process, one that can provide astonishment to its spectators but also as a value in itself, even without considering all the agricultural and social advantages that – from a Fascist perspective – would derive from it. Therefore, Bonifica could also operate on an inclusive level, as both its value and its necessity could be recognised by Italians and Albanians alike. Looking at the inclusive aspect of the process, which contemplates Italians and Albanians, the Bonifica results in a useful discursive tool for framing Fascist imperialism, as it assures the repeatability of Fascism's discourse even outside of Italy. It is Poggiali's text that predominantly exemplifies this assurance by showing how valuable the Bonifica can be for both the occupier and the occupied.

4.3. Through the Italian Frame

It was not only Italian literature about the region that needed to represent Albania as being improved by Italian labour and its connections with Italy – Italian fairs that represented Albania had to enhance this element as well. At the end of the '30s, the Ministry of Popular Culture started to organize the *Mostra triennale d'Oltremare* in Naples. This colonial fair opened on the 9th of May 1940, and closed a few months later due to the war. Its objective was to celebrate Italy as a colonial empire, bringing together in the same fair a sense of the relationship between the metropolitan and colonial environments. The exhibit represented the colonies in their historic, geographic, and economic dimensions,

aiming to celebrate their economic value, gather support for the Italian activities overseas, and provide a general reading of Italian expansionism as an additional segment of the Roman Empire. Through this exhibit, the visitors would have had the possibility to re-read Italian colonialism through a 'Roman' perspective (Arena 2012), enhancing the idea of the myth of Rome as a powerful identity maker for Italians who were visiting the fair (Gallicchio 2021). The exhibit also included an Albanian pavilion entitled 'l'Albania nella civiltà Mediterranea' (Albania within Mediterranean civilization), which was committed to celebrating the value of Albania within the Italian imperial community through visual art, anthropological and archaeologic artefacts, and economic data. Looking at the guidelines issued by the SSAA to the artists and curators who were supposed to organise the Albanian pavilion will allow us to understand which discourses on Albania served to celebrate Italian expansionism and to reinforce the connection between Fascist Italy and the Roman empire.

The architects Gherardo Bosio and Niccolò Berardi planned the Albanian pavilion. They projected a structure that would symbolise the union between Italy and Albania: the construction materials were tuff and marble from Italy, while the structure resembled a *Kulla,* a traditional Albanian fortified building with a rectangular shape.[58] The inside represented various segments of Albanian life; the short walls hosted one painting each about Roman and Fascist Albania, while the longer ones showed both the economic life of Albania and its historical and political development until the arrival of Fascism. These representations would exhibit a merging of pictures and paintings that, taken together, would signify the progressive path of Albanian history towards the arrival of Fascism. Alongside the paintings and pictures, the lower level of the exhibit hosted artefacts and statistics that explored the events represented in the upper images. The entire pavilion's organisation was articulated in a booklet entitled *Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle terre d'Oltremare*, written by the third office in charge of press and propaganda, the SSAA. This booklet displays two main sections: the first concerns the history of Albania, and explains which events from Albanian history are worthy of mention in the pavilion and which are not. The second contains extensive and precise indications for the artists and curators who were supposed to work at the exhibit. These guidelines explored the subjects in a detailed way, leaving little space for the artists' creativity, and already indicated the objects and data to be shown. *De facto,* the people working on

[58] For a more complete analysis of the architecture and the artistic sections of the pavilion look at Gallicchio's essay (2021).

this pavilion had to merely follow the instructions (Gallicchio 2021). These guidelines show the relationship between Italian authorities and the public discourse on Albania, illustrating how the Italian administration of Albania was shaping and reconstructing an image of the country to glorify the rule of Fascist Italy.

This analysis focuses on the construction of Albania in this fair, concentrating on the concepts functional to celebrating Fascism's expansionism. The first section of the guidelines shows an unscrupulous use of history, with the first pages stating how:

> 'appare fino dagli inizi discutibile la utilità di seguire l'Albania in ogni suo momento […] tale criterio, se appare di rigore in una trattazione scientifica […] non può essere seguito senza perdere di vista il concetto informatore di una simile mostra, quello di offrire una sintesi ed una esaltazione della civiltà italiana in paese d'oltremare.' (see Figure 10)

The articulation of this concept shows how Italian authorities had to reshape Albanian history, expressing a contradiction in relating to the whole subject. The fair, to follow its purpose, seeks to bypass any scientific truth and extract a new profile for Albanian history. This new profile has its basis in one main concept: the Roman spirit of Albania. The arrival of the Roman empire on the Albanian coast should be represented, following the Secretary's intentions, as the starting point of Albanian history because 'l'Albania è oggi romana e secondo il nostro concetto romani si nasce' (see Figure 11). This means that the document proposes Rome as the entity that shaped each and every aspect of Albanian history, working as an 'eternal civilisation' to construct the spirit of Albania (see Figures 12–13). For instance, the booklet states that it is necessary to avoid any reference to Greece, and to represent Venice as the daughter of Rome. In these guidelines Skanderbeg, the Albanian national hero, is also driven by the spirit of Albanian civilisation, which 'è una realtà di civiltà romana' (see Figure 14). Furthermore, the booklet explains how the Italian invasion should be conceived in the same frame: as a further manifestation of the Roman spirit in Albania. This interpretation of Albanian history linearly follows the construction of the stereotype in the colonial discourse theorised by Bhabha. He states how the function of this process is 'the creation of a space for a "subject peoples" through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised' (2004: 100). Within this frame, the document dictates the intentional exclusion of certain elements of Albanian history from the exhibit due to their uselessness to the Italian purpose. Therefore, these exclusions show how Italian authorities were elaborating a knowledge that would provide a cultural frame, that of Rome, which described a limited version of Albanian reality as being subjected to what this document called 'Latin Imperialism'. Furthermore, this scaffolding also works from a Fascist perspective,

as it aims to demonstrate that the establishment of a Fascist society *in loco* was coherent with the history of the place. This concept becomes clearer when looking at a brief point written in this guideline, which states:

> 'I cosiddetti rapporti italo-albanesi dell'800, per i quali vedo fatti i nomi di Garibaldi e di Crispi […] dobbiamo dire che Garibaldi non è «utilizzabile», come non lo è l'oriundo albanese Crispi […] dobbiamo quindi inquadrare gli avvenimenti recentissimi in una cornice comune con i Romani antichi.' (see Figures 15 – 16)

This quote demonstrates how, for Italian authorities, the imperialist efforts made by the previous Italian governments did not matter. The annexation of Albania was to be perceived as an action that belonged only to Fascist Italy, and narrating an Albania that had been always Roman was functional to this purpose. Furthermore, the necessity to create a break between the two Italies, which this quote demonstrates, suggests that the exhibit was not glorifying Italian expansionism per se, rather represented the territorial expansion that was only achievable through a Fascist frame. Therefore, this production of knowledge, besides serving to represent Albania as a subject of Italian colonial discourse, also indirectly articulates an image of Fascism as an expansionist force. This feature surfaces in the articulation of a direct continuity between Romans and Fascism, and acquires a clearer form in the second section of the guidelines.

The second section of the booklet provides guidelines for the artists and curators working on the exhibit. These guidelines explain how, on the first short wall, the artist should represent Roman Albania as a peaceful territory protected by the Roman legions, a fecund land living as a 'pace georgica' (see Figure 17). The second wall hosted the painting about Fascist Albania, which was articulated following most of the patterns expressed by the authors previously analysed. The painter had to avoid any reference to the military invasion and represent Albania as a peaceful but dynamic territory. The booklet uses the same vocabulary as Poggiali, explaining the need to represent Albania as a work in progress (see Figure 18), while the representation of Italian activities had to demonstrate the dynamic features of Fascist dominion. The two other walls hosted representations of historical-political developments in Albania and its economic life. For the latter, the booklet suggested depicting all the activities deployed by Italy in Albania: extractive activities, public works, financial organisation, pictures of cattle and cultivation. The guidelines then suggest dividing the other painting into seven frames, to show the seven historical periods from Rome to Fascism. Six of these seven represented the Roman, Venetian and Italian periods of influence over the region, with just one focused on the five centuries between the fall of Skanderbeg and the arrival of Fascism. This frame was supposed to

provide a sense of emptiness and abandonment, and the authors proposed using pictures of Albania where it was not yet possible to recognise Fascism's actions, namely sheds, mud, weak cattle, marshes and swamps (see Figures 19–20). From our perspective, these passages show how the imaginary related to Fascism was also displayed to depict a reality that – as per the SSAA's intentions – was supposed to represent the opposite of Fascism. To show a period of abandonment, the booklet suggests images that articulate the idea through Fascism's imaginary, and the absence of Bonifica. It also reinforces the idea that these representations expressed a certain degree of lies and contradictions. To represent Turkish dominion, the Italian authority suggested using contemporary pictures in which Fascist influence was not evident.

To conclude, the analysis of this source should not lead to systemic conclusions about the 'machine of consensus' deployed by Fascism or Italian rule in Albania. Rather, it provides some insights into the ability of Fascism's propaganda to operate in between the disavowal and recognition of the foreign subject under its control. This material suggests that the Italian authorities disseminated an image of Albania to respond to a political necessity, and that this image functioned on two levels. First, it provided a general cultural and historical frame in which to locate, coherent with Fascism's principles, the Albanians as a subject of colonial discourse. It also reaffirmed the value of Fascism as a panoptical tool, able to construct knowledge about a reality that was subjected to its scope – a knowledge that, despite only being partially demonstrable, acquires the value of unique truth as it circulates within a colonial discourse.

5. Conclusions

This chapter highlights the common aspects between the various sources and texts; however, as the first section suggests, they testify to discrepant experiences that influence some of the texts' themes. In the concluding observations, it may be worth briefly exploring some of these themes in order to provide a more comprehensive account of these publications. The previous paragraphs show how Poggiali was the only one to provide an articulate image of bonifica, accounting for its spectacular value. The exploration of this theme is not accidental, as Poggiali's account is very much focused on the relationship between the local population and Italian policies. This focus makes Poggiali's text less focused on the history of the country than those of the other two writers, and more focused on showing the representation of Italian administration in Albania. By contrast, Bondioli's account celebrates the impact of the Italians on Albania, not only during the Fascist occupation but throughout its whole history. It deploys an overwhelmingly Italo-centric perspective, negating that of Albania, and providing little engagement with the Albanian subject per se. It is Montanelli who, among these

authors, showed the most interest in the local reality. The first pages of his text provide a general description of Albania, which follows the stereotypes about the Balkans at the time and narrates Albania as a place that is divided between east and west (Todorova 2009: 16). Furthermore, *Albania una e mille* provides, more than the other texts, extensive ethnographic and anthropological observations about the local population. These observations are framed in the general system of representation delineated in the third section of the chapter. Nevertheless, they constitute an original feature of Montanelli's text, which is the only one to provide this kind of account in detail.

At the beginning of the chapter, I claimed that adopting a thalassological perspective would have been beneficial in understanding how the cultural discourse that accompanied Italy's invasion of Albania and Yugoslavia functioned, showing how it became possible and plausible. Both this chapter and the previous have delineated how these two 'micro-ecologies' related to the Italian discourse about the Adriatic, and how they functioned. I have shown how the narration of discursive constructions of Albania glorifies its potentialities and constructs it as a place where it was possible to develop a Fascist society. Meanwhile, the previous chapter illustrated how the description of the relationship between Italy and Dalmatia provided by Federzoni imbues Fascism with the qualities that made it possible to construct a putative peace in the Adriatic.

In light of the articulation of these two discourses, and following Horden and Purcell (Peters 2003), the methodological question could be: is it possible to find features shared by these two elements that are generated by the Adriatic's geographical and historical distinctiveness? To answer this question, it is necessary to create a premise: the topic of these chapters is how Fascist Italy discursively constructed a reality in a way that was functional to its imperialist desires. Consequently, the object of inquiry must be found within the expression of Italian imperialist intentions towards the region. However, looking at the various devices displayed by Italian authorities and authors in describing the area, it is notable that in articulating the images of both places, they all have a common point of departure and arrival. These sources show how all the texts were generated with the same intention: to provide a coherent location for these new territorial acquisitions within Fascism's discourse. After visiting all the qualities that make these territories valuable from a Fascist perspective, we may note that they all deployed the same solution to this process: to locate these territories within a Fascist frame that, in itself, can solve the doubts and contradictions that could arise from these annexations. For instance, it is only within a Fascist frame, which founded and organised the archaeologic expedition in Albania, that it was possible to sustain the common racial origins between Albania and Italy and thus to undermine the idea that it was an invasion. Another example of this can be found in the description of all the advantages that the development of a Fascist society can provide

to the occupied country.

This process of 'location' was also founded on contradictions, as well as the constant disavowal of various aspects of these realities; nevertheless, these necessities were not perceived as problematic for its development. Consequently, the answer to the question could show the common origin of the discursive representation of these territories, which perpetuates despite the differences between the two regions. Therefore, it is necessary to understand wheter the Adriatic setting was fundamental to helping the development of this discourse, to provide elements that coherently deploy a description of these territories that would have located them in what Bhabha described as 'the space for subject peoples', a space from which to deploy a colonial discourse (2004: 100). The positive answer to this question must be found in the patterns of narration that the authors deployed to serve their purpose. Thus, most of the arguments used to realise the discourse are provided by the Adriatic setting in which these territories are located. The Venetian and Roman heritage of the area, the understanding of the sea as a connector between Italy and Dalmatia, the presence of Italian speaking groups, and the archaeological findings – all these elements served as useful tools to represent the territories from a Fascist perspective, without raising the racial and social preoccupations that the other Italian colonies generated in writers of the time (Duncan 2005). In other words, based on these sources, is possible to argue, firstly, how the Adriatic, within Italian colonial discourse, constituted a region unified by Italian expansionist desire. Secondly, how the area was distinctively characterized by various heterogeneous elements, like archaeological ruins, that the Italian authors interpreted as capable of legitimating the Italian rule in the region.

The thalassological perspective highlights the role of the Fascist elements present in Italian discourse concerning the Adriatic. This chapter underlines how this discourse shares many features with the colonial discourse constructed by Bhabha. More specifically one can argue that the Italian discourse about the Adriatic has the same objective as that of the colonial, as it aims to 'construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction' (Bhabha 2004: 101). Although the Italian discourse concerning Albania is more ambivalent, as it asserts the primitivism of Albanians while also celebrating some of their features, it shares the same reasoning: to provide a specific image of the colonised that would legitimate an invasion. Bhabha proposes questioning the functionality of the colonial discourse by understanding its regime of truth (2004: 95–96), which ensures the productivity of colonial discourse.

The sources analysed here have testified to the process of the construction of a specific regime of truth concerning Albania, showing how they articulated a stereotypical image of the nation as being

able to sustain certain specific features of the Italian administration. Looking at the various images provided by the sources, the elements that are shown to be fundamental to guaranteeing the repeatability of the discourse are those that are related to Fascism's values and ideas of society. It is the palingenesis that Fascism ensures which allows the sources to understand which image of Albania was useful for Italian administrations to construct. It is also Fascist ideology that provides the discursive elements that can construct, within its regime of truth, a legitimate hierarchy between Italians and Albanians, indicating the concepts (such as Bonifica) necessary to enhance these representations.

To conclude, these sources constructed their regime of truth around Fascism, which appears from these texts as a form of laic religion, a way of conceiving the world, similar to the concept of ideology theorised by Gramsci (Gramsci 2015: 1378). This similarity arises from Fascism's endeavour to define the Italians in the Adriatic as collective subjects through an imperial dimension. Fascism imbued Italian cultural discourse with a societal archetype centred around its regenerative potential. This model facilitated the literary portrayal of the Adriatic region within Italian culture, employing tropes such as bonifica and labour, while also emphasising the repeatability and applicability of Fascist civilisation and Italian colonialism in various contexts. Authors who celebrated the export of Fascism to Albania and elucidated its purported enhancement of local living conditions affirm the transferability of the occupational model employed in Albania.

These elements suggest that Fascism attempted to represent itself as world view akin to Gramsci's conceptualisation of ideology in his eleventh notebook, which considers ideology as a conception of the world which aims to achieve hegemony (Liguori 2004: 144–45). To accomplish this aim, ideology led individuals to develop a collective awareness of themselves as a collective (Panichi 2020; Liguori 2004). Gramsci reflected on this concept looking predominantly at the subaltern subject, arguing that this awareness – thus also ideology – was necessary in order to bring about and class struggle. Furthermore, he initially conceived Fascism as Caesarism and later as a form of passive revolution (Roberts 2011). The examination of sources in this chapter implies that Fascism aimed to function as an ideological apparatus that tried to construct a specific collective identity not for a particular social group, but rather for a national group.

These narratives underscore how the authors displayed a metropolitan identity in the Adriatic, which is no longer the imagination by any single author, as was explored in the previous chapters, but rather is concretely projected onto the concrete level of a colonial administration. The Italians depicted in these accounts operated as a collective national identity, shaping and instructing a national otherness characterised by a perceived lower level of modernity and civilisation. For reasons of political power, Fascism bolstered this collective role of Italians in the Adriatic, persistently projecting

this metropolitan image even within national borders. By aligning this process with the regenerative messages concerning the Italian nation and its perceived need for redemption, one can assert that Fascism, through Adriatic imperialism, sought to function as a tool for collective consciousness – raising and mass organisation, echoing similarities with the concept of ideology (Panichi 2020: 395) as I will elaborate on further in the conclusion.

