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Of Ghosts and Survivors:
The History and Memory of 1968 in Italy

By

Rosaria Carbotti

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Italian Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Critical Theory

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Film Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Barbara Spackman, Chair
Professor Mia Fuller
Professor Linda Williams

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Abstract

Of Ghosts and Survivors:
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Doctor of Philosophy in Italian Studies

and the Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory

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University of California, Berkeley

Professor Barbara Spackman, Chair

The year 1968 saw the rise of a manifold protest movement among Italian university students that evolved well into the late 1970s and spread to all segments of society. Today, the memory of this collective experience represents one of the most haunting episodes of the 20th century. Torn between celebrating national events and giving in to cultural amnesia, the Italian cultural discourse around ’68 appears deliberately opaque. In recent historiography, fiction, and film this momentous year appears to be condensed in a puzzle of contrasting snapshots that do not fit well together. On one hand, it is remembered as a watershed event that altered the course of the nation’s history and the lives of individuals in radical ways. On the other hand, many ’68 storytellers mourn the complete erasure of their experience from contemporary culture and criticize the moral wasteland that is associated with the current political arena when contrasted with the vanished hopes of the past. From Luisa Passerini to Guido Viale, from Erri De Luca to Giovanni Moro, a generation of protagonists and witnesses of those times raise through their work a number of urgent questions that deal with issues of periodization, selective perception, genealogical inheritance, and a paralyzing feeling of melancholia. Such questions do not seem to find answers within traditional historical or sociological approaches. At the same time, these accounts pose problems of their own, as they reflect a desire to simultaneously preserve and shatter the memory of 1968 as it has come to be celebrated in popular culture.

My dissertation is in dialogue with a vast intellectual constellation that encompasses historical, theoretical, literary, and cinematic readings of 1968. As I investigate the existing narrative production around the ’68 phenomenon, I question what lies at the heart of the possessive forms of memory that have come to characterize our present approach to that time. In doing so, I challenge the current widespread view that sees possessive memory as an obstacle to a proper understanding of the past. On the contrary, I argue that it is precisely by looking closer at the stumbling blocks that seem to hinder the flow of historical narrative surrounding ’68 that we might get at the core of our collective attachment to that time, a bond that is shaped by the labor of forces and emotions that cannot yet be put to rest. My research pays particular attention

to the ways in which the memory of ’68 has been defiantly organized at the narrative level as an attempt to resist periodization. Thus, I interpret such resistance as a way to protract the presence of ’68 beyond its temporal confines and ultimately deny the symbolic death of a groundbreaking collective experience. Through the analysis of the narrative figuration of the ghost, I explore the ways in which melancholia — the feeling of painful attachment to a lost ideal — can be taken to be an affirmative disposition that originates a form of critical agency on the part of the ’68 storytellers. The imperative need “to begin with oneself” — to impose the primacy of subjective affect, understanding one’s involvement in social phenomena as the merging of individual and collective expression — becomes a melancholic act of rebellion against the objectifying discourse of history. From this perspective, I take 1968 to be reactivated as a temporal category against which the present needs to be questioned in order for a future to be imagined anew.

A PJ e Flora

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Introduction

The Year Time Came Unbound

> I don't want to invent victories for people's movements. But to think that history-writing must aim simply to recapitulate the failures that dominate the past is to make historians collaborators in an endless cycle of defeat. If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it should, I believe, emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past when, even if in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, occasionally to win. I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past's fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare.
> *Howard Zinn*[*]

In 1968, the foundations of Italian culture were shaken to the core by a series of events that first took place in university buildings and public squares: what started out as a spontaneous mass student movement with no organized hierarchy and a very vast, ambitious, yet vague set of goals soon acquired the features of a pervasive revolutionary impetus that spread out to a multiplicity of settings, from the privacy of homes to the organized world of factories, unions, and political institutions. Because of the resonance of the unexpected impact between the '68 student movement and the Italian society of the time, the history of 1968 immediately appeared to be shrouded in legend. Not only did the Italian events contribute to changing the society from within and opening a set of cultural and ideological debates that lasted for decades afterwards; what happened in '68 also suddenly seemed to connect the local reality of the Italian struggles with a worldwide net of youth protests and civil rights movements. Alongside the United States, Vietnam, Japan, Mexico, Germany, and France, Italy came to represent one of the central stages where a cultural and political revolution was considered to be in the making. When observed from the perspective of today, the peculiarity of the Italian experience is the long-lasting reverberance of the effects of the 1968 struggles and the complex narrative matter that coagulated around this historical event. Soon after the beginning of the student uprisings, the understanding of the temporal dimension of 1968 transcended and morphed into a much more kaleidoscopic object — the so-called "'68" or "il Sessantotto" — which came to serve as a

[*] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005), 10-1.

repository of hopes and deceptions, desires and disillusionments, severe ideologies and poetical musings for decades to come.[1] Its relevance in the Italian political discourse continued to be a matter of vehement controversy. As noted by the historian Peppino Ortoleva, with '68

> [i]nstead of a reflection, we are often confronted with a *dispute* over the ownership over the past. On one hand, some enunciate the maxim according to which certain events can be understood only by those who *lived* through them; on the other hand, we find an increasingly widespread thesis that contends that '68, seen as some kind of great (and fundamentally inexplicable) collective *intoxication*, should for the most part be *buried* once and for all.
>
> Invece che a una riflessione, ci troviamo molto spesso di fronte ad una disputa sulla proprietà del passato. Da un lato, alcuni enunciano la massima secondo cui alcuni eventi sarebbero comprensibili solo a chi li ha *vissuti*; dall'altro, troviamo la tesi, sempre più diffusa, secondo cui il '68, sorta di grande (e fondamentalmente inspiegabile) ubriacatura collettiva, andrebbe soprattutto *seppellito*.[2]

In this piece, Ortoleva aptly defines '68 as a "sphinx": both mythicized and treacherous, '68 as a historical object appears to be wildly composite and incoherent in nature. It engages many interlocutors, yet to enter into dialogue with it often entails seeking to provide an answer to an obscure and elusive riddle. The passage quoted above eloquently encapsulates many of the key unresolved questions that emerge when investigating the legacy of the Italian '68 both as a movement and as a repository of affects. The demands and actions of the '68 generation emerge as so incommensurably and radically distant from the reality that followed it to grant them the status of an irrational "intoxication." Yet, the passions they spurred still animate historical disputes, so much so that it seems still impossible to produce a sensible and tranquil "reflection" upon the events that generated them. Solving the riddle of '68, thus, involves standing at the intersection of life-affirming desires and the urge to silence the lingering voices of the past.

When discussing 1968 in the context of Italian history, the origins of the protests are often conflated with their many, more or less intentional, repercussions and spontaneous proliferations. Over the span of almost five decades, this dynamic produced a body of stories that simultaneously celebrate a time of unrepeatable joy or a new sense of community and righteous rebellion, while also characterizing it as a violent, irrational, and chaotic time. Some of the reasons behind such contradictions can be attributed to the disjointed sense of time that has come to be associated with 1968. When evoking 1968 as a cultural phenomenon, it immediately becomes apparent that the stories centered around it cannot be confined to the events of that year alone: they often inform questions that reveal a much longer-lasting duration. This is why, in recent times, historians and intellectuals who addressed the events of that year have largely deployed the notions of "the long '68" or "the years '68" to stress the necessity of adopting a

[1] For the purposes of my dissertation, I will refer to 1968 when discussing the year in which the protest movement emerged; the terms "'68" or, at times, "Sessantotto" will instead be deployed to refer to the movement itself, whether in its collective dimension or as the subject of philosophical and historical debates.

[2] Peppino Ortoleva, "La sfinge '68," in Luigi Bobbio, et al, *Cinque lezioni sul '68*, RS dossier (Turin: Rossoscuola, 1987), 38. Emphasis mine.

wider frame of view in order to grasp the importance of what happened during those times.[3] As a result, it appears crucial not only to identify the differences between the history *of* 1968 per se and the stories that are told *about* 1968, which often confound clear-cut chronological borders. It also seems fundamental to me to ask *what is it* about 1968 that originated this disjointed perception of time. As I discuss in my dissertation, the experience of those who witnessed the 1968 events first-hand or actively participated in them produced a specific rhetoric about that era that aims at simultaneously casting a judgement about it and claiming a special privileged status for their own memories. This demand for a special status stems precisely from the assumption that the year 1968 caused time to "erupt" and precipitate events in unexpected ways, breaking away with a perception of time that is taken to flow much more slowly by comparison and subverting the "natural" order of previous intergenerational exchange. In other words, when discussed in the context of 1968, events seem to have protracted beyond their logical ending and found an afterlife in a cascade of consequences that determined a shift in collective understandings of politics and culture for more than a generation, and certainly for at least a decade: while there is in fact some debate about what marks the end of "the long '68," many seem to think that it protracted up to at least the beginning of the 1980s, a period that saw the definitive fall of radical movements and the collapse of their collective dreams.

From the standpoint of my analysis, 1968 is taken to be — in accordance with much of the recent scholarship — an event that lasted well beyond one single year and expanded into its "long" form. Thus, I begin my investigation by asking how this altered perception of time came to be and what it represented since the start of the '68 protests for the generation that inhabited those events. Both at the time and — just as importantly — in the later recollections of those who were part of the '68 generation, the feeling of having been at once the makers and beneficiaries of a unique time in history dominated the memories of their youth and determined the production and circulation of a very specific form of "collective" memories. By looking at this sub-genre of "long '68" memoirs, essays and fictional stories, my dissertation closely explores the connections between the affective and political landscapes of 1968, tracking the emergence and diffusion of an impassioned mode of participation in historical events that characterizes the experience of this time and joins together intimate and public issues. There is, in fact, a very tight yoke between the available narratives of '68, the participatory mode with which this generation conceived of itself and a lasting form of disjointed perception of time. These three elements combined — rhetorics, affect, sense of time — changed the experience of the protagonists of the '68 events and still inform their present recollections and opinion on current events. Such a peculiar attitude towards an event — one that attempts to uncertainly hold together the macrohistory of a generation as well as myriad individual, microhistorical frames — appears to be the constitutive element of the memory of 1968 and can be traced in a variety of different literary genres and texts: from novels to memoirs, from short stories to journalism, from pamphlets to historical accounts. In my view, these two apparently contradictory perspectives — the collective and the subjective — make up the bulk of the narratives surrounding this time and need to be understood and reclaimed as two

[3] See, for example, Circolo Gianni Bosio, *Un anno durato decenni: Vite di persone comuni prima, durante e dopo il '68* (Rome: ODRADEK, 2006); Nicoletta Fasano and Mario Renosio (eds.), *I giovani e la politica: Il lungo '68* (Turin: Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 2002); Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand, Robert Frank, Marie-Françoise Lévy, and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel (eds.), *Les années 68. Le temps de la contestation* (Brussels: Complexe, 2000); "Lectures: les années 1968," in *Le Mouvement Social* 2, no. 223 (2008): 33-40; Philippe Artières, Michelle Zancarini-Fournel (eds.), *'68, Une histoire collective 1962-1981* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).

interlocked and mutually constitutive sides of a radical — and, at least in its original aims, enduring and permanent — act of social resistance and transformation.