Conclusions

Fernand Braudel, in his pivotal work on the history of the Mediterranean, argues that 'the Adriatic is perhaps the most unified of all the regions of the sea' (Braudel 1995: 125). Braudel's reason for making this statement is the long-term influence that the Italian peninsula exercised over the eastern Adriatic. He emphasises how Venice had been controlling strategic outposts that assured her authority over the entire sea, and quotes the magistracy responsible for trade in Venice, which stated 'ogni merce che entra nell'Adriatico o esce dall'Adriatico deve toccar Venezia' (Braudel 1995: 128). The conception of the Adriatic as unified under Venetian aegis, and of Venice as a political entity capable of employing an imperial understanding of the Adriatic in which it is the metropolitan capital of the region, also features in the representations of the Adriatic employed by the authors analysed in this thesis. Their narratives display is original in that they imagine Venetian history as a segment of a larger whole, namely the history of the Italian Nation. This history encompasses various political phenomena between the Roman Empire and Fascism. Through the exploration of this history, these authors configured the role of the Italian Nation in the Adriatic as the metropolitan centre of the eastern Adriatic region, which is represented as a peripheral space. The employment of a thalassological perspective, which in this context meant analysing narratives about different spaces exploring the same Adriatic system, has allowed me to establish how the narratives conceived different geographic and social realities in the Adriatic through similar patterns.

Several scholars have developed historical and cultural studies concerning the relationship between Italy and the former Yugoslav regions on the Adriatic, emphasising their cultural and national hybridity (Sluga 2001) and pinpointing the role of this region as a space where national identities were negotiated (Ballinger 2018b). Nonetheless, I argue that in a comprehensive approach to Italian discourse on the Adriatic as a whole, it is possible to articulate a further perspective on the relationship between Italian identity and the region. This thesis aims to show, through its analysis, a justification of such an approach, as its deployment has revealed various elements that provided unity and distinctiveness to the Adriatic from an Italian perspective. The narratives investigated show how, in their perspective, history plays a structural role in determining the identity of a given space. The histories of Venice and Rome are both standardised as experiences of greatness, civilisation, and identity. Their development in the eastern Adriatic generates a solid base of visual and literary representations, architectural and urbanistic ruins that are visible and recognisable as Roman or Venetian by Italian travellers in the area, who acknowledged them as the main identifiers of the region. These identifiers, in the representations studied, are supplemented by memories or direct experience of the various

Italian attempts to establish influence over the area. The latter includes, for instance, the battle of Lissa, or Vis (1866), during the third war of independence, and the imagined meaning of these for the Italian-speaking population of Dalmatia as portrayed by D'Annunzio (1928: 11) investigated in the second chapter, or Mantegazza's representation of the Italian school in Durrës as capable of evoking the Latin history of the city (1912a: 124–27) explored in the first chapter. All of these observations depict a continuity between Roman, Venetian and Italian experiences in the Adriatic. This continuity concerns both the northern and the southern Adriatic, in both contexts serving as a source of legitimisation for their claims about further Italian involvement in the region. A thalassological perspective thus permits us to note how these narratives employ the use of specific histories in the Adriatic to assert and map Italian geopolitical interests in the region, showing how historical narratives are useful to direct claims of sovereignty and expansionist policies (Pocock 1998). Moreover, by viewing Fascism's discourse about the region, it is possible to frame certain specific features that were deployed about the Adriatic as a whole. Fascist ideology and its concepts of civilisation served as a further source of legitimisation for Italian dominion in the area. The third and fourth chapters investigate how elements of Fascist discourse surfaced in descriptions of the Adriatic, noting how, within the region, the political system that Fascism deployed alongside the occupation could accept, within its borders, the presence of a national otherness, albeit limited to a specific role and on a lower level of the hierarchy of nationalities that Fascism envisioned.

Italy, like many other states and regions belonging to Southern Europe, has been historically represented by cultural productions of other European nations, through a centre-periphery pattern that assigns a peripheral role to Italy (Cazzato 2017; Contarini 2021). Marginal and peripheral spaces are the result of specific constructions and representations of social and geographic spaces, and 'the building of modern nations involves the marking out of some groups of people and places as marginal in relation to the nation's core groups' (Forgacs 2014: 1). As Forgacs contends, the process of nation-state construction in Italy, a region which was recognised as southern and peripheral, involved the construction of diverse marginalities, such as southern Italy within the borders of the state, and the colonies beyond them. As Labanca argues, the main driving force of the first phase of Italian colonialism was the necessity to gain international prestige and develop a policy of power through which Italy would be acknowledged among the Great Powers of Europe (Labanca 2002: 54–55).

Therefore, it might be possible to argue that the creation of a colonial empire worked in two distinct ways. First, it was pursued by the Italian government and elites to redeem their peripheral

position with respect to other European powers.[59] Second, it created a periphery to the Italian state which 'meant that the imagined spatial structure of centre and periphery, dominance and dependency […] was now reproduced at an international level' (Forgacs 2014: 3). When viewing the Italian discourse about the Adriatic, another territory emerges that Italian authors perceive as peripheral. Delving into travelogues, essays, articles, autobiographies, notes and guidelines regarding the shores of the eastern Adriatic – produced in diverse contexts by people with different agendas, aims, political beliefs and backgrounds, but linked by their Italian nationality and their direct experience of the region – displays how the Italian authors moving to the eastern side of the Adriatic perceived themselves as metropolitan subjects moving within a space that was peripheral to them. The diverse textual analyses employed in the thesis show that the different spatial contexts that border with the Adriatic display features that may in turn be territorial,[60] historical, political,[61] or even demographic[62] and capable of evoking imperialistic representations in how the authors narrated the region. These representations employed diverse patterns, but they all have a common factor, namely that Italians in the Adriatic conceive the space around them as a periphery seen from a metropolitan perspective. Such a perspective allows them to represent the Adriatic as a space with features that must comply with the characteristics displayed by Italian imperial discourse. For instance, in visiting Ottoman Albania, Mantegazza emphasises how the region was abandoned and would have needed Italian companies to work there in order to stop wasting its resources, which is coherent with Crispi's plan to use the colonies as a place of emigration for Italian workers. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Adriatic was a space in which Italians were claiming an imperialist role for themselves, using the features observed in the region to demonstrate how Italy was naturally prone to play an imperial role over the seaside.

1. The Italian Discourse about the Adriatic and its Features

This thesis explores multifaceted issues across various chapters, highlighting how Italian observers, while travelling in the eastern Adriatic regions, consistently discovered elements that allowed them

---

[59] This position had become particularly straightforward by the end of the nineteenth century, with Tunisi, a city considered crucial for Italian ambitions, being occupied by France (Labanca 2002: 49).

[60] Like their proximity to Italy, claimed by Castellini as a justification for Italian intervention in Albania (1913: 148–52).

[61] Like the presence of the Ottoman rule, analysed in the first chapter, or the aggressive Yugoslav policy denounced by Dei Gaslini (1929: 104).

[62] Like the presence of Italians in the urban centres of Dalmatia; meanwhile the Yugoslavs were inhabiting the countryside, which Menini gave as a reason to establish Italian dominion over the area (1925: 9).

to envision themselves as being included in the metropole or at the centre of these peripheral spaces. Consequently, most of these observers perceived and depicted the social reality of the eastern Adriatic as peripheral or subaltern. These representations relied on conventional colonial discursive devices, narrating encounters with a national otherness in the eastern Adriatic marked by the negation of coevalness and subalternity. Since the 1920s, these devices were intertwined with elements of Fascism's discourse of power, expanding the discursive strength of Italian claims over the Adriatic. This thesis focuses on how the employment of an eschatological way of representing the region, or the elaboration of an Italian and Fascist identity capable of developing a 'bonifica' of both the landscapes and attitudes of a given community, provided further justifications for and perspectives on Italian imperial expansion. These perspectives articulate the distinctiveness of Italian colonial discourse, allowing it to perform theoretical operations that are typically considered contradictory within colonial discourses. As was explored in the third and fourth chapters, Fascism's influence allowed these authors to encompass the presence of a national otherness within the imperial borders without perceiving them as a threat to the empire, constructing them as entities that could achieve their greatness within the Fascist and Italian frame.

An analysis of Italian discourse on the eastern Adriatic between 1910 and 1943 reveals a nationalistic emphasis within Italian imperialist ambitions. Chapters one and two emphasise this national focus. The former explores Italian travelogues advocating for intervention in Albania to liberate the nation from Ottoman rule, while the latter articulates Italian unification as an imperialist endeavour on the Dalmatian coast. This analysis positions Italian imperialism as distinctive within European imperialism due to its nationalistic feature which, within the Adriatic context, revolves around nationalistic principles in two ways. First, it contends that Italy has the ability to defend and create the national interest of another oppressed nation, such as Albania under the Ottoman authority. Second, on a specifically Italian level, it suggests how Italy has to establish control over the eastern Adriatic shore in order to complete its unification, envisioning this control in terms of excluding or reducing to subalternity the national otherness living in the same space.

Chapters three and four delve into the nuances of Fascism's discourse, analysing travelogues and unpublished archival materials. Within this examination, the thesis pursues a dual focus: first, scrutinising the discursive tools fashioned by Fascism and utilised by cultural representations to legitimise and perpetuate control over the area. Second, it explores Fascism's standalone role within Italian cultural discourse, along with its capacity to generate fresh imagery and representations to ensure the functionality of the colonial aspects embedded in this discourse. Through the exploration of these themes, one might posit that Fascism emerges as a discursive force that endeavours to forge

a demiurgical relationship with reality, attempting to mould it in accordance with its imperatives. Simultaneously, assessing the image of itself that it aims to project reveals insights akin to Gramsci's ideology, portraying Fascism as a broad conceptual tool that could lead a subject exposed to it to gain awareness of itself (Gramsci 2015: 1378). In its literary articulation, Fascism emerges not merely as a political ideology, but rather as an overwhelming force that aligns the destinies of the Italian state with the Roman empire. This alignment allows Italians to relive the glory of their ancestors and aspire to a new societal model guiding them towards 'victory'. Within this framework, Gramsci's elaboration of the concept of ideology, deeply rooted in folklore, religion, and popular culture, seems apt to describe the attempt to depict Fascism as instrumental in achieving Adriatic peace while systematically transforming the societies within its purview through the concept of 'bonifica'. In his eleventh notebook, Gramsci delineates the similarities between religion and ideology, suggesting that ideology could be considered a secular religion or a comprehensive worldview fostering collective consciousness (Liguori 2004). In the context outlined in this thesis, the authors also described Fascism through these features, endeavouring to depict the conquest of new territories as a functional element for both the occupier and the occupied. The implantation of a Fascist society into a foreign territory is depicted as a regeneration, offering a new paradigm for perceiving and engaging with the world, while also instilling collective consciousness in the populace residing within it. In this sense, examining the representation of Albanians and Yugoslavs concerning the development of a Fascist society in their countries suggests how Fascism utilised its ideological attributes to work on the two sides of colonial discourse, trying to coherently show both the superiority of Italians and the captivating nature of the subjected reality.

2. Further Developments

My interest in Italian colonial expansionism in the Balkans, and the cultural discourse that motivated and sustained it, emerged from studying the relationship between Italy and the Balkans in the 1990s during my undergraduate studies. Observing the migration processes between Albania and Italy, coupled with various Italian interventions in the context,[63] sparked an interest in scrutinising prior connections between these regions through the theoretical concepts presented in postcolonial studies.

[63] Italy is the main military contributor to KFOR, the international peacekeeping force supervising the construction of Kosovo as a state. Furthermore, Italy played a major role in the first democratic elections in Albania and employed various military operations in the region.

Moreover, the genealogical focus of this work paves the way for further expansion in terms of sources, geography, and temporal considerations.

This study draws from a select yet representative array of literary sources, which does not claim to be comprehensive. The extensive number and diverse genres of publications in the Italian language concerning the region within the time period considered offer numerous avenues for future research that may offer further options to work on the relationship between Italian expansionism and the Adriatic region. This thesis elucidates the Italian epistemological understanding of the Adriatic during a period of accelerated expansion in the region, paving the way for successive scholar works of this phenomenon. In the fourth chapter, the research indicates how the primary sources, especially Poggiali's text (Poggiali 1943: 237–41), emphasised Albania, and the improvements made by the Italians there, as an attractive location for Italian tourists. The connections between tourism and colonialism within the Italian context had been partially explored (McGuire 2018b; Hom 2012; McLaren 2006); an investigation into these offers an insight into how the region was located within the Italian imperial community, which function Italian authorities foresaw for the region, and how it was perceived and represented by Italian tourists. From the analysis of Poggiali's understanding of Albania as a touristic destination, it is possible to extend a comparable interest to other Adriatic territories. Luigi Bertarelli's 1934 guide for Touring Club on the Dalmatian and Julian regions (Bertarelli 1934) and *Le vie d'Italia*, the Club's periodical, had employed various representations of Dalmatia since the First World War (Lonati 2011), which would be useful to investigate through a postcolonial lens. Other valuable sources in this sphere include the Drini periodical, a monthly publication exploring Albanian tourism between 1940 and 1943 (Ballinger 2018a), and the activities of the Italian Geographic Society.

This thesis provides a brief investigation into the role of the *Società geografica italiana* in exploring and representing the eastern Adriatic territories by analysing the publications of Baldacci and Ferrero. Nonetheless, the society, especially the publications by Giotto Dainelli, edited various volumes about the region that could be further explored in tandem with the Touring Club's publications as a means to see how state-sponsored initiatives tended to represent the region to Italians before Fascism's rise. Furthermore, in my research, I visited the archive of the *Sottosegretariato agli affari*

albanesi, which contains a vast amount of heterogeneous documentation about the Italian administration of Albania, which is mostly unexplored by scholarly research.[64] I focused on a subset of documents from the institution's office number three, associated with press and propaganda, to investigate the state-sponsored exhibit about Albania. However, the press and propaganda archive includes a range of unpublished materials that could significantly enhance the study of Italian cultural discourse regarding Albania during the period of domination, and which I plan to work on further in my next research project. Among the diverse sources in the archive, of particular note are the scripts for several propaganda films proposed to the office. These scripts contain numerous comments from the office, determining whether the movie aligns with the needs of propaganda at the time. Consequently, these scripts offer a relevant source for further research into Fascism's representation of Albania, providing a privileged perspective on the decision-making process within the Italian propaganda machinery, and revealing the regime's desired image of Albania through films and the pivotal elements driving movie production.

This thesis shows how Italian cultural discourse displayed the ability represent foreign territories and people, with their distinctive features, within the Italian and Fascist imperial community. The research subsequently opens the field to two sets of questions, the first territorial and the second temporal. This work articulates the possibility to view other territorial contexts in proximity to those analysed to understand if and how Italian propaganda worked in a similar way. One possible investigation that could be explored in a further research project could focus on Bosnia, a region which shares with the other Adriatic territories a Venetian past and a subjection to Italian propagandistic discourse during the Second World War (Santoro 2013). Moreover, delving deeper into representations of territories like Montenegro and Slovenia could offer additional insights into the varied discursive representations by Italian intellectuals that this thesis has offered a perspective upon. Furthermore, this study investigates the publications of various authors, including Mantegazza, Baldacci, Comisso, Poggiali, Dei Gaslini, and Montanelli, who also wrote about the Italian African colonies. These publications offer the possibility to employ a comparative reading of the same authors in their works about the eastern Adriatic and the Horn of Africa. Some of these texts have undergone scholarly analysis (Contarini 2015), but in light of this work, a comparative examination of the same author's publication about two distinct regions that were both subjected to Italian imperialism may shed light

[64] One of the first publications that considered these materials was Alberto Basciani's essay about Italian rule in Albania, which focuses mainly on the historical aspects of this domination.

on Italy's relationship between the Adriatic and African colonies.

My analysis concludes with 1943, the year in which the Italian empire collapsed. Nevertheless, Italy did not undergo a true process of decolonisation, and its colonial tropes, stereotypes and discourses remained unquestioned. Therefore, a supplementary research path might attempt to chart the development of the discourse analysed here in the following years. In the former Yugoslavian territory, the victory of communist partisans led to the establishment of a socialist state (Gobetti 2013: 148). The political relationship between Italy and Yugoslavia initially featured contrasts due to the post-war aftermath and the issue of Trieste, but were eventually normalised, positioning Italy as a key link between Yugoslavia and Western Europe (Bucarelli and others 2016). Meanwhile, in Albania, Enver Hoxha instituted a Stalinist dictatorship, with no structural connection with Western Europe, but which nonetheless considered Italy its point of reference from the western world (Basciani 2022: 276-277). Consequently, examining how these regions were represented by Italian discourse in the aftermath of the Second World War could offer insights into Italian postcolonial heritage concerning the Balkans and its impact on popular culture. This theme is particularly relevant as Italy played a crucial role in NATO's operation after the collapse of Yugoslavia during the 1990s (Pirjevec 2014: 602). Historiography on the relationship between Italy and Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the Second World War has predominantly focused on the border issues in the Julian region (Ballinger 2018b); at the same time, aspects of Yugoslavian literature (Vaglio 2023) and on Italian influence over Yugoslavian culture (Rolandi 2015) have been widely explored. Nonetheless, a comprehensive study on the representation of Yugoslavia within Italian literary discourse has yet to be developed, and would offer insight into the survival of Fascism's discourse in Italian media, as well as the patterns of representation employed by Italian postcolonial discourse. Studies on the Italian postcolonial relationship with Albania, especially regarding migrations in the 1990s, are beginning to emerge. Pamela Ballinger emphasises how the postcolonial history between Italy and Albania is marked by both gaps and connections which led, for example, approximately eighty individuals to seek repatriation to Italy in the 1990s, citing the previous colonial domination (Ballinger 2018a). In scrutinising diverse forms of cultural production and historical developments, Ballinger posits that 'in the post socialist era Albania and Albanians serve as Italy's negative mirror' (Ballinger 2018a: 117). Ballinger's work opens the door to further research into the relationship between Italy and Albania during both the socialist and post-socialist eras, aiming to understand the nexus between Italian discourse about Albania in the past and the relationship between the two countries in the last thirty years. Bond and Comberiati's edited collection of essays analysing the Italo-Albanian literary relationship and migrant literature in this context (Bond and Comberiati 2013) marks a significant step in exploring the cultural ties between

Italy and Albania through a postcolonial lens. The authors interpreted the literary analysis through a postcolonial perspective, and the essays focused on both the literature during the communist period and after the collapse of communism, maintaining a solid relationship with the historical context. This thesis further enlightens the cultural aspects of the colonial relationship to which Bond and Comberiati refer in their text, showing how it may be worthwhile to broaden the postcolonial analysis to Italian literature about Albania during the second half of the twentieth century.