My dissertation begins by broadening the scope of the scholarly inquiry into 1968 to include the narrative tropes that characterize most accounts of 1968 as a unique temporal experience, one that changed the perception of time itself on the part of those involved. In doing so, I consider how the 1968 generation represented itself and its relation with time in the wake of that year. Throughout my analysis of the narrative tropes that characterize memory work centered around that year, I focus on how that mode of self-perception informed that same generation's attitudes towards history and self-representation today. Strikingly, 1968 is remembered as a watershed year — or, more to the point, a year that precipitated a break with the past from which society would never turn back — across different literary genres and from the point of view of a variety of disciplines. This break with the past is also inextricably linked with a specific sentiment, one of euphoria, often pictured in the form of a defiant, sudden burst of laughter that breaks tensions accumulated over decades of political and cultural immobilism.[4] By coining a temporal neologism, Peppino Ortoleva describes the student movement's infatuation with their own peculiar understanding of time as a form of *immediatismo* (*immediatism*, a movement characterized by immediacy). In the context I am analyzing, Ortoleva's word choice appears particularly interesting, as it is reminiscent of a similar desire for new, breakthrough conceptions of the relationship between politics and time present in former Italian cultural movements, such as Futurism. Rather than looking at ways to impart new directions to culture and politics in order to shape the future, the students' *immediatismo* is rather characterized by a passion with the prospect of change that is inherent to the present moment. As observed by Ortoleva, "one of the aspects of that new mass political reality that greatly struck (mostly in a negative sense) the observers was what someone defined as its 'impatience.'"[5] In the case of the Italian '68, part of this urge to impose the movement as a "truly" revolutionary force was a way for the young *sessantottini* to set themselves against the *status quo*, but also in direct contrast with the more cautious forms of political opposition attempted by the PCI (the Italian Communist Party) after its defeat in the elections that followed World War Two. Moving more and more towards an integrated position within the coalition of parties that dominated the institutional political scene, the PCI was often considered a corrupting agent for the radical Left, having based its politics on compromise and having lost the opportunity to lead to the revolution in Italy after the war. Yet, the sense of impatience toward old-fashioned ways of doing politics identified by Ortoleva was not the only contributing factor to the altered perception of time that was brought about by the year 1968. By juxtaposing the different ways in which the protagonists of that era conceived of the moment they were experiencing, it seems that this unique sense of a break with tradition emerged from the meeting of different temporalities which coexisted at once, determining a cascade of consequences. Ortoleva identifies at least three concurring temporalities, the first of which is dominated by a sense of *urgency* which coincided with the need to distinguish the present movement from the ineffective politics of the past. Confronted with an increasingly more pervasive and faster-approaching capitalist system — coupled with more technologically advanced policing institutions — the '68 generation was made suddenly aware that the need for urgent action was determined by the narrowing down of the "spaces for

[4] See, for example, Nanni Balestrini, et al, *La risata del '68* (Rome: Edizioni Nottetempo, 2008).

[5] "[u]no degli aspetti di quella nuova realtà politica di massa che più colpirono (in genere negativamente) gli osservatori fu quella che qualcuno definì 'impazienza.'" In Peppino Ortoleva, *I movimenti del '68 in Europa e in America* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1998), 204.

transformation." Moreover, for the students the urge to change the world was, in a way, "a form of discovery […] in opposition with the reassuring expectations of stability that favored the passive consensus of the population."[6] Collective action, then, was seen as an antidote to the dormant acquiescence of an atomized, disjointed society. Secondly, the time of '68 is characterized by the "joy of the action" itself, a desire to "experience concretely that utopian 'elsewhere' that was the ultimate goal of the movement. […] Moreover, the 'gratuitousness' of political action (a gratuity that was often taken to be a value in and of itself) excluded calculations [from the political game] by definition."[7] Gratuity, the giving away of oneself and of one's future prospects in a spontaneous act that is capable of altering the rules of the political game, thus appears as a strategy that can — in the present — affect our individual and collective conception of time. No more attached to aspirations for a long, constant growth, but rather invested with a desire to spend itself for the improvement of the present moment, the '68 movement is not preoccupied with looking back or looking forward: its only dimension is consumed in the present. Far from being exclusively of service to the strictly political sphere, the *immediatismo* is connected with a sense of joy that stems from a newly found freedom of speech,

> a prevalence of the need for expression over the need to obtain concrete results: this model […] excluded (at least on the surface) the instrumental use of people, involving them all together in a happening during which each participant felt not only like having contributed to advancing a cause — through their actions and their words — but also like having given voice to their deepest need for liberation, of having offered their testimony.
>
> un prevalere dell'esigenza di espressione rispetto all'esigenza di ottenere risultati concreti: questo modello […] escludeva (almeno all'apparenza) l'uso strumentale delle persone, e le coinvolgeva tutte insieme in un happening nel quale ciascuno sentiva di avere, con i suoi gesti e le sue parole, non solamente contribuito a fare avanzare una causa, ma dato voce alle proprie istanze più profonde di liberazione, fornito la propria testimonianza.[8]

Immediacy, as a temporal dimension, is thus privileged by the '68 movement for its unique ability to endow pleasure and joy with a political mission; for granting everyone the right to belong to something greater than themselves; and for exposing the risks and compromises that come with a long-term political agenda. Paradoxically, Ortoleva associates to this need for expression one last, seemingly opposed temporal dimension: that of *slowness*, a long process no more associated with the idea of progressive political advancements, but with the idea of a "permanent revolution" — a concept borrowed from Trotsky and Lenin (via Marx and Engels), yet deeply transformed in its meaning when applied to the material reality of the late Sixties in Italy — that essentially aimed at amplifying the effects of the "revolution" beyond the strictly

[6] "una scoperta […] di contro alle rassicuranti prospettive di stabilità che favorivano il consenso passivo della popolazione." Ortoleva, *I movimenti del '68 in Europa e in America*, 205.
[7] "sperimentare in concreto quell'altrove utopico che era il fine del movimento. […] Inoltre, la 'gratuità' dell'agire politico (gratuità che viene spesso assunta come valore in sé) escludeva per definizione il calcolo [dal gioco politico]." Ibid., 207.
[8] Ibid., 208.

political sphere, investing the intimate sphere as well: "revolution multiplied itself, it broke into many different pieces, it became a daily practice."[9]

Such a complex, multi-layered sense of immediacy impacted the way the '68 generation thought of itself and determined the way the event would be remembered for decades to come. Coaxed together out of multiple, collective desires for change and liberation, the '68 temporality is reimagined today — in contemporary memoirs and historical essays related to that time — as a dimension when the *instant* and the *long duration* were miraculously fused together and inspired the actions of those who lived through it in the long term, forever altering the way they would understand the passing of time. Whether through mournful regrets or through the desire to continue the work begun in the late Sixties, many interpreters of that era have battled with the notion of the passing of time and with what it meant to grow older after the passing of a moment when youth became a political entity. Like Ortoleva, historian Anna Bravo partly attributes the contradictions that characterize the accounts of 1968 to the different temporalities that are attached to the same event, and to the influence exerted by the ideologies and philosophies of "the years '68" within contemporary culture. She exposes the dichotomy:

> At one extreme [...] a Big Deception that started with the anti-authoritarian masquerade, continued with a new Marxism-Stalinism and finally returned to the bosom of the original bourgeoisie. [...] At the other extreme, you have Sessantotto as a struggle against authority that lacked authoritativeness, [...] but also as a wave of freedom which was defeated not only by "traditional" politics, but also by its own barbarization.
>
> A un estremo, [...] Grande Inganno iniziato con la maschera antiautoritaria, proseguito con un nuovo marx-stalinismo, e infine rientrato in grembo alla borghesia di origine. [...] All'estremo opposto, c'è il sessantotto come lotta contro l'autorità senza autorevolezza, [...] ma anche ventata di libertà, sconfitta, oltre che dalla politica "tradizionale", dal proprio stesso imbarbarimento.[10]

This doubling strategy constantly highlights what 1968 is *not* about and brings us to question the psychic compulsion which is at work in the desire to perpetuate this suspension on the part of those who own and hand down the memories of '68, postponing the ultimate judgement of future generations. When reading many contemporary accounts of 1968, we are confronted with a generation that does not want to fade away prematurely, but cannot find a stable channel to convey the feeling that its experience is still alive and matters today. Thus, it responds to periodization, to symbolic death, with all the strategic mechanisms of grief. This may correspond, as explained by Marcello Flores, to a "narcissistic and a bit presumptuous" way to believe that the experience of *sessantottini* can escape normalization.[11] By choosing to disclose only partial accounts of their experiences while dismissing any and all historical analysis as inaccurate, many of those who are vocal about how to form a correct assessment of

[9] "La rivoluzione si moltiplicava, si spezzettava, diveniva quotidiana." Ibid., 209.
[10] Anna Bravo, *A colpi di cuore: Storie del sessantotto* (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, 2008), 4.
[11] "Credere che del '68 non si possa fare storia è forse un modo — un po' narcisistico e un po' presuntuoso — per credere di non essere ancora stati normalizzati, di non poter mai venire omologati. Quali siano le motivazioni che vi si nascondono, sarebbe questo un comportamento tipicamente 'reducistico', analogo, anche se di segno opposto, alla frenesia della memorialistica militante." "Lo storico disorientato. I molti significati di un anno sfuggente," *Il Manifesto 1968 – Supplemento al n. 300 de Il Manifesto*, 12/21 (1988): 13.

this era — and, in particolar, the former leaders of the "long '68" movements, such as Mario Capanna, Adriano Sofri or the late Mauro Rostagno — act as gatekeepers to an elusive and fetishized "truth" that appears too fraught with contradictions, possessive impulses and discordant opinions to ever be attainable. Among the most vocal intellectuals who occupied a protagonist role during the late Sixties and Seventies in Italy, Adriano Sofri repeatedly affirmed the impossibility of uttering his grief for the lost integrity of 1968, which cannot be trapped into "the not-so-elastic mesh of history." According to Sofri, "there is only one thing that is worse than the celebrations of '68: the vilifications of '68."[12] Nothing seems appropriate. The same compulsion to deny historicity to 1968 is echoed by journalist Marino Sinibaldi and former '68 leader Guido Viale in *La risata del '68*, a collection of short memory writings on the significance of 1968 today. Sinibaldi writes: "Interviewing Guido Viale on '68 means running the risk of freezing him as well as ourselves in an image, in an era — a danger we need to come to terms with, and that we will try to avoid." Yet, Sinibaldi professes to be looking for "a spark that can still tell us something authentic about '68."[13] And when asked by Sinibaldi to help him describe what '68 was like, Viale replies: "But we didn't *do* '68, it happened upon us. [...] I'm saying this as a premise, because '68 is not 'happening' to today's youth. It's not their fault, they didn't have such luck."[14] Writers Primo Moroni and Nanni Balestrini unconsciously reiterate the twofold aspects of the "1968 chimera" in their premise to *L'orda d'oro*, simultaneously giving way to triumphalism and victimism. On one hand, they define the '60s and '70s as "two decades that have dug the seemingly immutable pillars of Italian society down to their foundations," and yet lament the fact that "the great mineral reserve of the Seventies movements seems lost and erased today; the better part of two generations [has been] silenced again, or it has been 'given back' to society after having been humiliated in its core identity."[15]

While being enamoured with the story of their youth and lamenting the lack of understanding displayed by the subsequent generations, many former *sessantottini* deny the possibility of intergenerational dialogue. For Flores, it is "not a coincidence that people like Sofri and Rostagno have claimed […] that it is impossible to write the history of 1968, since it was too much of an engrossing and multivocal experience to be summed up and restrained by the rigid frame of historical narrative."[16] Yet, despite his skepticism toward such an uncooperative attitude toward historians, Flores also acknowledges that there is an important lesson to be learned from this reluctance. The worth of these fragmented and incomplete personal accounts is to be found precisely in the value of their subjective standpoints, which are all the more faithful because they refer to the memory of a time that saw the affirmation of politics as an "explosion

[12] "le maglie poco elastiche della storia." "C'è solo una cosa peggiore delle celebrazioni del '68: le denigrazioni del '68." Cited in Marino Sinibaldi, "Il '68: Intervista a Guido Viale di Marino Sinibaldi," in Balestrini et al., *La risata del '68*, 116.

[13] "Intervistare Guido Viale sul '68 significa correre il rischio di congelare lui e noi in un'immagine, in un'epoca – un pericolo con cui fare i conti, e che noi cercheremo di evitare"; "una scintilla che ancora ci dica qualcosa di autentico sul '68." Ibid., 115.

[14] "Ma noi non abbiamo fatto il '68, ci è capitato addosso. [...] Lo dico come premessa perché ai giovani d'oggi non sta 'capitando' il '68. Non è colpa loro, non hanno avuto questa fortuna." Ibid., p. 116. Emphasis mine.

[15] "due decenni che hanno scavato fino alle fondamenta i pilastri apparentemente immutabili della società italiana"; "il grande giacimento minerario dei movimenti degli anni settanta appare disperso e cancellato, la parte migliore di due generazioni [è stata] ricondotta al silenzio, o 'restituita' alla società dopo essere stata umiliata nella sua identità."[15] Nanni Balestrini and Primo Moroni, *L'orda d'oro. 1968-1977: La grande ondata rivoluzionaria e creativa, politica ed esistenziale*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1988), 10-3.

[16] Ibid.

of subjectivity."[17] One of the founding principles of collective movements throughout the late Sixties and Seventies was indeed the notion that "the personal is political." Therefore, one's personal needs and political demands are deemed to be intertwined and all the more valid as they reflect a condition of specific, material oppression. As such, the formation of a body of memory that claims to be reliable precisely insofar as it is partial, subjective, even biased is indeed a testimony of a long-standing collective (albeit minoritarian) belief in the validity of individual experiences, made all the more powerful in light of the years that have gone by between the events that took place and the narratives that have publicly been disseminated about them.

By refusing to be fully captured in history, many reluctant storytellers of '68 claim to have access to the whole historical picture from their own particular standpoint, yet continue to resist fully addressing their discomfort. The focus in their stories stays on the feelings of loss, shame, nostalgia, and forgetfulness. The story gets suspended on the affective level. History and memory come to represent two modes of expression, perhaps two stages of awareness on the part of the storytellers. Yet, it is precisely in these hardly accessible truths and in this restless discomfort that meaning is likely to be found. While many contemporary historians foresee a way out of such narrative and existential chaos through the production of reliable macro- and micro-chronicles of that time that would establish ultimate truths, I deliberately choose to stay with the discomfort and with the contradictions it produces. By untangling the complex knot of feelings and narrative compulsions that connect the history of 1968 to its emotional legacy, I trace the roots of the problem in questions of authority, legitimacy, power, and generational conflicts.

Observing the peculiar storytelling strategies deployed in subjective accounts of '68 allows us to uncover the ways in which paradoxes and ironies are put to use to tell stories that elude normalization and rhetorically reaffirm a defiant resistance to the historical canon. In order to sharply define the strategies at work in these stories, it is necessary to return to the question of how time and generational becoming have been discursively produced within the available body of memories of '68. Focusing on the perception and representation of time in memory work allows us to investigate the ways in which subjective narrators of 1968 perceive and construct their relationship to the past: the problem I call into question is that of the continuity between generations, a much debated topic among the young revolutionaries of the Sixties who felt as though they were breaking with tradition altogether. On one hand, this generation displayed a very complex and multi-layered relationship with those who came before them, selectively choosing which historical figures or historical experiences could be hailed as genealogical precedents, while often refusing and vilifying its forefathers. On the other hand, that same generation now frequently attempts to set itself as a model for the future, revealing its protagonists' desire to live on as examples and enablers of future collective epiphanies. Yet, in many cases they aim to do so without establishing a direct relationship with the younger generations, but rather alluding to a sense of loss and a feeling of unease toward the broken or awkward exchanges they have established with their successors. This issue also brings to the forefront another related problem that haunts discussions around the 1968 protests and their outcome: the contradiction that stems from the rhetoric of collective rebirth, of an orphaned generation discovering a new mode of existence in collective participation, and its subsequent return to normalcy. What shape does continuity take in the existence of a generation that wanted to imagine itself anew? As we will see in my dissertation, much of the self-perception of the '68 generation was complicated by the belief in the absolute newness of their experience,

[17] Ibid.

paradoxically coupled with a yearning for deeper roots in previous historical movements or heroic figures. Similarly, the relationship between that same generation and those who have followed them appears troubled by a coexisting desire for continuity and contemptuous refusal of the present *status quo*.

The relationship between memory, time and generational exchange is rendered even more tangled because of related problems of authorship. Looking back at 1968 today means confronting the way it is told: who is producing narratives about '68 in Italy? The media, historians and some *ex-sessantottini* are. Often they are one and the same, and only some versions of the story become objects of commemoration. There is, in fact, a much heated debate about who counts as a reliable narrator for that time. One of the issues lies precisely in the vagueness of the collective category we identify with *ex-sessantottini*, since many can claim to hold that status and still have completely different backgrounds and perspectives. And '68 also amplified the notion of subjectivity, because of the collective aspect of the social actors that made the "movement." As noted by Alessandro Portelli, this idea of social movement conceals attitudes and modes of participation that radically differ from one another, and there is a certain generic quality in the vastness of the ideological issues that were being confronted, so that disparate social actors can claim to have equally participated and played a crucial role in the '68 struggles.[18] At the same time, 1968 coincided with a moment when politics were being redefined as a new way of expressing and satisfying individual needs through collective activity. Looking closely at who the *sessantottini* were, we see a very stratified collective subject that can hardly account for itself and for the totality of its manifested aspects. Rossana Rossanda, among many, denounced the trouble posed to memory by the scope of the questions raised by the 1968 phenomenon:

> '68 thought of itself as a total event: today we work on partialities, perhaps out of an aquired wisdom, perhaps just out of opportunism.
>
> Il '68 si pensò totale: oggi si lavora, forse per saggezza, forse solo per opportunismo, sulle parzialità.[19]

Caught between the immensity of their desires for total change and the limits of their partial role in history, individual stories struggle to emerge from the massive mechanisms of historical commemoration. Yet the recurrence of widespread commemorations at every new decade — '78, '88, '98, 2003 — and the production of new, timely research, documentation and cultural representations of '68 in film, literature, and journalism has so far failed to provide relief from that sense of incompleteness, of a lost affective wholeness that is attached to that moment. My dissertation grapples with the ways closure with '68 might be achieved despite the seemingly incongruous nature of our collective memories of that time; in fact, I argue that it is precisely through an acceptance of the ambiguity of the '68 event and of the affective void it left behind that we might reach a reparative reading of the nation's own broken mechanisms of remembrance.

In Chapter One, I explore how — in the Italian case — the "'68 sphinx" relentlessly continues to pose questions that relate to our understanding of time in contemporary history,

[18] See Circolo Gianni Bosio, *Un anno durato decenni*, 5-14.