This work elucidates the productivity and functionality of Italian discourse concerning the eastern Adriatic and frame its imperialist features within a postcolonial perspective. Behdad underscores how a postcolonial perspective must confront colonial amnesia and 'expose the genealogy of oppression and the oppressed' (Behdad 1994: 6). In my analysis of Italian discourse, departing from Bhabha's critique of Said, I have emphasised how the discourse investigated in this thesis leaves space for resistance to it. In carrying out this research, the thesis begins the journey of charting an understanding of Italian discourse on the Adriatic by focusing on the discourse that eventually informed the invasion of those territories. Nevertheless, to achieve a further understanding of this relationship it will be necessary to focus on narratives that counter this discourse. Such an investigation could pursue two distinct paths: one related to Italian voices opposing expansionist ambitions, the other looking at Yugoslav and Albanian voices. Srivastava has explored where to find voices that opposed Italian colonialism, and her essay focuses on the Italian Communist Party's archives, showing how the party tried to develop anti-imperialist sentiment within the colonies (Srivastava 2018: 16). In the case of the Adriatic, it has been argued that it might be plausible to begin charting the stances that resisted the expansionist narratives stemming from the anti-irredentist positions of intellectuals such as Salvemini and socialist institutions (Cattaruzza 2016: 68). Additionally, even in the aftermath of the First World War, Italian politics presented oppositions to the annexation of Dalmatia, proposing various nuances to understanding Italian hegemony in the Adriatic (Monzali 2007: 12). To provide an understanding of the Italian discourse about the Adriatic, it may thus be worthwhile investigating these sources as they offer an alternative understanding of the relationship between Italy and the Adriatic to the one analysed in this work.

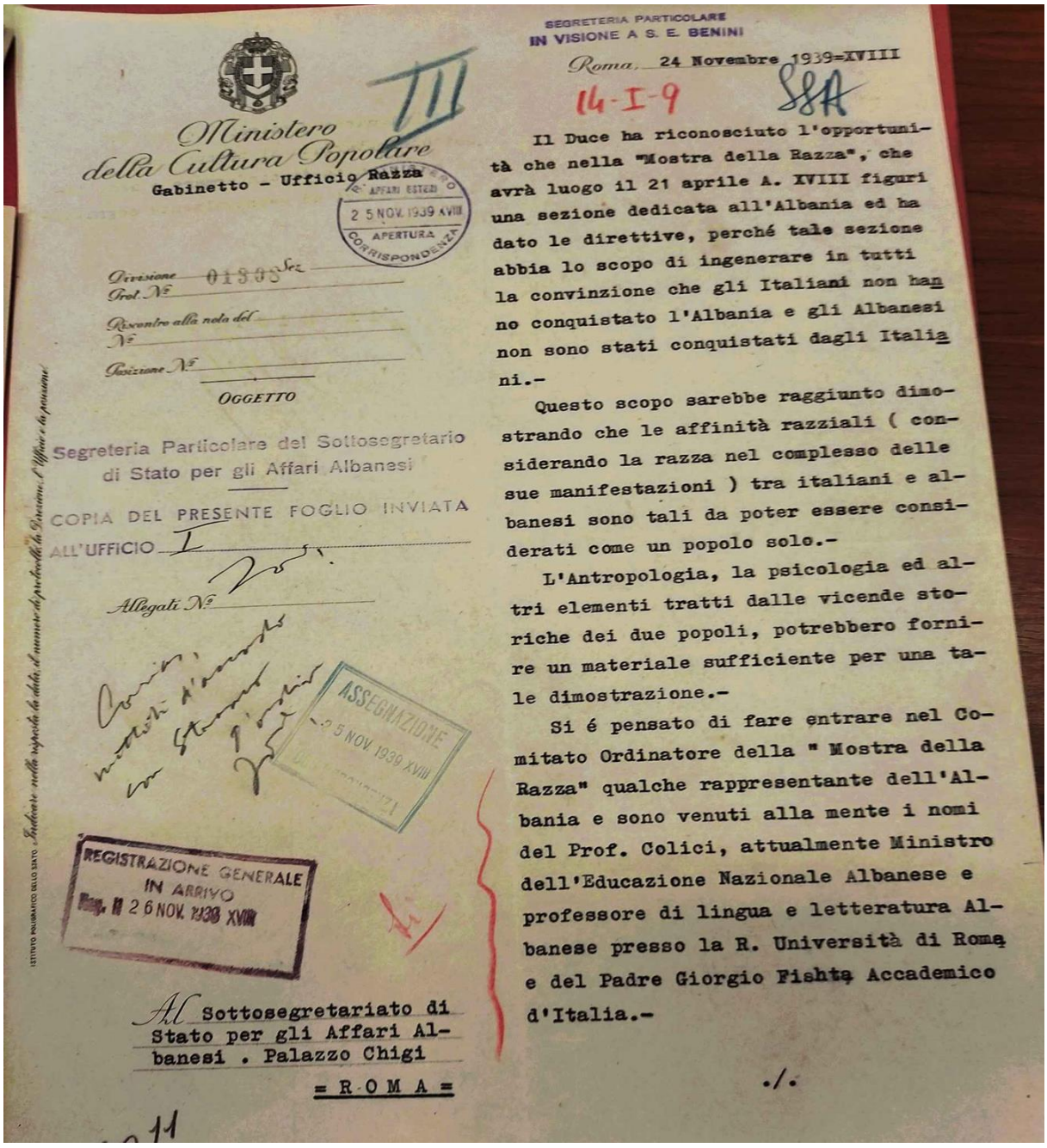
In his essay about the diverse identities within Trieste during the Habsburg era, Salvatore Pappalardo articulated a deep critique of both Italian and Yugoslav nationalism. Pappalardo emphasises how the Slovenian modernist poet Srečko Kosovel (who lived in Trieste), through his literary production, perceiving them as a 'pathology that cuts Adriatic multiculturalism to the core' (Pappalardo 2021: 83). Pappalardo's analysis shows the coexistence of diverse conceptions of national iden-

tity about the same territory, consequently indicating a possible field of investigation that would expand this thesis. My work, with its emphasis on representations of Italian identity in the Adriatic, indicates how rescuing these voices from the years that preceded the Italian annexation provides an interesting insight into the scope of national identities conveyed in the Adriatic space. Such an investigation would show the heterogeneity of the issues of identity that informed political actions in the region, as the Italian perspective explored in this work constitutes only one of these. In other words, this research tried to show how the Italian discourse about the Adriatic conveyed narratives of identity and expansionism. It indicates how the representation of Italianness in the area displayed imperialist attitudes, the recognition of these may lead to further investigations and understandings of the relationship between Italy and the other nationalities in the region.

Appendix

The following materials are part of the ‘Archivio storico diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale’ located in Rome. During my PhD studies I paid two visits to the archive, in March 2022 and January 2023. During these visits I had access to the archival collection of the ‘Sottosegretariato Agli Affari Albanesi’ (SSAA) and the following materials are contained in two envelopes: 136 and 138. The materials of envelope 136 are in the folder 9a11, while those of envelope 138 are in folder 15, 9/a/5. The reproduction and the publication of these materials was kindly permitted by the archive.

1.Telegrams



Ministero della Cultura Popolare
Gabinetto - Ufficio Razza

2 5 NOV. 1939 XVIII

Divisione Prot. N° 01308 Sec.
Risontro alla nota del N°
Posizione N°

OGGETTO

Segreteria Particolare del Sottosegretario di Stato per gli Affari Albanesi

COPIA DEL PRESENTE FOGLIO INVIATA ALL'UFFICIO I

Allegati N°

ASSEGNAZIONE 25 NOV. 1939 XVIII

REGISTRAZIONE GENERALE IN ARRIVO Reg. N 26 NOV. 1939 XVIII

Al Sottosegretariato di Stato per gli Affari Albanesi . Palazzo Chigi

= R O M A =

SEGRETERIA PARTICOLARE
IN VISIONE A S. E. BENINI

Roma, 24 Novembre 1939=XVIII

14-I-9 SSA

Il Duce ha riconosciuto l'opportunità che nella "Mostra della Razza", che avrà luogo il 21 aprile A. XVIII figuri una sezione dedicata all'Albania ed ha dato le direttive, perché tale sezione abbia lo scopo di ingenerare in tutti la convinzione che gli Italiani non hanno conquistato l'Albania e gli Albanesi non sono stati conquistati dagli Italiani.-

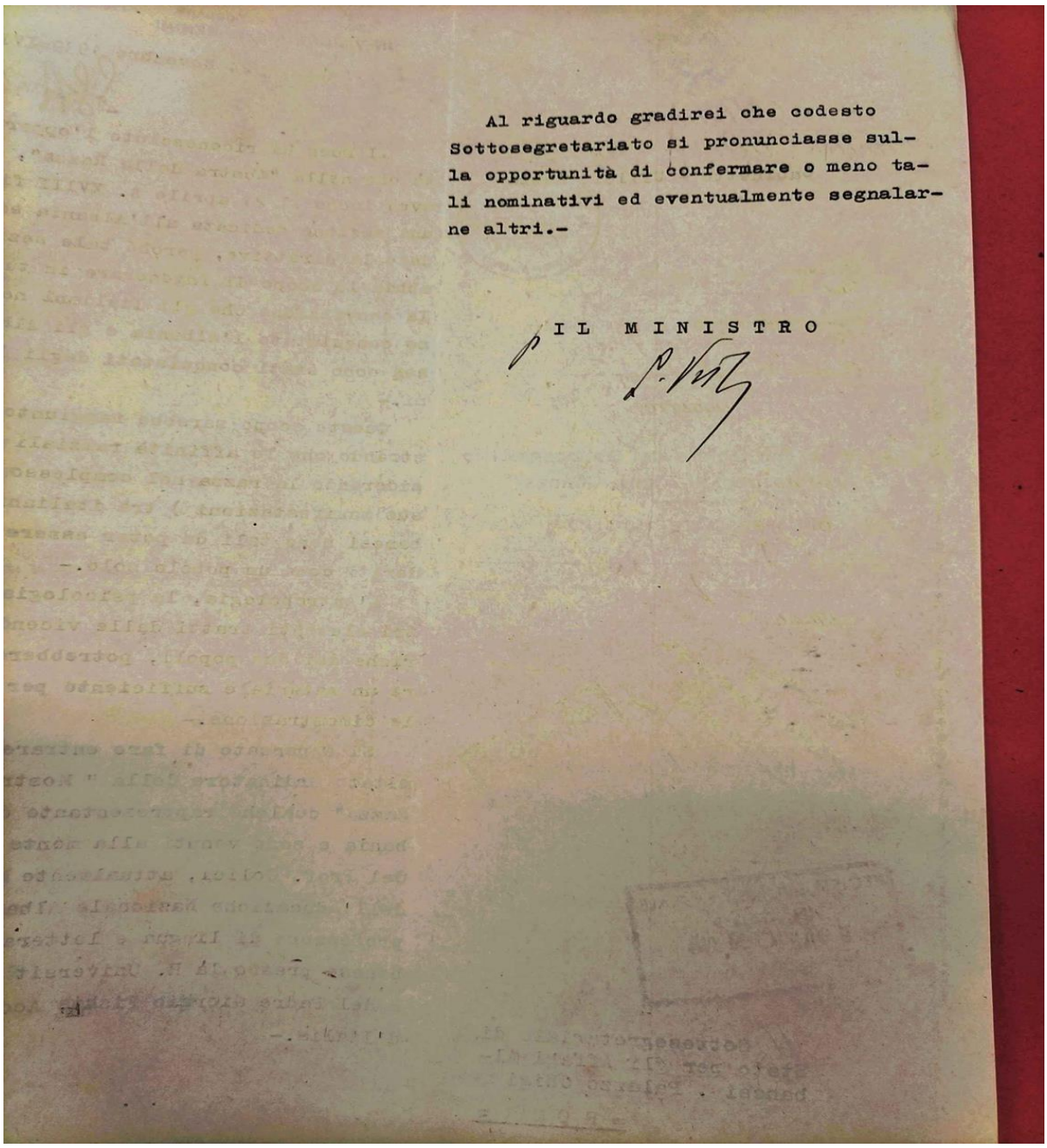
Questo scopo sarebbe raggiunto dimostrando che le affinità razziali (considerando la razza nel complesso delle sue manifestazioni) tra italiani e albanesi sono tali da poter essere considerati come un popolo solo.-

L'Antropologia, la psicologia ed altri elementi tratti dalle vicende storiche dei due popoli, potrebbero fornire un materiale sufficiente per una tale dimostrazione.-

Si é pensato di fare entrare nel Comitato Ordinatore della " Mostra della Razza" qualche rappresentante dell'Albania e sono venuti alla mente i nomi del Prof. Colici, attualmente Ministro dell'Educazione Nazionale Albanese e professore di lingua e letteratura Albanese presso la R. Università di Roma e del Padre Giorgio Fishta Accademico d'Italia.-

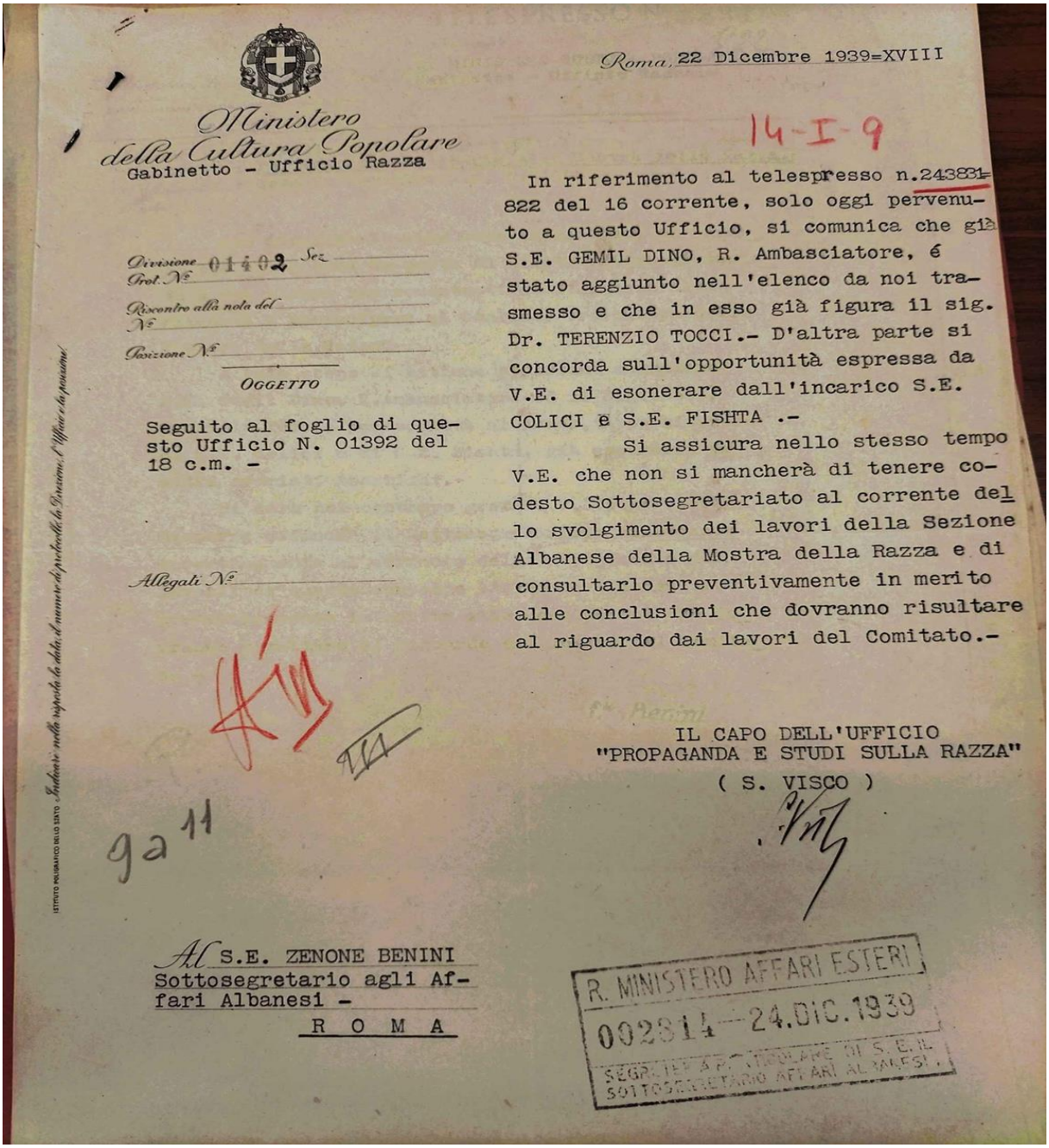
./.

Figure 1: Telegram 01308, 24th November 1939, p.1. Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASDMAE), SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 136, 9a11.


Al riguardo gradirei che codesto Sottosegretariato si pronunciasse sulla opportunità di confermare o meno tali nominativi ed eventualmente segnalarne altri.-

IL MINISTRO

Figure 2: Telegram 01308, 24th November 1939, p. 2. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 136, 9a11.



Ministero della Cultura Popolare
Gabinetto - Ufficio Razza

Roma, 22 Dicembre 1939=XVIII

14-I-9

Divisione 01402 Sez
Prot. N.