[19] Rossana Rossanda, "L'anno rifiutato. Un bilancio provvisorio dopo la fatica di ricordare," *Il Manifesto 1968 – Supplemento al n. 300 de Il Manifesto*, 12/21 (1988): 5.

particularly when our notion of time is troubled by the messy matter of affects and by a possessive attachment to history. Furthermore, I contend that the crux of the whole debate surrounding the memory of 1968 and its resilient presence in the Italian cultural landscape is constituted by the desires and attachments that coalesced around the feeling of hope. Hope as a daily practice and as a collective project defined the lives of individuals and enlivened the actions of groups both during and beyond 1968. As obsolete, naive or erroneous as they may seem today, the hopes of a generation — taken as a whole — conferred meaning on the lives of the individuals who made up the movement. Hope, which itself is a form of becoming — since it projects the self into a transformative dimension that has its origins in the present — is the dominant feeling through which an assessment of those times ought to be conducted. Whether it is understood as a form of melancholic resistance to annihilation or as a return to inhabit the present, hope is the force that drives the persistence of 1968 into the present.

In Chapter Two, I introduce the figuration of the ghost as a crucial symbol of the memory of ’68. In my view, the experience of haunting and the frequent recourse to images of ghostly possession lay the stage for a psychic scenario in many accounts that look back at 1968. Suspended between life and death, at once present and vanishing, ghosts represent the ’68 generation’s melancholic resistance to historical change. Inspired by the “hauntological” writings of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Jacques Derrida, I connect the experience of being haunted by one’s own memories to the notion of melancholia, a state of psychic paralysis which can also be understood as a way to refuse a notion of historical progress that denies the importance of the ’68 experience. In my view, Erri De Luca’s staunch loyalty to a vanished, yet persistent ideal of revolution represents an attempt at keeping alive a conversation with the ghosts of history in order not to give in to the careless forgetfulness with which a part of contemporary Italian society dismisses the experience of 1968.

In my third chapter, I move away from the painful, yet resilient feeling of melancholic stasis that characterizes the work of De Luca to interrogate the work of a number of ’68 “survivors.” Moving beyond a melancholic stage, some former ’68ers imagined new forms of life and attitudes toward the past despite acknowledging their grief for a vanished collective utopia. In fact, it was sometimes precisely *because* of their haunting memories that they found a way out of a crippling stasis. In describing the aftermath of their participation in the ’68 movement, both Guido Viale and Luisa Passerini transform their melancholic feelings towards their youth into a form of survival that is informed and made stronger by the experience of loss. By telling their own personal stories as paradygmatic examples of a whole generation’s affective undoing and subsequent rebirth, they reaffirm the primacy of intersubjectivity in the story of the “long ’68.” Finally, I return to the question of the ’68ers’ ongoing preoccupation with generational continuity by addressing a number of memoirs and essays written by the generation of the “children of ’68,” those who never partook in the movement out of their own choice, but whose lives were nevertheless forever changed by their encounter with collective history and with their parents’ generation’s downfall.

My investigation concludes with an analysis of documentaries from the early Sixties to today, following a strand of affective commitment that was shaped and reinforced by cinematic rites of commemoration of political martyrs. Indeed, Chapter Four exposes the ways in which documentary film reinforced and stabilized the notion of “collectivity” within the culture of the Left, despite the marked shift in the dramatic urgency of the events depicted on film that took place during the 1970s, with the diffusion of the genre of *controinchieste*. From the memory of the partisan Resistance to the search for the enigmatic truth behind the bombing of Piazza

Fontana in December 1969, political documentaries have long constituted a channel through which a collective *ethos* is both shaped and preserved against the annihilating sense of loss that follows a cultural trauma. This tradition continues today with the embattled films that seek to honor the memory of Carlo Giuliani, a young protester who died in Genoa in July 2001.

As a whole, by calling into question the notion that possessive, subjective memories inherently reproduce a biased representation of history, my dissertation provides new insights into the way the history of 1968 — as fragmented and controversial as it appears — continues to haunt the present and challenge us to read the past through a different frame, one that takes into account surviving emotions and ghostly attachments that cannot be silenced or repressed.

Chapter 1

1968, Memory and the Persistence of Hope

Section 1. Unreliable Narrators: Defining the Story of a Generation

In a sharp and polemical article written at the beginning of 1973 for the newspaper "Il Corriere della Sera" and originally titled *Against Long Hair* (*Contro i capelli lunghi*), Pier Paolo Pasolini famously wrote a harsh account of the appearance of a new type of social actor, the youth.[1] For Pasolini, this emerging new male character manifested a radical refusal of the values of the former generations as well as of institutional power through the choice of wearing long hair. According to Pasolini, these youths had no need for words to communicate their absolute distance from those who had preceded them: the fashion in which they wore their hair "spoke" for them and communicated the contempt in which they held tradition. Through the use of the synecdoche of the long hair, Pasolini depicts an unforeseen new subject who is unable to relate organically to history because he (the aggressive young male) assumes that, in order to start a cultural and political revolution, all bridges with the past must be severed. For Pasolini, this act corresponded to a masochistic severing of oneself from the workings of history:

> The radical and indiscriminate condemnation that they pronounced against their fathers by raising an insurmountable barrier against them — who represent history in its evolution and the culture that came before — isolated them in the end, preventing them from having a dialectic relationship with their fathers. Now, it is only through such a dialectic relationship […] that they could have achieved a real historical consciousness of themselves, and thus move forward, "overcoming" their fathers. Instead, the isolation in which they have withdrawn — as in a world apart, a ghetto reserved only to young people — kept them stuck in their insuppressible historical reality: and this has — fatally — caused a regression.
>
> [L]a condanna radicale e indiscriminata che essi hanno pronunciato contro i loro padri — che sono la storia in evoluzione e la cultura precedente — alzando contro di essi una barriera insormontabile, ha finito con l'isolarli, impedendo loro, coi loro padri, un rapporto dialettico. Ora, solo attraverso tale rapporto dialettico […] essi avrebbero potuto avere reale coscienza storica di sé, e andare avanti, "superare" i padri. Invece l'isolamento in cui si sono chiusi — come in un mondo a parte, in un ghetto riservato alla gioventù — li ha tenuti fermi alla loro insopprimibile realtà storica: e ciò ha implicato — fatalmente — un regresso.[2]

With this short but incisive rant against the damage inflicted by the youth of the Sixties to the process of genealogical continuity, Pasolini first voiced a criticism that would haunt the

[1] The article was later included in *Scritti corsari* (1975), a collection of articles published by Pasolini on the "Corriere della Sera." It became widely known with the alternative title *Il "Discorso" dei capelli*.
[2] Pier Paolo Pasolini, "7 gennaio 1973. Il 'Discorso' dei capelli," in *Scritti corsari* (Milan: Garzanti, 2003), 10.

generation of those who were young in 1968 when, decades later, they would come to confront their own obsolescence as well as their own ability to communicate with the young. Rather than seeing the voluntary self-isolation from the past as a moment of fecund creativity on the part of the youth, an opportunity to be born again in collective action, Pasolini considers it their own ultimate, self-inflicted condemnation to an obscure regression. Often even contemporary discussion around the '68 legacy — stories produced long after the facts they recount — are rendered in the dramatic tones of a life-or-death dilemma, whereby imposing new ideas or lifestyles seemed to have represented a struggle between injecting new life into society or surrender to its repressive and deathly demands. Through original writings of the time, such as Pasolini's, this mode of representation appears to have emerged from a very early stage: since 1968, the radical approach of the youth of the time, their actions and the ways in which they conceived of themselves was depicted as a battle with time itself, whether the battle itself was seen as a positive or negative endeavor. Stark dilemmas surrounding the ideas of death vs. rebirth, fast oblivion vs. everlasting presence were at the heart of the literary production of the time, and that same *forma mentis* makes its comeback in contemporary accounts of '68. Thus, while the '68 generation was convinced that it was bringing new life into the structures of society, Pasolini and other critics saw a fatal mistake in their violent rejection of the past. Coherent with a form of social aesthetics that saw in the traditional values of a rapidly disappearing rural Italy a way to escape the corruption and social ills that accompanied capitalist progress, Pasolini attributed to the '68 youths and to their radical rejection of the past a perverse responsibility: rather than bringing a much-needed renewal to a stifling society, he thought they were plunging Italy into a condition of even more unnatural "modernity," which was unfit for the country as a whole. In this article as well as in other subsequent writings, Pasolini openly denounced the breaking of the "pact" of continuity between generations as a sign of obtuse short-sightedness on the part of the youth, one that would haunt Italian society for a long time to come. And regardless of the moral judgement Pasolini may have cast upon the phenomenon he was observing, his assessment of the long-term effects that this rupture between generations would have on the future of the youth of '68 appears very accurate indeed.

In this chapter, I will expand on Pasolini's observations to consider the reasons why 1968 came to be understood and represented as an event that, in many ways, disrupted the logical flow of time and the traditional cycle of generational inheritance. In doing so, I will illustrate how this disjointed understanding of time produced a specific genre of narratives that, both then and today, seek to endow those who came to live through those times with a unique status as experts, storytellers, and witnesses. Finally, I will investigate the nexus between the broken cycle of temporality and the emotional attachment it generated, looking at the ways in which this particular form of "temporal affect" has been produced and circulated across time around the memory of the '68 events.

In September 2003, journalist Beniamino Placido wrote an article for the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, in response to an episode of Gad Lerner's TV show *L'Infedele*, dedicated to the history and memory of 1968. The article, aptly titled "Il Sessantotto che i ragazzi non conoscono" ("The Sessantotto that young people don't know"), commented on the lack of consistency displayed in current debates surrounding 1968, and pointed to two crucial and interrelated aspects of the problem: first, a reluctance to define its historical ends; and second, an uneasy relationship with the memory of that time, which ends up undermining and complicating current accounts of the 1968 events. A similar preoccupation lies at the heart of Kristin Ross's *Afterlives*: Ross laments that "discourse [around '68] has been produced, but its primary effect

has been to liquidate — to use an old '68 word — erase or render obscure the history of [the French] May."[3] As a discursive field, '68 thus seem to be rendered opaque by a constellation of coexisting, yet mutually excluding feelings and interests: survival and obsolescence, life and death, hope and deception. Those who inquire about '68 are expected to grapple with the pervasive confusion that surrounds current representations and even questions of periodization of that momentous year: Where do we draw a line with 1968? When did it start, and did it ever end? Placido notes how the discussion during the *Infedele* episode had been orchestrated around the stories of intellectuals and protagonists of that time, as well as around the screening of clips from three different films that came out in 2003: *The Dreamers*, by Bernardo Bertolucci (about a sexual initiation in Paris at the dawn of the French May), *La meglio gioventù*, by Marco Tullio Giordana (a family saga intertwined with national events from the mid-Sixties to 2003) and *Buongiorno notte* by Marco Bellocchio, a retelling of the story of the kidnapping and incarceration of Aldo Moro in 1978. But why include a film that dealt with a story that took place ten years after 1968? Placido notes:

> Here begins (it has already begun) the confusion: what do those terrible fifty-five days of imprisonment that ended with a brutal murder have to do with the "radiant days" of '68?
>
> Ecco che comincia (è già cominciata) la confusione: che c'entrano quei terribili cinquantacinque giorni di prigionia, conclusi con un brutale assassinio, con le "radiose giornate" del '68?[4]

Yet, the inclusion of *Buongiorno notte* seemed somewhat plausible in that context, for the very same reasons that make the history of 1968 such a contested cultural arena today. It is precisely this ontological confusion addressed by Placido that led to the coinage of the expression "the long year," used today to refer to the vast, expanded yet hard-to-grasp effects of the social and political questions that came center stage in Italian society at that point. What came afterwards, it seems, is seen by many as the evolution, or degeneration (as in the case of the armed struggle which continued throughout the Years of Lead), of the 1968 upheavals. Others refute this hypothesis entirely, whether because they insist on the irreconcilable difference between the positive *ethos* of 1968 and the violence that animated the political actions of far-left terrorist organizations such as the Red Brigades. '68 as a separate event, then, or '68 as the start of a "long year" that lasted over a decade? Again, the question remains unanswered, and in the seemingly impossible effort to contain time lies part of the endless fascination with this year.