Riscontro alla nota del
N.

Posizione N.

OGGETTO

Seguito al foglio di questo Ufficio N. 01392 del 18 c.m. -

Allegati N.

In riferimento al telespresso n.243831-822 del 16 corrente, solo oggi pervenuto a questo Ufficio, si comunica che già S.E. GEMIL DINO, R. Ambasciatore, é stato aggiunto nell'elenco da noi trasmesso e che in esso già figura il sig. Dr. TERENZIO TOCCI.- D'altra parte si concorda sull'opportunità espressa da V.E. di esonerare dall'incarico S.E. COLICI e S.E. FISHTA .-

Si assicura nello stesso tempo V.E. che non si mancherà di tenere codesto Sottosegretariato al corrente dello svolgimento dei lavori della Sezione Albanese della Mostra della Razza e di consultarlo preventivamente in merito alle conclusioni che dovranno risultare al riguardo dai lavori del Comitato.-

IL CAPO DELL'UFFICIO
"PROPAGANDA E STUDI SULLA RAZZA"
(S. VISCO)

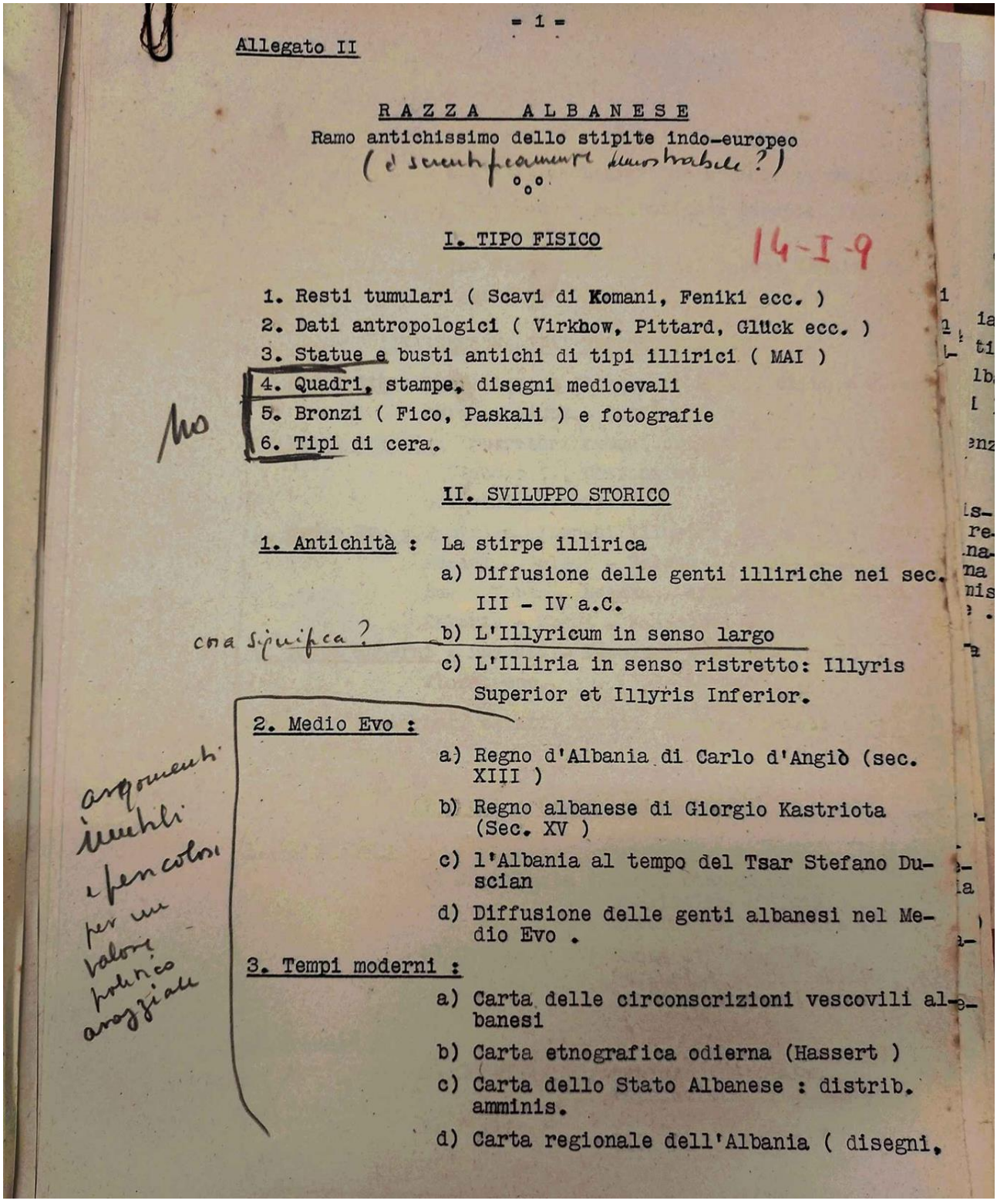
9a 11

Al S.E. ZENONE BENINI
Sottosegretario agli Affari Albanesi -
R O M A

R. MINISTERO AFFARI ESTERI
002814 - 24.DIC.1939
SEGRETERIA PARTICOLARE DI S.E. IL SOTTOSEGRETARIO AFFARI ALBANESI

Figure 3: Telegram 01402, 22nd December 1939, ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 136, 9a11.

2. Relazione Beratti



= 1 =

Allegato II

RAZZA ALBANESE

Ramo antichissimo dello stipite indo-europeo

(scientificamente dimostrabile ?)

°°°

I. TIPO FISICO

14-I-9

1. Resti tumulari (Scavi di Komani, Feniki ecc.)
2. Dati antropologici (Virkhow, Pittard, Glück ecc.)
3. Statue e busti antichi di tipi illirici (MAI)
4. Quadri, stampe, disegni medioevali
5. Bronzi (Fico, Paskali) e fotografie
6. Tipi di cera.

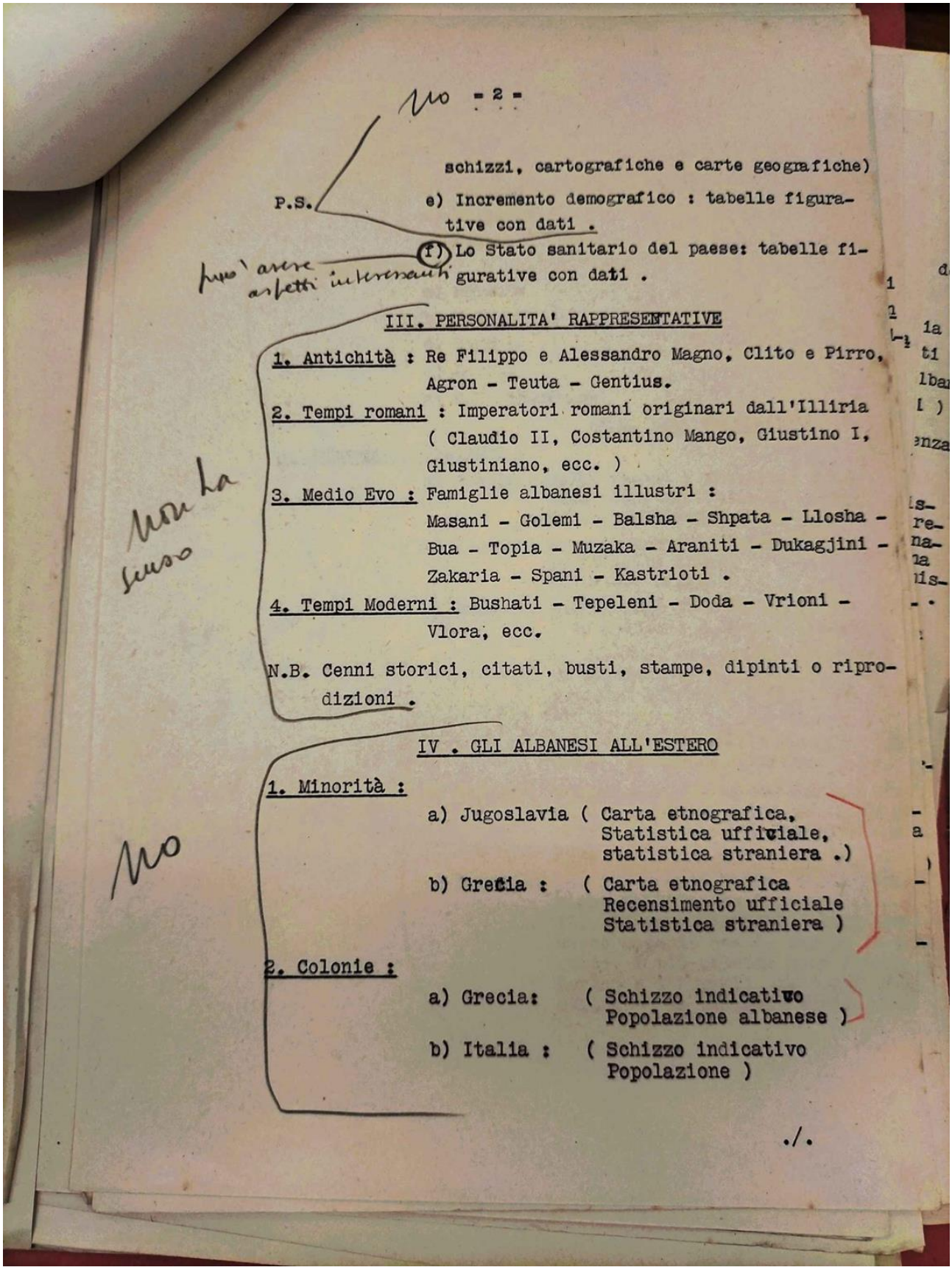
II. SVILUPPO STORICO

1. Antichità : La stirpe illirica
   a) Diffusione delle genti illiriche nei sec. III - IV a.C.
   b) L'Illyricum in senso largo
   c) L'Illiria in senso ristretto: Illyris Superior et Illyris Inferior.

2. Medio Evo :
   a) Regno d'Albania di Carlo d'Angiò (sec. XIII)
   b) Regno albanese di Giorgio Kastriota (Sec. XV)
   c) l'Albania al tempo del Tsar Stefano Duscian
   d) Diffusione delle genti albanesi nel Medio Evo .

3. Tempi moderni :
   a) Carta delle circonscrizioni vescovili albanesi
   b) Carta etnografica odierna (Hassert)
   c) Carta dello Stato Albanese : distrib. amminis.
   d) Carta regionale dell'Albania (disegni,

Figure 4: Relazione Beratti, p. 1. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 136, 9a11.



- 2 -

schizzi, cartografiche e carte geografiche)

P.S. e) Incremento demografico : tabelle figurative con dati .

f) Lo Stato sanitario del paese: tabelle figurative con dati .

III. PERSONALITA' RAPPRESENTATIVE

1. Antichità : Re Filippo e Alessandro Magno, Clito e Pirro, Agron - Teuta - Gentius.

2. Tempi romani : Imperatori romani originari dall'Illiria (Claudio II, Costantino Mango, Giustino I, Giustiniano, ecc.)

3. Medio Evo : Famiglie albanesi illustri : Masani - Golemi - Balsha - Shpata - Llosha - Bua - Topia - Muzaka - Araniti - Dukagjini - Zakaria - Spani - Kastrioti .

4. Tempi Moderni : Bushati - Tepeleni - Doda - Vrioni - Vlora, ecc.

N.B. Cenni storici, citati, busti, stampe, dipinti o riproduzioni .

IV . GLI ALBANESI ALL'ESTERO

1. Minorità :

a) Jugoslavia (Carta etnografica, Statistica ufficiale, statistica straniera .)

b) Grecia : (Carta etnografica Recensimento ufficiale Statistica straniera)

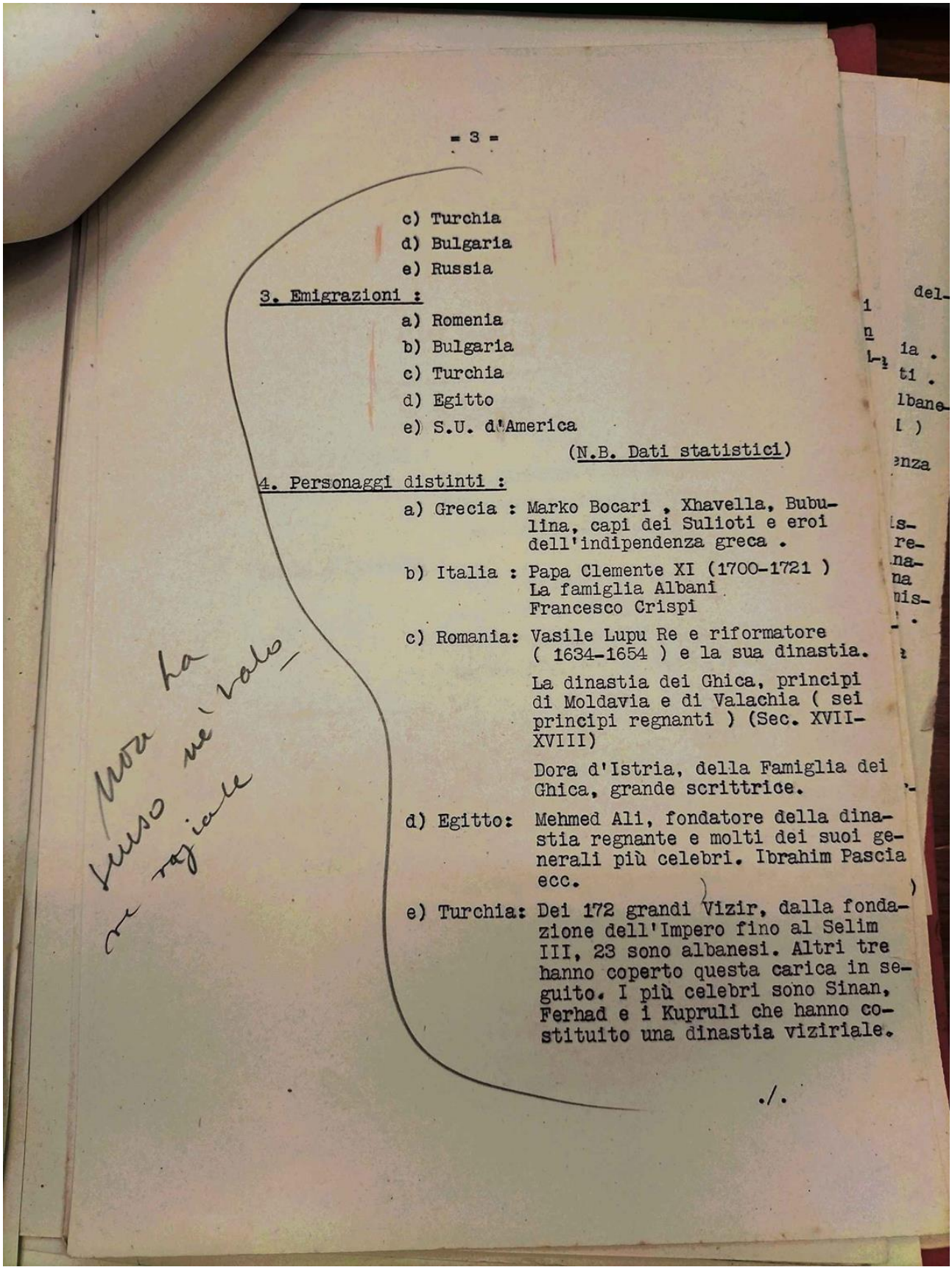
2. Colonie :

a) Grecia: (Schizzo indicativo Popolazione albanese)

b) Italia : (Schizzo indicativo Popolazione)

./.

Figure 5: Relazione Beratti, p. 2. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 136, 9a11.



- 3 -

c) Turchia
d) Bulgaria
e) Russia

3. Emigrazioni :

a) Romenia
b) Bulgaria
c) Turchia
d) Egitto
e) S.U. d'America

(N.B. Dati statistici)

4. Personaggi distinti :

a) Grecia : Marko Bocari , Xhavella, Bubulina, capi dei Sulioti e eroi dell'indipendenza greca .

b) Italia : Papa Clemente XI (1700-1721)
La famiglia Albani
Francesco Crispi

c) Romania: Vasile Lupu Re e riformatore (1634-1654) e la sua dinastia.

La dinastia dei Ghica, principi di Moldavia e di Valachia (sei principi regnanti) (Sec. XVII-XVIII)

Dora d'Istria, della Famiglia dei Ghica, grande scrittrice.

d) Egitto: Mehmed Ali, fondatore della dinastia regnante e molti dei suoi generali più celebri. Ibrahim Pascia ecc.

e) Turchia: Dei 172 grandi Vizir, dalla fondazione dell'Impero fino al Selim III, 23 sono albanesi. Altri tre hanno coperto questa carica in seguito. I più celebri sono Sinan, Ferhad e i Kupruli che hanno costituito una dinastia viziriale.

./.

Figure 6: Relazione Beratti, p. 3. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 136, 9a11.

Una grande schiera di generali
Economisti: Koçi Bey e Tarhungj Ahmet Pascià.
Architetti: Kassin, Ahmet Aga e il famoso Sinan.
Scrittori: Namik kemal Bey, Sami Bey Frasheri .

f) Altri paesi: I Basta al servizio degli Imperatori di Germania.

V. ABITAZIONE

1. Il villaggio :

Tipo carstico nella Malsija
Tipo medioevale nella Myzeqeja
Tipo moderno nel sud (Korça, Gjirokastra)

2. La cittadella :

Ruderi antichi
Avanzi romani
Resti dell'epoca bizantina, veneziana, turca (Rosafa, Kruja, Berat, ecc.)

3. Le Città :

Tipo medioevale (Berat, Gjinokastra, ecc)
Tipo turco-orientale (Vecchia Tirana, quartiere commerciale di Scutari ecc.)
Tipo moderno (Fieri, Tirana, Scutari, Corcia) .

4. La Casa :

A. Vestigia preistoriche (Le caverne di Velcia, di Porto Spileon, di Kamenica)
B. Tipo primitivo di dimora con carattere provvisorio: Abitato troglodítico (a Gruda)
Kaçor : capanna conica per pastori e pescatori (a Kneta Baldrens, Terbuf)
Kasolle, abitazioni di agricoltori (Myzeqeja)

./.

Figure 7: Relazione Beratti, p. 4. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 136, 9a11.

Dimora mezzo-interrata (a Hoti)
Stan (Ovile)

C. Tipo primitivo di dimora con caratteri duraturo: "Casuccie appoggiate" (a Nikaj e Merturi)
Ban: Casolare provvisto di porta
Ban con più vani (a Valbona)

D. Tipo evoluto di casa contadina (Malcija)
Fattoria
Acquedotto - Fontana - Ponte

E. Casa in legno o in pietra con atrio e veranda.

F. Kulla: casa in pietra come fortilizio .

5. La casa cittadina :

A. Tipo scutarino, circondato di giardino Portico - atrio - soffitto -camino.

B. Tipo del sud (per es. Korça)
Portico - atrio - interiore .

6. La camera di una casa contadina ed il suo mobilio .

7. Supellettili, arredi e attrezzi contadini :

Arredi casalinghi

Atrezzi pastorali e di latteria

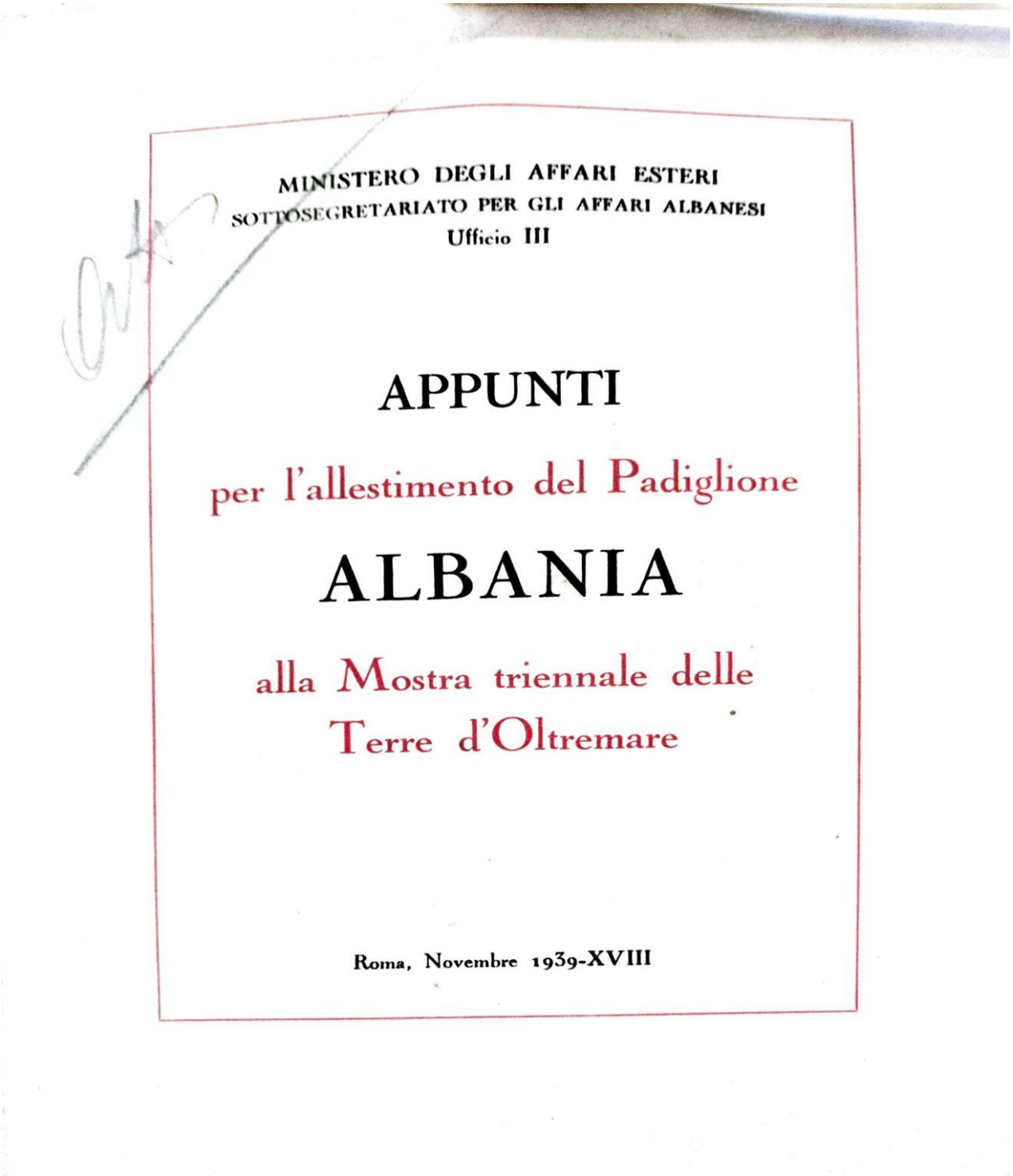
Atrezzi agricoli primitivi - Atrezzi di pesca .

Mezzi di trasporto : carro, basto, otri da nuoto, barche di tipo illirico (lunder):
barca scavata in albero,
barche da traghetto,
tipi di barche scutarine:sule, take.

./.

Figure 8: Relazione Beratti, p. 5. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 136, 9a11.

3. Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare



MINISTERO DEGLI AFFARI ESTERI
SOTTOSEGRETARIATO PER GLI AFFARI ALBANESI
Ufficio III

APPUNTI

per l'allestimento del Padiglione

ALBANIA

alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare

Roma, Novembre 1939-XVIII

Figure 9: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

porsi necessaria premessa a quegli scritti con i quali lo stesso Sottosegretariato entrò in rapporto con i vari artisti incaricati di illustrare la vita albanese nel padiglione napoletano, scritti compilati dunque con l'intento di offrire un « canovaccio » agli artisti ed in seguito spunti per una guida per il visitatore.

* * *

Ci sembra anzitutto opportuno rilevare come il criterio integrale, suggerito per la sistemazione del proposto settore storico albanese, non sia scevro di certi inconvenienti, mentre appare fino dagli inizi discutibile la utilità di seguire l'Albania in ogni suo momento, dalla preistoria mitologica ai più moderni avvenimenti.

Tale criterio latissimo, se appare di rigore in una trattazione scientifica o consigliabile per una mostra puramente storica, non può, nella fattispecie, essere seguito senza perdere di vista il concetto informatore di una simile mostra, quello di offrire una sintesi ed una esaltazione della civiltà italiana in paese d'oltremare attraverso i suoi vari momenti storici.

[10]

Figure 10: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 10. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

rite. Il Fascismo preferisce nettamente questo Quirite, figlio legittimo della terra.

Di conseguenza sembra opportuna la soppressione del settore « Mitologia e preistoria albanese » in quanto o è scienza pura (che rischia la pedanteria) o è Enea, simbolo di una innegabile romanità borghese.

* * *

Un sotto-settore porta l'etichetta « Roma »; è questo a nostro avviso il punto di partenza vero per tutto il settore storico, tanto da farne *leit-motiv* della mostra.

L'Albania è oggi romana e secondo il nostro concetto romani si nasce; bisogna dimostrare fino all'evidenza che la terra d'Albania è nata romana, bisogna dimostrare che nell'attuale territorio schipetaro prima di Roma esisteva la materia ma non la forma e lo spirito.

Questo è d'altronde storicamente e scientificamente esatto, ma a questa verità occorre con la Mostra dare una veste popolare; bisogna trasformarla in una nozione elementare nel cervello di ognuno.

[13]

Figure 11: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 13. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Offic, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

Bisogna mettere in luce il momento degli spaccapietre della via Egnatia, che sbarcarono subito dopo il legionario, e domano la pietra per i legionari che verranno ; il momento dell'atticizzante T. Pomponio potrebbe magari essere tralasciato.

Ci sembra, in sostanza, che il vero esordio debba trovarsi non nella preistoria mitologica e alquanto cortigiana del favoloso viaggio di Enea, ma nella positività delle sode legioni romane che sbarcano per stampare la loro impronta senza sangue, preferendo all'acciaio di un gladio inutile quello ugualmente sonoro del piccone.

L'artista cui sarà affidato il compito di illustrare Roma in Albania saprà mettere in evidenza questa verità storica : una conquista incruenta, comandata dal destino di Roma in nome di una civiltà eterna e tappa di un imperialismo tutto latino nel suo equilibrio, con la conseguente immediata opera di pace con giustizia e di gloria nella grandezza del nome romano. Il soldato romano è il soldato contadino che non pecca contro la terra ; il capo romano è conscio dell'esistenza di altri valori oltre la forza, di valori più forti della forza.

[15]

Figure 12: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 15. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

L'artista, ispirandosi per questo alla Butrinto romana, dovrà far vedere come i Romani nel loro fine imperialistico seppero tuttavia realizzare grandi opere di pace e di gioia, come a lato della strada ove si marciava verso il destino sorsero ville e teatri ove lo spirito avanzava accanto alle aquile di Roma, immortale nelle sue conquiste quanto quelle lo erano nella gloria.

In questa fusione fra inflessibili armi pacifiche, fra lo « *adversus hostes aeterna auctoritas* » realizzante uno splendido spietato concetto, e la costruzione di una strada imperialistica e imperiale e quella di un teatro e di una villa, l'artista deve trovare il mezzo di far sentire che l'Albania è veramente romana perchè è nata romana.

* * *

È da approvarsi il proposto taglio ad una Albania bizantina; la luccicante romanità *fânée* non ha nulla da dire a noi d'oggi, nella sua delicata sfioritura autunnale.

E' noto invece come, fra le varie città italiane che si proclamarono « figlie di Roma »,

[16]

Figure 13: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 16. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

figlio di una terra nata romana, cresciuta romana, dove Roma è tuttora presente con S. Marco; il suo fondo albanese è una realtà di civiltà romana e questo può spiegarci perchè una volta spedito contro i suoi simili, i figli della stessa civiltà, la sua natura si ribelli e «tradisca»; ma non tradisce, è solo l'impalcatura musulmana che cade e lascia a nudo il vero Giorgio Castriota, il figlio di un popolo romanizzato. E il mito di Roma è storicamente presente nelle opere e nelle parole dell'eroe, e si noti che non è la Roma cattolica; Skanderbeg amico di Venezia, alleato a vita per la sua natura, morendo raccomanda ai Senatori veneti suo figlio, la sua terra, raccomanda a suo figlio l'amicizia con Venezia perchè sente che la forza di Roma antica è ora sulla laguna.

In lui, figlio di un secolo in cui la romanità è in netta ripresa, questa romanità è vivente e operante; non è l'eroe barbaro che teme ancora dopo secoli il nome romano, Skanderbeg è l'eternità dell'influsso di Roma.

Siamo così del parere che questo vero Skanderbeg debba, senza esitazione, figurare in una

[20]

Figure 14: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 20. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

Vero che Garibaldi rappresentò un'attrazione anche su i liberali albanesi, ma non fu un'attrazione italiana, fu invece quella per un'idea che in quel momento indossò – anche – la camicia rossa. Se il nostro risorgimento parlò e cantò di Roma, la verità è che non la sentì veramente ; nessun romantico poteva sentire la romanità imperiale, a Cesare si preferì Bruto ; in questo siamo agli antipodi, preferiamo Cesare, il tiranno.

Con espressione forse un po' brutale dobbiamo dire che Garibaldi non è « utilizzabile », come non lo è l'oriundo albanese Crispi, l'uomo che la morte s'era dimenticata di cogliere e che cercò in disperazione folle di vivere la terza età ; a Crispi diplomatico l'Albania fu perfino offerta come un « pezzo » nel gioco degli scacchi, ma l'anacronismo di Crispi ci sembra troppo difficile per una mostra e anche se non fosse difficoltà eccessiva per gli organizzatori lo sarebbe, e insormontabile, per ogni visitatore.

Lasciamo la cosiddetta Albania di Garibaldi, di Crispi, della guerra mondiale, di Valona, di Versailles, di Zog ; è tutta un'Albania che si cerca senza possibilità di trovarsi, il suo pas-

[22]

Figure 15: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 22. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

sato bizantino e turco l'ha allontanata e non le darà mai l'*ubi sistam* per sollevarsi.

A differenza di molte terre ove il seme romano maturò una nuova civiltà e una nuova storia e sulle quali, anche se da un particolarismo minuto, potè svilupparsi lo Stato-Nazione, l'Albania vive fino ad ieri un suo medioevo lunghissimo e non potrà ritrovarsi che in Roma, ogni volta che questa risorga; è fatale.

Dobbiamo quindi, a nostro giudizio, inquadrare gli avvenimenti recentissimi in una cornice comune con i Romani antichi, con i Veneti figli di Roma, con il vero Skanderbeg, albanese in cerca del mito di Roma; se la spedizione dell'aprile la si vede da questo angolo sarà facile allora comprenderne il valore non di conquista, non di rapina, non di oppressione, non di colonia, ma di ritorno all'Impero, ora che l'impero è di nuovo su i colli romani, e vederne così quel carattere di fatalità proprio del destino del nome romano, eterno.

* * *

Passando ora a considerazioni d'ordine affatto pratico, si indicano sommariamente

Figure 16: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 23. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

romani posero il loro piede sull'altra sponda per la stessa fatalità d'Impero, pienamente coscienti di un loro destino, ma nè essi combatterono nella terra ora albanese, nè la considerarono mai « marca » cioè terra di confine. Quando i romani andarono in Albania un imperialismo dell'altra sponda, l'epirotico, era già fiaccato su questa sponda; l'odierna Albania, che confina con l'antico Epiro ed in piccola parte lo comprende a Sud, era terra senza definita forma statale, terra aperta; non ha importanza per l'argomento il *casus belli* che li portò al di là, basti dire che arrivati al Tarentino sentirono la fatalità dell'altra sponda. Non fu conquista; modesta opera di polizia marittima e garanzia di tale polizia, non merita di essere posta in rilievo con opera di tanta mole.

* * *

L'affresco dovrà invece mostrare l'Albania già romanizzata; ci sembra anzitutto consigliabile eliminare l'elemento mare, che male si presta alla glorificazione di un assetto di pace georgica quale fu in realtà e quale intendiamo

Figure 17: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 30. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

L'Albania oggi è essenzialmente un cantiere; non vi sono opere finite, tutto è da fare e non è che « tutto si farà », come poteva venire detto in altri tempi, oggi tutto si fa.

Tenga ancora presente che l'Albania è oggi la palestra di ogni attività italiana, dalla scuola e dall'archeologia alla costruzione di fognoni di scolo. L'Italia sta veramente redimendo una terra e un popolo ; l'opera ci appare già tanto alta nei suoi singoli atti e momenti che possiamo invitare l'artista a non compiacersi dell'incolto e della miseria di un ieri ormai tramontato, come a non compiacersi del bello edificio, della strada asfaltata, del campo ricco e ben tenuto di domani.

Consideri che se sono già in Albania edifici bellissimi e campi perfettamente tenuti (ed è opera nostra) il già fatto perde ogni valore se lo si confronta con quello che si sta facendo ; non mostri quindi la gioia del lavoro compiuto ma neppure l'ansia e le preoccupazioni per quello da compiere, illustri invece l'attenzione, lo sforzo, la serenità che deve essere in ogni ora, in ogni istante di lavoro.

[52]

Figure 18: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 52. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

Tenga presente il compositore che con Skanderbeg muore l'Albania (si dice che gli albanesi ne portino ancora il lutto), che insomma l'Albania dei secoli XVI-XVII-XVIII-XIX non esiste e noi vogliamo precisamente che un visitatore medio abbia la sensazione esatta di questa lunghissima morte.

Questo il criterio; se il compositore non ha di meglio o di più efficace proponiamo di sfruttare fotografie di quell'Albania tutt'ora esistente là ove il Littorio non ha ancora potuto lasciare la sua impronta perenne (Roma non fu fatta in cinque mesi); si possono avere fotografie di montagne brulle, scoscese e povere, fotografie di paludi e di piane acquitrinose, di capanne fatte di ramaglia e fango secco, di povero bestiame immiserito; suggeriamo quindi di fotomontare un paesaggio fantastico nel quale da uno sfondo brusco di montagne sassose deserte e disalberate si avanzi verso il basso e primo piano una veduta di acquitrino malarico, con cespugli da pantano. Si cerchi di lasciare al fotomontaggio tutto un senso di vuoto e di abbandono; per questo sarebbe forse bene non si introducesse

Figure 19: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 81. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

nessun ritaglio di figura umana, basterà solo qualche fotografia, anche mediocre, di capanne albanesi poste fra l'acquitrino e il monte, e qualche fotografia di bestiame, se è possibile bufali.

Questo tipo di fotomontaggio è stato del resto felicemente provato quando s'è voluto mettere in luce l'opera dell'Italia odierna in quelle che furono le nostre paludi e il materiale può ancora trovarsi con facilità.

Ove fosse possibile procurarsi dati della popolazione albanese da Roma ad oggi, anche sporadici e molto approssimativi, sarebbe interessante costruire proprio sul fotomontaggio, mediante un nastro d'acciaio, un grafico sommario che indicasse quello che si sa di certo essere avvenuto, cioè il graduale spopolamento del paese; qualche data e qualche numero, ugualmente in metallo, sarebbero sufficienti a spiegare il significato di tale grafico.

Quinta vetrina.

In essa saranno raccolti, ben divisi, costumi gheghi e costumi toski, preferibilmente due o

[82]

Figure 20: Appunti per l'allestimento del Padiglione Albania alla Mostra triennale delle Terre d'Oltremare, p. 82. ASDMAE, SSAA, 3rd Office, CAB 138, 15, 9/a/5, 1940.

Bibliography

1. Primary Sources

Almagià, Roberto. 1918. 'Il territorio d'occupazione italiana in Albania e l'opera dell'Italia', *Rivista Coloniale*, 13.5: 185–95.

Baldacci, Antonio. 1917. *Itinerari albanesi* (Rome: Reale Società Geografica Italiana).

Bondioli, Pio. 1939. *Albania: quinta sponda d'Italia* (Milan: C.E.T.I.M.).

Castellini, Gualtiero. 1913. *I popoli balcanici osservati da un italiano* (Milan: Fratelli Treves).

Comisso, Giovanni. 2002a. 'Gente di mare', in Giovanni Comisso *Opere*, ed. by Rolando Damiani and Nico Naldini (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore), pp. 91–320.

———. 2002b. 'Il porto dell'amore', in Giovanni Comisso *Opere*, ed. by Nico Naldini and Rolando Damiani (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore), pp. 3–89.

Cora, Guido. 1912. 'La penisola balcanica nel momento attuale, impressioni di viaggio', *Nuova Antologia*, 162.Nov.-Dec. 1912: 287–97.

D'Annunzio, Gabriele. 1928. *La riscossa dei leoni, raccolta degli scritti di Gabriele D'Annunzio sulla Dalmazia italiana*, ed. by Eugenio Colseschi (Florence: R. Bemporad & F. editore).

Dei Gaslini, Mario. 1929. *Aquilotti sull'Adriatico* (Milan: Unitas).

Federzoni, Luigi. 1941. *L'ora della Dalmazia* (Bologna: Zanichelli).

Mantegazza, Vico. 1910. *Al Montenegro: note ed impressioni* (Milan: Libreria editrice Milanese).

———. 1912a. *L'Albania* (Rome: Bontempelli e Invernizzi).

———. 1912b. *La guerra balcanica*, Questioni Di Politica Estera (Milan: F.lli Treves).

Marpicati, Arturo. 1922. *Piccolo romanzo di una vela* (Milan: Alpes).

Menini, Giulio. 1925. *Passione Adriatica, ricordi di Dalmazia 1918-1920* (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli Editore).

Montanelli, Indro. 1939. *Albania una e mille* (Turin: Paravia).

Poggiali, Ciro. 1943. *Albania antica e giovane* (Rome: Edizioni Roma).

Ratti, Federico Valerio. 1914. *L'Adriatico degli altri: L'Albania nell'ora presente* (Florence: Bemporad&figlio).

Sperani, Bruno. 1887. 'Cronaca Rossa: Profili', *Cronaca Rossa.*

———. 1915. *Ricordi della mia infanzia in Dalmazia* (Milan: Antonio Vallardi Editore).

2. Secondary Sources

Abrecht, Ryan. 2019. 'Review of: The Boundless Sea: Writing Mediterranean History', *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* <https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2020/2020.03.55/> [accessed 30 November 2022].

Abulafia, David (ed.). 2003. *The Mediterranean in History* (London: Thames&Hudson)

———. 2005. 'Mediterraneans', in *Rethinking the Mediterranean,* ed. by William V. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 64–93.

Accame Bobbio, Aurelia. 1973. *Giovanni Comisso* (Milan: Ugo Mursia Editore).

Adamovsky, Ezequiel. 2005. 'Euro-Orientalism and the Making of the Concept of Eastern Europe in France, 1810–1880', *The Journal of Modern History*, 77.3: 591–628.

———. 2006. *Euro-Orientalism, Liberal Ideology and the Image of Russia in France (c. 1740 - 1880)* (Berlin: Peter Lang).

Agnew, John. 2017. 'Working the Margins:The Geopolitical Marking of Italian National Identity', *Carte Italiane*, 2.11: 1–21.

Airelli, Nir. 2010. *Fascist Italy and the Middle East 1933-1940* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan).

Alatri, Paolo (ed.). 1980. *Scritti Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Milan: Feltrinelli).

Ambrosio, Thomas. 2011. 'Irredentism', *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, ed. by Badie, Berg-Schlosser, and Morlino (New York: SAGE Publications).

Amighetti, Sara, and Alasia Nuti. 2016. 'A Nation's Right to Exclude and the Colonies', *Political Theory*, 44.4: 541–66.

Andall, Jacqueline, and Derek Duncan (eds.). 2005. *Italian Colonialism, Legacy and Memory* (Bern: Peter Lang).

——— (eds.). 2010. *National Belongings: Hybridity in Italian Colonial and Postcolonial Cultures* (Oxford: Peter Lang).

Anderson, Benedict. 2016. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).

Anderson, Linda R. 2001. *Autobiography* (London: Routledge).

Andreoli, Annamaria, Federico Roncoroni, and Giorgio Zanetti (eds.). 2003. *D'Annunzio (1889-1938)* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore).

Apih, Elio. 1988. *Trieste* (Rome; Bari: Laterza).

Arena, Giovanni. 2011. 'The City of the Colonial Museum: The Forgotten Case of the Mostra d'Oltremare of Naples', in *Great Narratives of the Past Traditions and Revisions in National Museums*, ed. by Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstein, and José María Lanzarote Guiral (Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press), pp. 267–84.

Asor Rosa, Alberto. 1976. *Sintesi* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice).

Baioni, Massimo, and Martin Thom. 2011. 'Anniversaries and the Public Uses of the Risorgimento in Twentieth-Century Italy', *Journal of Modern European History*, 9.3: 397–415.

Baker, Catherine. 2018. *Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

Bal, Mieke. 1996. *Double Exposures: The Practice of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Routledge).

Ballinger, Pamela. 2013. 'Liquid Borderlands, Inelastic Sea? Mapping the Eastern Adriatic', in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands.*, ed. by Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), pp. 423–37.

———. 2018a. 'A Sea of Difference, a History of Gaps: Migrations between Italy and Albania, 1939-1992', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 60.: 90–118.

———. 2018b. *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press).

———. 2020. *The World Refugees Made: Decolonization and the Foundation of Postwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

Barrera, Giulia. 2004. 'The Construction of Racial Hierarchies in Colonial Eritrea: The Liberal and Early Fascist Period (1897-1934)', in *Place in the Sun*, ed. by Patrizia Palumbo (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 81–116.

Barry, Peter. 2002. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press).

Bartolini, Guido. 2021. *The Italian Literature of the Axis War*, (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan).

———. 2022. 'Past, Present, and Future of the Italian Memory of Fascism. Interviews with Luisa Passerini, Filippo Focardi, John Foot, Robert Gordon, and Philip Cooke', *Modern Italy*, 27.4: 303–25.

Basciani, Alberto. 2017. 'L'Italia liberale e l'espansione economica nel sud-est Europa, alcuni aspetti della Compagnia di Antivari', *Quaderni monografici di proposte e ricerce*, 41: 73–88.

———. 2021. 'A Late Offensive. Italian Cultural Action in Belgrade in the Last Phase of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1937-1941)', *Balcanica*: 83–98.

———. 2022. *L'impero nei Balcani. L'occupazione italiana dell'Albania (1939-1943)* (Rome: Viella).

Behdad, Ali. 1994. *Belated Travelers Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press).

———. 2019. ‘Orientalism and Middle East Travel Writing’, in *Orientalism and Literature*, Cambridge Critical Concepts, ed. by Geoffrey P. Nash (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 185–201.

Belmonte, Carmen. 2017. ‘Staging Colonialism in the “Other” Italy: Art and Ethnography at Palermo’s National Exhibition (1891-1892)’, *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 59.1: 86–107.

Belmonte, Carmen, and Laura Moure Cecchini. 2022. ‘Introduction: Critical Issues in the Study of Visual and Material Culture of Italian Colonialism’, *Modern Italy*, 27.4: 327–50.

Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. 2004. *La cultura fascista*, trans. by Maria Luisa Bassi (Bologna: Il Mulino).

———. 2006. ‘Modernity Is Just Over There’, *Interventions*, 8.3: 380–93.

Ben-Ghiat, Ruth, and Mia Fuller (eds.). 2005. *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan).

Bennet, Andrew, and Nicholas Royle. 2016. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (London and New York: Routledge).

Bertacchini, Renato. 1954. ‘Giovanni Comisso’, *Belfagor*, 9.4: 428–41.

Bertarelli, Luigi V. 1934. *Venezia Giulia e Dalmazia*, (Milan: TCI).

Bhabha, Homi K. 1983. ‘Difference, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism’, in *The Politics of Theory*, ed. by Francis Barker (Colchester: University of Essex), pp. 124–211.

———. 1984. ‘Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse’, *October*, 28: 125–33.

———. 1998. ‘Culture’s in between’, in *Multicultural States*, ed. by David Bennet (London; New York: Routledge), pp. 29–36.

———. 2003. ‘The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism’, in *Literature Politics & Theory*, ed. by Francis Barker (London; New York: Routledge), pp. 148–72.

———. 2004. *The Location of Culture* (New York and London: Routledge).

Bhattacharya, Baidik. 2012. ‘The Secular Alliance: Gramsci, Said and the Postcolonial Question’, in *The Postcolonial Gramsci*, ed. by Baidik Bhattacharya and Neelam Srivastava (New York: Routledge), pp. 80-97.

Bhattacharya, Baidik, and Neelam Srivastava. 2012a. ‘Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’, in *The Postcolonial Gramsci* (New York and London: Routledge), pp. 221–32.

———. 2012b. ‘Introduction: The Postcolonial Gramsci’, in *The Postcolonial Gramsci* (New York and London: Routledge), pp. 1–14.

Boer, Inge E. 2003. ‘Introduction: Imaginative Geographies and the Discourse of Orientalism’, in *After Orientalism: Critical Entanglements, Productive Looks*, ed. by Inge E. Boer (Amsterdam: Rodopi), pp. 9–21.

Bond, Emma, and Daniele Comberiati (eds.). 2013. *Il confine liquido. Rapporti letterari e interculturali fra Italia e Albania* (Nardò: Besa).

Borutta, Manuel, and Sakis Gekas. 2012. 'A Colonial Sea: The Mediterranean, 1798-1956', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire*, 19.1: 1–13.

Bosworth, Richard. 2004. 'War, Totalitarianism and "Deep Belief" in Fascist Italy, 1935-43', *European History Quarterly*, 34.4: 475–505.

Bowler, Anne. 1991. 'Politics as Art: Italian Futurism and Fascism', *Theory and Society*, 20.6: 763–94.

Braudel, Fernand. 1995. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Bresciani, Marco. 2021. 'Fascism, Anti-Fascism and the Idea of Nation: Italian Historiography and Public Debate since the 1980s', *Contemporary European History*, 30.1: 111–23.

Brunetti, Mario. 1936. 'Sposalizio del mare', *Enciclopedia Italiana - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sposalizio-del-mare_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)> [accessed 29 August 2021].

Bucarelli, Massimo. 2017. 'Marina Cattaruzza. L'Italia e la questione adriatica. Dibattiti parlamentari e panorama internazionale (1918-1926). Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014. Pp. 604.', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 48: 323–24.

Bucarelli, Massimo, Luca Micheletta, Luciano Monzali, and Luca Riccardi (eds.). 2016. *Italy and Tito's Yugoslavia in the Age of International Détente* (Bern: Peter Lang).

Buchanan, Ian. 2018. *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Burdett, Charles. 2009. 'Travel and Writing in Fascist Italy', *Italian Politics and Society*, 67: 14–22.

———. 2010a. 'Italian Fascism, Messianic Eschatology and the Representation of Libya', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11.1: 3–25.

———. 2010b. *Journeys Through Fascism: Italian Travel - Writing Between the Wars* (Oxford: Berghahn Books).

———. 2011. 'Nomos, Identity and Otherness: Ciro Poggiali's Diario AOI 1936-1937 and The Representation of the Italian Colonial World', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 79: 329–49.

———. 2018. 'Transnational Time:Reading Post - War Representations of the Italian Presence in East Africa', *Italian Studies*, 73.3: 274–88.

———. 2020. 'Addressing the Representation of the Italian Empire and Its Afterlife', in *Transnational Italian Studies*, ed. by C. Burdett and L. Polezzi (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), pp. 249–66.

Burdett, Charles, and Derek Duncan (eds.). 2002. *Cultural Encounters: European Travel Writing in the 1930s* (New York: Berghahn Books).

Burgwyn, H James. 2004. ‘General Roatta’s War against the Partisans in Yugoslavia: 1942’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 9.3: 314–29.

———. 2005. *Empire on the Adriatic: Mussolini’s Conquest of Yugoslavia 1941-1943* (New York: Enigma).

Burzanovic, Slavko, and Olivera Popovic. 2016. ‘Vico Mantegazza e Il Montenegro’, *Acta Histriae*, 23.4: 511–26.

Byrne, Eleanor. 2019. ‘Said, Bhabha and the Colonized Subject’, in *Orientalism and Literature*, Cambridge Critical Concepts, ed. by Geoffrey P. Nash (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 151–65.

Caburlotto, Filippo. 2010. ‘D’Annunzio, la latinità del Mediterraneo e il mito della riconquista’, *California Italian Studies*, 1.1.

Caccamo, Francesco. 2018. ‘Italy, the Adriatic and the Balkans: From the Great War to the Eve of the Peace Conference’, in *Italy in the Era of the Great War*, ed. by Vanda Wilcox (Leiden; Boston: Brill), pp. 122–44.

Caccamo, Francesco, and Luciano Monzali (eds.). 2008. *L’occupazione italiana della Iugoslavia (1941 - 1943)* (Florence: Le Lettere).

Capano, Fabio. 2018. ‘From a Cosmopolitan to a Fascist Land: Adriatic Irredentism in Motion’, *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 46.6: 976–91.

Capolino, Patrizia. 2011. ‘Tirana: A Capital City Transformed by the Italians’, *Planning Perspectives*, 26.4: 591–615.

Caraci Luzzana, Ilaria. 1988. ‘Almagià, Roberto’, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/roberto-almagia/, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/roberto-almagia/> [accessed 6 September 2020].

Carlino, Marcello. 1982. ‘Comisso, Giovanni’, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-comisso_(Dizionario-Biografico)> [accessed 27 April 2022].

Casales, Francesco. 2020. ‘Purezza e meticciato: The Italian Colonial Novel and the (Re)Production of Italian Whiteness’, *Modern Italy*, 25.4: 439–54.

———. 2023. *Raccontare l’oltremare : storia del romanzo coloniale italiano (1913-1943)* (Florence: Le Monnier).

Caserta, Silvia. 2015. ‘Memory and Representations of the Colonial Experience in Italian Literature’, *KULT Journal for Nordic Postcolonial Studies at Roskilde University, Denmark*, 12: 52–66.

Catalan, Tullia. 2018. ‘Anti-Slavism in Trieste. Old and New Stereotypes in the Satirical Press of the 20th Century’, *Memoria e Ricerca*: 417–30.

Cattaruzza, Marina. 2011. ‘The Making and Remaking of a Boundary – the Redrafting of the Eastern Border of Italy after the Two World Wars’, *Journal of Modern European History / Zeitschrift Für Moderne Europäische Geschichte / Revue d’histoire Européenne Contemporaine*, 9.1: 66–86.

———. 2016. *Italy and Its Eastern Border* (New York: Routledge).

Cavarero, Adriana. 2000. *Relating Narratives, Storytelling and Selfhood* (London; New York: Routledge).

Cavazza, Stefano. 2012. ‘Twisted Roots. Intellectuals, Mass Culture and Political Culture in Italy’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 10.2: 207–30.

Cazzato, Luigi. 2017. *Sguardo inglese e Mediterraneo italiano. Alle radici del meridionismo* (Milan; Udine: Mimesis).

Cecchi, Emilio, and Natalino Sapegno. 1969. *Il novecento* (Milan: Garzanti).

Chakrabarti, Sumit. 2012. ‘Moving beyond Edward Said: Homi Bhabha and the Problem of Postcolonial Representation’, *International Studies. Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, 14.1: 5–21.

Chambers, Ian. 2008. *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham NC: Duke University Press).

Chiarandini, Tommaso. 2022. *Immaturi, sleali, violenti. Immagini e linguaggi dell’antislavismo fascista (1919-1937)* (Pisa: Pacini Editore).

Collini, Stefan. 2019. ‘The Enlightened Vote’, *London Review of Books*, 41.24: 9–10.

Columm Camerino, Marinella. 1994. ‘Donne nell’ingranaggio. La narrativa di Bruno Sperani’, *Les Femmes-Écrivains En Italie (1870-1920): Ordres et Libertés. Croniques Italiennes*, 39–40: 75–88.

Comberiati, Daniele. 2019. ‘Accidental Orientalists. Modern Italian Travelers in Ottoman Lands’, *Italian Studies*, 74.1: 102–3.

Comisso, Giovanni, and Goffredo Parise. 1969. *Diario: 1951-1964* (Milan: Longanesi).

Consociazione turistica italiana (ed.). 1940. *Albania* (Milan: Consociazione turistica italiana).

——— (ed.). 1942. *Dalmazia*, Guida d’Italia (Milan: Consociazione turistica italiana).

Contarini, Silvia. 2015. ‘Scrivere e riscrivere la guerra d’Etiopia: eroismi coloniali e postcoloniali’, *Nuova Corvina*: 144–53.

———. 2021. ‘Linee Del Sud e Racconti Di Migrazione’, in *Percorsi/Contatti/Migrazioni/Dualismi. Nord/Sud e Mediterraneo nella lingua, nella letteratura e nella cultura italiana*, ed. by Paolo Orrù (Florence: Franco Cesati editore), pp. 99–114.

Conti, Davide. 2008. *L'occupazione italiana dei Balcani ; crimini di guerra e mito della brava gente (1940-1943)* (Rome: Odradek).

Culler, Jonathan. 1988. *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Oxford: Blackwell).

D'Annunzio, Gabriele. 1992. *Tutte le novelle*, ed. by Annamaria Andreoli and Marina De Marco (Milan: Mondadori).

Dainotto, Roberto. 2007. *Europe (In Theory)* (Durham NC: Duke University Press).

———. 2017. 'South by Chance: Southern Questions on the Global South', *The Global South*, 11.2: 39–53.

Daly, Selena. 2016. *Italian Futurism and the First World War* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press).

Damiani, Rolando, and Nico Naldini (eds.). 2002. *Giovanni Comisso opere* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore).

De Donno, Fabrizio. 2018. 'Accidental Orientalists: Modern Italian Travellers in Ottoman Lands', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 23.5: 684–86.

De Grand, Alexander. 1971. 'The Italian Nationalist Association in the Period of Italian Neutrality, August 1914 - May 1915', *The Journal of Modern History*, 43.3: 394–412.

———. 2004. 'Mussolini's Follies: Fascism in Its Imperial and Racist Phase, 1935-1940', *Contemporary European History*, 13.2: 127–47.

Del Boca, Angelo. 2005. *Italiani, brava gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore).

Deplano, Valeria. 2018a. *Per una nazione coloniale* (Perugia: Morlacchi Editore).

———. 2018b. 'Within and Outside the Nation: Former Colonial Subjects in Post-War Italy', *Modern Italy*, 23.4: 395–410.

D'Ercole, Maria Cecilia. 2013. 'Archeologia e politica fascista in Adriatico', *Annali della scuola normale superiore di Pisa. Classe di lettere e filosofia*, 5.1: 359–401.

Devos, Rika, Alexander Ortenberg, and Vladimir Paperny (eds.). 2016. *Architecture of Great Expositions 1937-1959: Messages of Peace, Images of War* (London; New York: Routledge).

Di Fiore, Laura, and Marco Meriggi. 2011. *World history. Le nuove rotte della storia* (Rome: Laterza).

Djordjevski, Josef. 2021. '"The (Still) Beautiful Blue Adriatic": Tourism, Yugoslav Socialism, and the Adoption and Limitations of Visual Preservation on the Eastern Adriatic Seaside, 1960s-1990s', *Balkanologie. Revue d'études Pluridisciplinaires*, 16.2.

Doumanis, Nicholas. 1997. *Myth and Memory in the Mediterranean: Remembering Fascism's Empire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

Duncan, Derek. 2002. ‘Travel and Autobiography, Giovanni Comisso’s Memories of the War’, in *Cultural Encounters, Europeans Travel Writing in the 1930s*, ed. by Derek Duncan and Charles Burdett (New York: Berghahn Books), pp. 49–63.

———. 2005. ‘Italian Identity and the Risks of Contamination: The Legacies of Mussolini’s Demographic Impulse in the Work of Comisso, Flaiano, and Dell’Oro’, in *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*, ed. by Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan (Peter Lang), pp. 99–123.

Dunnage, Jonathan. 2002. *Twentieth Century Italy: A Social History* (London: Longman).

Dzelzainis, Martin. 2012. ‘Milton, Foucault, and the New Historicism’, in *Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton*, ed. by Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 209–34.

Evans, Fred. 2018. ‘Adriana Cavarero and the Primacy of Voice’, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 32.3: 475–87.

Fabian, Johannes. 2014. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta. 2023. *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Falcucci, Beatrice. 2020. ‘“The Issue of the Mediterranean and the Colonies Has Now Moved to the Forefront of Cultural Life”: Curating Museums and Curating the Nation in Fascist Italy’s Colonies’, *Modern Italy*, 25.4: 421–37.

———. 2021. ‘Bringing the Empire to the Provinces: Colonial Museums and Colonial Knowledge in Fascist Italy’, *Cahiers François Viète*: 113–46.

Fanon, Frantz. 1970. *Towards the African Revolution* (London: Pelican).

———. 2007. *I dannati della terra,* trans. by Carlo Cignetti (Turin: Einaudi).

Faysal, Yasif Ahmad, and Md Mijanur Rahman. 2021. ‘Foucault’s Concept of History and New Historicism: Points of Convergence’, *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: A Arts & Humanities - Psychology*, 21.15: 9–17.

Ferraccioli, Maria Marcella, and Gianfranco Giraudo. 2013. ‘Sudditi Slavi Della Serenissima’, in *Linee Di Confine: Separazioni e Processi Di Integrazione Nello Spazio Culturale Slavo*, ed. by Giovanna Moracci and Alberto Alberti (Florence: Firenze University Press), pp. 489–510.

Filippini, Michele. 2017. *Using Gramsci: A New Approach* (London: Pluto Press).

Finaldi, Giuseppe. 2009. *Italian National Identity in the Scramble for Africa: Italy’s African Wars in the Era of Nation-Building, 1870-1900* (Bern: Peter Lang).

Fiore, Teresa. 2020. ‘Italy and Italian Studies in the Transnational Space of Migration and Colonial Routes’, in *Transnational Italian Studies*, ed. by Charles Burdett and Loredana Polezzi (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), pp. 161–76.

Fischer, Bernd J. 1999. *Albania at War, 1939-1945* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press).

Fleig, Anne. 2019. 'Gender Studies', in *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, ed. by Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (Boston; Berlin: De Gruyter), pp. 54–63.

Fleming, Katie. 2006. 'The Use and Abuse of Antiquity: The Politics and Morality of Appropriation', in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. by Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd), pp. 127–37.

Forgacs, David. 2014. *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

———. 2016. 'Italian Massacres in Occupied Ethiopia', *Modern Italy*, 21.3: 305–12.

Foucault, Michel. 1971a. *L'Archeologia Del Sapere, Una Metodologia per La Storia Della Cultura*, trans. by Giovanni Bogliolo (Milan: Rizzoli).

———. 1971b. *L'ordine Del Discorso*, trans. by Alessandro Bertani Fontana (Turin: Einaudi).

Frangioni, Andrea. 2023. 'Gaetano Salvemini and Foreign Policy during the First World War: The Collaboration with The New Europe', *Modern Italy*, 28.4: 286–95.

Freeland, Anne. 2020. 'Subalternity and the National-Popular: A Brief Genealogy of the Concepts', in *Revisiting Gramsci's Notebooks*, ed. by Francesca Antonini, Aaron Bernstein, Lorenzo Fusaro, and Robert Jackson (Leiden: Brill), pp. 195–208.

Gallicchio, Alessandro. 2021. '« Squilli di gloria nel sole di Napoli »: Le pavillon L'Albania nella civiltà mediterranea de la Prima Mostra Triennale delle Terre Italiane d'Oltremare à Naples (1940)', *Artl@s Bulletin*, 10.2: 198–211.

Games, Alison. 2006. 'Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities', *The American Historical Review*, 111.3: 741–57.

Gasset, José Ortega y. 1994. *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company).

Gemiani, Marco. 2010. 'MIllo, Enrico', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/enrico-millo_(Dizionario-Biografico)/> [accessed 17 June 2021].

Gentile, Emilio. 1993. *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Rome; Bari: Laterza).

———. 2009. *La Grande Italia: The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*, George L. Mosse Series in Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press).

Gerbi, Sandro, and Raffaele Liucci. 2011. 'Montanelli, Indro', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/indro-montanelli> [accessed 16 March 2023].

Gilkes, Oliver J., Anna Maria Liberati, Lida Miraj, Iris Pojani, Frank Sear, and others. 2003. 'The Theatre at Butrint: Luigi Maria Ugolini's Excavations at Butrint 1928-1932 (Albania Antica Iv)', *The British School at Athens. Supplementary Volumes*, 35: iii–270.

Ginsburg, Shai. 2009. 'Signs and Wonders: Fetishism and Hybridity in Homi Bhabha's "The Location of Culture"', *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 9.3: 229–50.

Gobetti, Eric. 2013. *Alleati del nemico, l'occupazione italiana in Jugoslavia* (Rome: Laterza).

———. 2018. 'Allied with the Enemy: The Italian Occupation of Yugoslavia (1941-43)', in *Italy and the Second World War, Alternative Perspectives*, ed. by Emanuele Sica and Richard Carrier (Leiden; Boston: Brill), pp. 15–33.

Gounalis, Nicole. 2018. 'Antonio Gramsci on Italian Futurism: Politics and the Path to Modernism', *Italian Studies*, 73.4: 365–76.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1930. 'Alcuni Temi Della Questione Meridionale', *Lo Stato Operaio, Rassegna Di Politica Proletaria*, IV.1: 9–26.

———. 2015. *Quaderni del carcere* (Turin: Einaudi).

Grasman, Edward. 2012. 'A Salute to You: Expansion under the Wings of Saint Mark', *Artibus et Historiae*, 33.66: 121–31.

Gribaudi, Gabriella. 2010. 'Nord e Sud: Una Geografia Simbolica', *Contemporanea*, 13.1: 105–18.

Griffin, Roger. 2002. 'The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (Or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37.1: 21–43.

———. 2007. *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

———. 2012. 'Studying Fascism in a Postfascist Age. From New Consensus to New Wave?', *Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 1.1: 1–17.

Guaraldo, Olivia. 2012. 'Thinkers That Matter. On the Thought of Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero', *AG About Gender - International Journal of Gender Studies*, 1.1: 92–117.

Guerriero, Stefano. 2003. 'Edward W. Said', *Belfagor*, 58.3: 313–26.

Guida, Francesco. 2007. 'Mantegazza, Vico', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana).<https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vico-mantegazza_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/> [accessed 15 November 2020].

Guidi, Andreas. 2022a. *Generations of Empire: Youth from Ottoman to Italian Rule in the Mediterranean* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

———. 2022b. 'Storia italiana, storia mediterranea: nuove prospettive su un passato imperiale e coloniale', *Italia Contemporanea*: 350–69.

Halimi, Redi. 2017. 'L'Albania fascista (1939-1943)', *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea*, 31.3.

Hall, Stuart, and Paul Du Guy. 1996. *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: SAGE Publications).

Hametz, Maura. 2014. 'Replacing Venice in the Adriatic: Tourism and Italian Irredentism, 1880–1936', *Journal of Tourism History*, 6.2–3: 107–21.

Härmänmaa, Marja. 2015. 'Gabriele D'Annunzio and War Rhetoric in the "Canti Della Guerra Latina"', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 33: 31–51.

———. 2019. 'Anatomy of the Superman: Gabriele D'Annunzio's Response to Nietzsche', *The European Legacy*, 24.1: 59–75.

Harris, William V. 2005. *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press).

Hartman, Geoffrey. 2010. 'Gods, Ghosts, and Shelley's"Atheos"', *Literature and Theology*, 24.1: 4–18.

Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

———. 2012a. 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 1–14.

———. 2012b. 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 263–308.

———. 2018. *L'età degli imperi 1875-1914*, trans. by Franco Salvatorelli (Bari: Laterza).

Hofmann, Nicole. 2017. 'Il fondo archivistico di Federico Valerio Ratti presso la biblioteca Oliveriana di Pesaro. Indagini preliminari e primo censimento', *Studi Pesaresi*, 5: 227–30.

Hom, Stephanie Malia. 2012. 'Empires of Tourism: Travel and Rhetoric in Italian Colonial Libya and Albania, 1911-1943', *Journal of Tourism History*, 4.3: 281–300.

Homer. 1995. *Odyssey*, trans. by Augustus T. Murray (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press).

———. 1999. *The Iliad*, trans. by Augustus T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Horden, Peregrine, and Nicholas Purcell. 2000. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell).

———. 2006. 'The Mediterranean and "the New Thalassology"', *The American Historical Review*, 111.3: 722–40.

———. 2019. *The Boundless Sea: Writing Mediterranean History* (London: Routledge).

Hron, Madelaine. 2018. 'The Trauma of Displacement', in *Trauma and Literature*, ed. by Roger J. Kurtz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 284–98.

Hughes-Hallet, Lucy. 2013. *The Pike, Gabriele D'Annunzio Poet, Seducer and Preacher of War* (London: Fourth Estate).

Iaconis, Valeria. 2019. '"Una sola donna, una sola voce": Un'indagine "investigativa" su una novella d'autrice di fine ottocento', *Forum Italicum*, 53.2: 408–24.

Isnenghi, M. 1990. 'D'Annunzio e l'ideologia della venezianità', *Rivista di Storia Contemporanea*, 19.3: 419–31.

Iuso, Pasquale. 2002. 'Percorsi italiani nei Balcani del Novecento', *Meridiana*: 161–78.

Ivetic, Egidio. 2019. *Storia dell'Adriatico: un mare e la sua civiltà* (Bologna: Il Mulino).

Jeličić, Ivan. 2022. 'Redefining Fiumians: Flag Usage and the Ambiguities of the Nation-Building Process in the Former Habsburg-Hungarian Corpus Separatum, 1914-1924', *Contemporary European History*: 1–20.

Jezernik, Božidar. 2010. *Europa selvaggia. I Balcani nello sguardo dei viaggiatori occidentali* (Turin: EDT).

Kramer, Alan. 2010. 'The First World War as Cultural Trauma', in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. by R. J. B. Bosworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 32–51.

Labanca, Nicola. 2002. *Oltremare, storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino).

L'Abbate, Mariagrazia, and Valeria Moscardin. 2017. 'L'Albania nelle grandi esposizioni - L'Albania alla fiera del Levante di Bari', in *La presenza italiana in Albania tra Il 1924 e Il 1943. La ricerca archeologica, la conservazione, le scelte progettuali*, ed. by Roberta Belli Pasqua, Luigi M. Caliò, and Anna B. Menghini (Rome: Quasar).

Lack, Hans Walter, and Zoltán Barina. 2020. 'The Early Botanical Exploration of Albania (1839-1945)', *Willdenowia*, 50.3: 519–58.

Lamour, Christian. 2023. 'The Scientific Discourse Circulated during a National-Populist Commemoration: Dannunzian Fiume and the "Italo-Cosmopolitan" Field of History', *Modern Italy*, 28.1: 35–50.

Lane, Frederic C. 2015. *Storia di Venezia*, trans. by F. Salvatorelli (Turin: Einaudi).

Lanfranchi, Stéphanie. 2011. '"Verrà un dì l'Italia vera...": poesia e profezia dell'Italia futura nel giudizio fascista', *California Italian Studies*, 2.1.

Larebo, Haile. 2005. 'Empire Building and Its Limitations: Ethiopia (1935-1941)', in *Italian Colonialism*, ed. by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US), pp. 83–94.

Lavdosh, Ahmetaj. 2017. 'Italian Financial Expansion to National Bank of Albania and SVEA (1925-1939)', *Economicus*, 15: 123–34.

Laven, David, and Elsa Damien. 2015. 'Empire, City, Nation: Venice's Imperial Past and the "Making of Italians" from Unification to Fascism', in *Nationalizing Empires*, ed. by Alexei Miller and Stefan Berger (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press), pp. 511–51.

Lepre, Aurelio, and Claudia Petraccone. 2008. *Storia d'Italia dall'unità ad oggi* (Bologna: Il Mulino).

Liguori, Guido. 2004. ‘Ideologia’, in *Le parole di Gramsci,* ed. by Fabio Frosini and Guido Liguori (Rome: Carocci), pp. 131–49.

Litvine, Alexis D. 2022. ‘The Annihilation of Space: A Bad (Historical) Concept’, *The Historical Journal*, 65: 871–900.

Lonati, Sara S. 2011. ‘La scoperta dell’Italia: letteratura, geografia e turismo nella rivista “Le vie d’Italia” (1917-1967) del Touring Club Italiano’ (Geneve: Universite de Geneve).

Loomba, Ania. 2015. *Colonialism / Postcolonialism* (Abingdon: Routledge).

Lorenzetti, Sara. 2021. ‘Frammenti equorei in gente di mare Di Giovanni Comisso’, in *Narrazioni e rappresentazioni dell’Adriatico ieri e oggi*, ed. by Costanza Geddes da Filicaia and Sara Lorenzetti (Macerata: Eum), pp. 99–110.

Lowe, Cedric James, and Frank Marzari. 1976. *Italian Foreign Policy 1870-1940* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

Luzzana Caraci, Ilaria. 1985. ‘Dainelli, Giotto’, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giotto-dainelli_(Dizionario-Biografico)> [accessed 31 March 2021].

Mai, Nicola. 2003. ‘The Cultural Construction of Italy in Albania and Vice Versa: Migration Dynamics, Strategies of Resistance and Politics of Mutual Self-Definition across Colonialism and Post-Colonialism’, *Modern Italy*, 8.1: 77–93.

Malaparte, Curzio, and Enzo R. Laforgia. 2023. *Viaggio in Etiopia e altri scritti africani* (Passigli)

Mallet, Michael. 1984. *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State, Venice c. 1400-1617* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Mancosu, Gianmarco. 2022. *Vedere l’Impero : L’Istituto Luce e il colonialismo fascista* (Milan; Udine: Mimesis Edizioni).

Martucci, Donato. 2014. ‘“Le terre albanesi redente”. La Ciameria tra irredentismo albanese e propaganda fascista’, *Palaver*, 3: 145–74.

———. 2016. ‘Il sogno di un’opera monumentale: Fonti per la storia d’Albania’, *Palaver*, 5.1: 5–58.

Martucci, Donato, and Rita Nicolì. 2013. ‘Ai Popoli Generosi Dell’Albania e Della Montagna Nera: Antonio Baldacci e i Balcani’, *Palaver*, 2: 183–206.

McGuire, Valerie. 2018a. ‘An Imperial Education for Times of Transition: Italian Conquest, Occupation and Civil Administration of the Southeast Aegean, 1912-23’, in *Italy in the Era of the Great War*, ed. by Vanda Wilcox (Leiden; Boston: Brill), pp. 145–63.

———. 2018b. ‘Bringing the Empire Home: Italian Fascism’s Mediterranean Tour of Rhodes’, *California Italian Studies*, 8.2.

———. 2020. *Italy’s Sea: Empire and Nation in the Mediterranean, 1895-1945* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

McLaren, Brian. 2006. *Architecture and Tourism in Italian Colonial Libya: An Ambivalent Modernism* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press).

McLaughlan, Robert, and Neelam Srivastava. 2014. 'Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory', *Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, 22.1: 240–70.

McLean, Eden. 2021. 'What Does It Mean to Be a(n Italian) Borderland? Recent Literature on Italy's "New Provinces" of South Tyrol and the Julian March', *Contemporary European History*, 30.3: 449–59.

Merolla, Riccardo. 1978. 'Gualtiero Castellini', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana).

Meyers, Walter E. 1969. 'Literary Terms and Jakobson's Theory of Communication', *College English*, 30.7: 518–26.

Michail, Eugene. 2012. 'Western Attitudes to War in the Balkans and the Shifting Meanings of Violence, 1912-91', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47.2: 219–39.

Micheletta, Luca. 2008. 'Il sostegno alla Grande Albania: Il caso del Kosovo', in *L'Occupazione italiana della Iugoslavia (1941-1943)*, ed. by Francesco Caccamo and Luciano Monzali (Florence: Le Lettere), pp. 257–308.

Milani, Este. 1956. *Bibliografia di Pio Bondioli* (Busto Arsizio: La famiglia bustocca).

Mishra, Vijay. 2022. 'Homi Bhabha and "Signs Taken for Wonders": A Second Reading', *Textual Practice*, 36.1: 135–57.

Mohanty, Pramod Kumar, and Aron Andemichael. 2010. 'Colonialism and Land in Africa: A Case of Italian Land Policy in Eritrean Highlands', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 71: 950–58.

Moll, Carlo. 2021. 'Seeing Poems of Suffering and The Future of the Nation: On the Meaning of the Eyes in Italian Literature of the Great War, 1915-1935', *Italian Studies*, 76.4: 353–70.

———. 2022. 'The Idea of a Beautiful Death in Italian Literature of the Great War', *Modern Italy*, 27.2: 91–103.

Moloney, Brian. 2005. *Italian Novels of Peasant Crisis, 1930-1950: Bonfires in the Night* (Dublin: Four Courts).

Monsagrati, Giuseppe. 2007. 'Manfroni, Camillo', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/camillo-manfroni_(Dizionario-Biografico)> [accessed 17 June 2021].

Monzali, Luciano. 2007. *Italiani di Dalmazia 1914-1924* (Florence: Le Lettere).

Moosavinia, Sayyed, Karlis Racevskis, and Sasan Talebi Sarokolaei. 2019. 'Edward Said and Michel Foucault: Representation of the Notion of Discourse in Colonial Discourse Theory', *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistic*, 10.2: 182–97.

Mosk, Carl. 2013. *Nationalism and Economic Development in Modern Eurasia* (New York; London: Routledge.

Nail, Thomas. 2016. *Theory of the Border* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Newman, John Paul. 2014. 'Croats and Croatia in the Wake of the Great War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 24: 165–81.

———. 2017. 'War Veterans, Fascism, and Para-Fascist Departures in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1918-1941', *Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 6.1: 42–74.

Nordman, Daniel. 2011. 'William V. Harris(Éd.)Rethinking the Mediterranean Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, xxii-414p., Cartes.', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 66: 259–61.

Oruc, Firat. 2022. 'Thalassological Worldmaking and Literary Circularities in the Indian Ocean', *Comparative Literature*, 74.2: 147–55.

Osterhammel, Jurgen. 2018. *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment Encounter with Asia*, trans. by Robert Savage (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press).

Palano, Damiano. 2002. *Il potere della moltitudine* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero).

Palma, Silvana. 2005. 'The Seen, the Unseen, the Invented: Misrepresentations of African "Otherness" in the Making of a Colony. Eritrea, 1885-1896 (Le vu, Le Non vu, l'inventé. Trompeuses Représentations de l'altérité Africaine Dans La Construction d'une Colonie. L'Érythrée 1885-1896)', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 45.177: 39–69.

Panichi, Alessio. 2020. 'Between Belonging and Originality: Norberto Bobbio's Interpretation of Gramsci', in *Revisiting Gramsci's Notebooks*, ed. by Francesca Antonini, Aaron Bernstein, Lorenzo Fusaro, and Robert Jackson (Leiden, The Netherlands ; Brill), pp. 391–411.

Panizza, Letizia, and Sharon Wood (eds.). 2000. *A History of Women's Writing in Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Pappalardo, Salvatore. 2021. *Modernism in Trieste: The Habsburg Mediterranean and the Literary Invention of Europe, 1870-1945* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic).

Parfitt, Rose. 2018. 'Fascism, Imperialism and International Law: An Arch Met a Motorway and the Rest Is History...', *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 31.3: 509–38.

Patriarca, Silvana. 2011. *Italianità: la costruzione del carattere nazionale*, Storia e società (Rome: Laterza).

———. 2021. 'Italian Uses of Orientalism from the Risorgimento to Fascism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 26.2: 220–26.

Patriarca, Silvana, and Valeria Deplano. 2018. 'Nation, "Race", and Racisms in Twentieth-Century Italy', *Modern Italy*, 23.4: 349–53.

Pavić, Milorad. 2016. 'Perceptions of the Eastern Adriatic in the Travel Literature of the Early Modern Period', *Tabula (Pula)*, 14: 103–17.

Paz, Carme Font, and Nina Geerdink (eds.). 2018. *Economic Imperatives for Women's Writing in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden; Boston: Brill).

Pergher, Roberta. 2017. *Mussolini's Nation-Empire: Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy's Borderlands, 1922–1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Pes, Alessandro. 2017. 'Il lavoro italiano in colonia nel dibattito politico tra il 1946 e Il 1949', *Il Politico*, 82.3(246): 160–75.

Peters, Edward. 2003. 'Quid Nobis Cum Pelago? The New Thalassology and the Economic History of Europe', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 34.1: 49–61.

Piccioni, Lucia. 2022. 'Images of Black Faces in Italian Colonialism: Mobile Essentialisms', *Modern Italy*, 27.4: 375–96.

Pinkus, Karen. 1995. *Bodily Regimes: Italian Advertising under Fascism* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press).

Pirjevec, Joze. 2014. *Le guerre jugoslave. 1991-1999* (Turin: Einaudi).

Pocock, J. G. A. 1998. 'The Politics of History: The Subaltern and the Subversive', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 6.3: 219–34.

Poesio, Camilla. 2011. *Il confino fascista: l'arma silenziosa del regime* (Rome; Bari: Laterza).

Porter, Dennis. 2013. 'Orientalism and Its Problems', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory, A Reader* (London; New York: Routledge), pp. 150–61.

Prato, Giuliana. 2009. 'Minorities in Italy: The Cases of Arbëresh and Albanian Migrations', in *Beyond Multiculturalism* (Routledge)

Pratt, Mary Louise. 2007. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge).

Puccini, Sandra. 1996. 'Le immagini delle razze balcaniche nell'antropologia italiana tra le due guerre', *La Ricerca Folklorica*: 59–70.

Pula, Besnik. 2008. 'Becoming Citizens of Empire: Albanian Nationalism and Fascist Empire, 1939-1943', *Theory and Society*, 37.6: 567–96.

Qesari, Edon. 2017. 'Le orme dell'egemonia Italiana sul protonazionalismo albanese e lo scontro con l'alleato Asburgico sull'istruzione scolastica', in *Puglia e Grande Guerra*, ed. by F. Altamura (Nardò: Salento Books).

Quagliarini, Barbara. 2008. 'Marpicati, Arturo in', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/arturo-marpicati_(Dizionario-Biografico)> [accessed 25 April 2022].

Ragone, Giovanni. 1983. 'La letteratura e il consumo: un profilo dei generi e dei modelli nell'editoria italiana (1845-1925)', in *Letteratura italiana, Produzione e consumo*, Letteratura Italiana, ed. by Alberto Asor Rosa (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore), pp. 687–774.

Rappas, Alexis. 2022. 'The Fascist Temptation: British and Italian Imperial Entanglements in the Eastern Mediterranean', *Contemporary European History*: 1–18.

Reid, Richard. 2012. 'Italian National Identity in the Scramble for Africa: Italy's African Wars in the Era of Nation-Building, 1870-1900', *Northeast African Studies*, 12.2: 123–27.

Reill, Dominique K. 2012. *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice*, Stanford Studies on Central and Eastern Europe, 1st edn (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

———. 2020. *The Fiume Crisis* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press).

Roberts, David D. 2011. 'Reconsidering Gramsci's Interpretation of Fascism', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16.2: 239–55.

Rodogno, Davide. 2004. 'Italian Soldiers in the Balkans. The Experience of the Occupation (1941-1943)', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 6.2: 125–44.

———. 2006. *Fascism's European Empire*, trans. by Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Rolandi, Francesca. 2015. *Con ventiquattromila baci. L'influenza della cultura di massa italiana in Jugoslavia* (Bologna: Bononia University Press).

Romanelli, Pietro. 1971. 'Boni, Giacomo', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giacomo-boni_(Dizionario-Biografico)> [accessed 29 August 2021].

Romani, Gabriella. 2006. 'Introduction. Scenes from Nineteenth-Century Italy: Delightful Stories on Those Long, Long Winter Evenings', in *Writing to Delight*, ed. by Antonia Arslan and Gabriella Romani (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 3–20.

Romeo, Caterina. 2017. 'Italian Postcolonial Literature', *California Italian Studies*, 7.2.

Rossi, Elena A., and Maria T. Giusti. 2011. *Una guerra a parte: i militari italiani nei Balcani, 1940-1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino).

Rossi, Umberto. 2015. 'Broken Images of a Defeat: Gadda, Comisso, Malaparte, and the Rout of Caporetto', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 33: 131–51.

Ryan, Eileen. 2015. 'Violence and the Politics of Prestige: The Fascist Turn in Colonial Libya', *Modern Italy*, 20.2: 123–35.

Saba, Umberto. 1956. *Ricordi - Racconti, 1910/1947* (Milan: Mondadori).

Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism* (New York: Random House Inc.).

———. 1994. *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books (New York: Random House Inc.).

Salerno, Daniele. 2016. 'Memorializing Boat Tragedies in the Mediterranean: The Case of the Katër i Radës', in *Migration by Boat*, ed. by Lynda Mannik (Berghahn Books), pp. 133–53.

Santoro, Lorenzo. 2012. ‘Antonio Gramsci: The Fascist Leadership as Modern Reactionary Caeserism and the Novelty of the Corporative State’, *Leadership*, 8.3: 277–86.

Santoro, Stefano. 2013. ‘Culture and Propaganda in World War II: Fascist Italy and the Balkans’, in *War and Propaganda in the XXth Century* (presented at the War and propaganda in the XXth Century, Lisbon: Instituto de História Contemporânea (IHC)), pp. 122–27 <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7799676> [accessed 11 April 2023].

Schep, Caroline, and Herman Paul. 2021. ‘Denial of Coevalness: Charges of Dogmatism in the Nineteenth-Century Humanities’, *History of European Ideas*, 48.6: 778–94.

Segnini, Elisa, and Michael Subialka. 2023. *Gabriele D’Annunzio and World Literature: Multilingualism, Translation, Reception* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

Segrè, Claudio G. 1979. ‘Beggar’s Empire: Ideology and the Colonialist Movement in Liberal Italy’, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society*, 4: 174–83.

Serventi Longhi, Enrico. 2022. ‘The Father of “Sovereignism”: D’Annunzio in Fiume between the Crisis of Liberalism and the Critique of Democracy’, *Modern Italy*, 27.1: 35–47.

Seyhan, Azade. 2012. *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press).

Skendi, Stavro. 1967. *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Sluga, Glenda. 2001. *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

———. 2010. ‘The Aftermath of War’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. by R. J. B. Bosworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Spackman, Barbara. 2017. *Accidental Orientalists: Modern Italian Travelers in Ottoman Lands* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1985. ‘Can The Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice’, *Wedge*, 7.8: 120–30.

Srivastava, Neelam. 2015. ‘Frantz Fanon in Italy’, *Interventions*, 17.3: 309–28.

———. 2018. *Italian Colonialism and Resistance to Empire* (London: Palgrave MacMillan).

———. 2022. ‘Philological Method and Subaltern Pasts’, *Italian Culture*, 40.1: 49–60.

Steward - Steinberg, Suzanne. 2007. *The Pinocchio Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Surdich, Francesco. 1983. ‘Guido Cora’, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana).

Tallon, James N. 2014. ‘Albania’s Long World War I, 1912-1925: Albania in WWI’, *Studia Historyczne*, 4: 437–57.

Tamborra, Angela. 1963. ‘Baiamonti, Antonio’, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-baiamonti_(Dizionario-Biografico)> [accessed 24 August 2021].

Thomas, Peter D. 2009. *The Gramscian Moment Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism* (Leiden ; Brill).

———. 2018. ‘Refiguring the Subaltern’, *Political Theory*, 46.6: 861–84.

Todorova, Maria N. 2009. *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Tramonti, Ulisse, and Marie Lou Busi (eds.). 2017. *Architettura e urbanistica nelle terre d’oltremare: Dodecaneso, Etiopia, Albania (1924-1943)* (Bologna: Bononia University Press).

Trento, Giovanna. 2012. ‘From Marinetti to Pasolini: Massawa, the Red Sea, and the Construction of “Mediterranean Africa” in Italian Literature and Cinema’, *Northeast African Studies*, 12.1: 273–307.

Triulzi, Alessandro. 2003. ‘Adwa: From Monument to Document’, *Modern Italy*, 8.1: 95–108.

Troilo, Simona. 2021. *Pietre d’oltremare: scavare, conservare, immaginare l’Impero (1899-1940)* (Rome; Bari: Laterza).

Turda, Marius, and Bolaji Balogun. 2023. ‘Colonialism, Eugenics and “Race” in Central and Eastern Europe’, *Global Social Challenges Journal*, 2.2: 168–78.

Ungari, Andrea. 2008. ‘Casa Savoia e la diplomazia fascista nei Balcani’, in *L’occupazione italiana della Iugoslavia (1941-1943)*, ed. by Francesco Caccamo and Luciano Monzali (Florence: Le Lettere), pp. 309–54.

Vaglio, Luca. 2023. ‘La ricezione di Ivo Andric in Italia (1991-2021). Bilanci e prospettive’, *Studi Slavistci*, XX: 173–85.

Valentino, Russell S. 2023. ‘Morlach’s Blood in Fiume’s Mensa: D’Annunzio and the Intimate Adriatic’, in *Gabriele D’Annunzio and World Literature*, ed. by Elisa Segnini and Michael Subialka (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), pp. 316–29.

Van Hout, Milou. 2020. ‘In Search of the Nation in Fiume: Irredentism, Cultural Nationalism, Borderlands’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 26.3: 660–76.

Vedovato, Giuseppe. 2009. ‘Giotto Dainelli tra scienza e politica’, *Rivista Di Studi Politici Internazionali*, 76.3: 381–421.

Veracini, Lorenzo. 2018. ‘Italian Colonialism through a Settler Colonial Studies Lens’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 19.3.

Verginella, Marta. 2008. ‘Il paradigma città/campagna e la rappresentazione dualistica di uno spazio multietnico’, *Contemporanea*, 11.4: 779–92.

———. 2011. ‘Antislavismo, razzismo di frontiera?’, *Aut Aut*, 349: 30–49.

Vittoria, Albertina. 1995. ‘Federzoni, Luigi’, *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani - Treccani* (Rome: Istituto della enicopledia Italiana) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigi-federzoni_(Dizionario-Biografico)> [accessed 27 April 2023].

West - Pavlov, Russel. 2013. *Temporalities* (New York: Routledge).

Wilcox, Vanda. 2021. *The Italian Empire and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

———. 2022. ‘Imperial Thinking and Colonial Combat in the Early Twentieth-Century Italian Army’, *The Historical Journal*, 65: 1333–53.

Wolff, Larry. 1994. *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford Unviersity Press).

———. 2001. *Venice and the Slavs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

———. 2014. ‘The Western Representation of Eastern Europe on the Eve of World War I: Mediated Encounters and Intellectual Expertise in Dalmatia, Albania, and Macedonia’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 86.2: 381–407.

Young, Robert J. C. 2004. *White Mythologies* (Abingdon: Routledge).

———. 2015. *Empire, Colony, Postcolony.* (Oxford: WILEY Blackwell).

———. 2016. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Chicester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd).

Yusin, Jennifer. 2018. ‘Postcolonial Trauma’, in *Trauma and Literature*, ed. by J. Roger Kurtz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 239–54.

Zambon, Patrizia. 2006. ‘I “Ricordi della mia infanzia in Dalmazia” di Beatrice Speraz’, in *Letteratura arte e cultura italiana tra le due sponde dell’Adriatico* (Padua: Cleup), pp. 155–73

Zichi, Giuseppe. 2017. ‘Tra malizia politica e giochi diplomatici: per una ricostruzione del ruolo dell’Italia nelle operazioni balcaniche del 1915-16’, *Rivista di studi politici internazionali*, 84.4 (336): 573–95.

Zimmermann, Tanja. 2014. *Balkan Memories Media Constructions of National and Transnational History* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag).

Zocchi, Benedetta. 2019. ‘Italian Colonialism in the Making of National Consciousness: Representations of African Natives’, *Storicamente*, 15: 1–27.