If no definitive truth can be pronounced about the legitimate ending of "the long year," then what about time before 1968? "What was there before '68?" Placido asks: "There was the opposite of that movement, a historical period during which nothing happened."[5] In this and many other accounts, we keep being confronted with a historical blindspot: 1968 is preceded by

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[3] Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3.

[4] "Cosa c'era prima del '68? [...] C'era il contrario di quel movimento, un periodo di storia in cui non succedeva nulla." Beniamino Placido, "Il Sessantotto che i ragazzi non conoscono," *La Repubblica* September 28 (2003), 38. Also available at http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2003/09/28/il-sessantotto-che-ragazzi-non-conoscono.html (last access: 12/01/2015)

[5] Ibid.

a muddled past and followed by a traumatic future, but most of all, as a temporal figuration, 1968 cannot be accounted for. It seems to defy any attempts to capture its complexity.

Despite the erratic rhetorics that surround it, I take this coexistence of imagined temporalities to be a productive element of the discursive field surrounding the generation of 1968, the future it so avidly envisioned and worked for, and the reality that followed it. My investigation is meant to complicate the widespread assessment of the 1968 generation as artistically sterile, unable to process its experiences in valuable cultural forms, both at the time of their unfolding and later on, in the workings of memory.[6] While the past literature surrounding 1968 is, in fact, often taken to be mediocre and uninteresting from a qualitative point of view, an overview of present accounts introduces a landscape where incompatible stories of victory and defeat appear next to one another, often forming part of the same story. This often seems to constitute a limit to the perception of those times for younger readers and scholars of 1968, who often lament the issues raised by questions of possessive memory on the part of the "reduci."[7] Yet, it is often precisely these fragile and conflicting accounts that disclose a fundamental truth about both the 1968 legacy and its first-hand narrators: the fact that the resonance and reverberation of life-changing events can sometimes haunt its participants for decades, urging them to endlessly reiterate the urge to narrate their past experiences and revisit the emotions that were elicited by them while simultaneously attempting to control all discourses about them. In many cases, the inconsistencies and fragmentary memories of 1968 storytellers do not just disclose more untold or less-known details about certain historical episodes, but represent stand-alone truths themselves, as brittle and opaque as they may seem: in other words, the fragment itself appears to be the only possible way to convey the sense of precariety and preciousness with which those memories are held. In essence, I contend that the real heritage and strength of those

[6] See, for example, Luisa Passerini: "Italian '68 proper, which coincides with the students' revolt, did not stimulate high levels of artistic production. […] It almost seems that literature is unable to narrate the '68 of the students, which then becomes an unuttered element at the artistic level, something that is always replaced by what came afterwards. […] While this aspect of the problem is connected to the long duration which is a feature of the Italian '68, it is not sufficient to explain the absence of artistic memory that surrounds a fundamental, deeply innovative phase such as the starting phase of that period." "[I]l '68 italiano inteso in senso stretto, cioè come rivolta degli studenti, non ha stimolato una produzione artistica di alto livello. […] Pare quasi che la letteratura non trovi narrabile il '68 degli studenti, che quindi rimanga un non detto sul piano artistico, sempre rimpiazzato da ciò che è venuto dopo. […] Se questo aspetto rinvia alla caratteristica di lunga durata del '68 italiano, non basta tuttavia a spiegare l'assenza di memoria artistica a proposito di una fase fondamentale e profondamente innovatrice come quella di avvio." "Il '68. Luogo della memoria, luogo dell'oblio," in *Autoritratto di gruppo* (Florence: Giunti, 2008), 266-7. Also, see Emmanuel Betta and Enrica Capussotti: "While from the point of view of public and historiographic discourse, '68 appears to be absent as an object of knowledge and hyper present as a genealogical symbol of subsequent phenomena which unfolded in time, from the narrative point of view it seems equally impossible to relate, thus making it difficult, if not impossible, to convey its features to those who have not experienced it in the first person. As such, the inability to narrate '68 goes side by side with the inability to narrate the Seventies: often, through the trope of the double, stories focus on the fragmentation of the self, on the rupture of linear and coherent meanings, on the difficulty of the effort to represent the event in a literary form." "Se dal punto di vista del discorso pubblico e storiografico, il '68 sembra scontare un'assenza in quanto oggetto di conoscenza e una iper presenza in quanto simbolo genealogico di fenomeni successivi dispiegati nel tempo, dal punto di vista narrativo esso presenta analogamente una non raccontabilità che vede difficile, se non impossibile comunicarne i caratteri a chi non ha vissuto l'esperienza in prima persona. In questo senso, la non raccontabilità del '68 si affianca alla non raccontabilità degli anni settanta, dove spesso attraverso lo schema del doppio si dà conto di una frantumazione dell'io, della rottura di linearità e coerenze, della difficoltà dello stesso rappresentare l'evento in forma letteraria." "Contrappunti," in ibid., 293.

[7] See Andrea Hajek, *Negotiating Memories of Protest in Western Europe*, in particular Ch. 2, "'Wonderful Years'? Myth, Nostalgia and Authority," 35-53.

accounts is sometimes to be found in the haunting traces of ill-digested memories, unfulfilled hopes and uncertain narrations, rather than in the stabilizing force of historical accuracy.

In the following pages, I will both be in dialogue with and attempt to challenge the existing scholarship on the Italian '68 by looking at some of the recurring narratives that have fixed and stabilized contemporary perceptions of that event and its temporal frame, with a specific focus on those rhetorical strategies that have reinforced the image of an "unknowable" event by simultaneously stating its groundbreaking importance while compromising inter-generational dialogue or denying the possibility of an articulated debate about it. For this purpose, I will examine several narratives centered around '68 in order to give an account of the ways different narrators, operating within a range of literary genres, have devised strategies (both subtle and overt) to control the way 1968 is remembered and told, with a particular attention to slippages, overlappings and contradictions within the same narrative. The troubled relationship with memory returns, in fact, as a constant preoccupation in contemporary fiction and memoirs, and betrays an anxiety, on the part of many former *sessantottini,* towards a generational confrontation. This is very often expressed in the ongoing recourse to the image of the young sons and daughters of the former revolutionaries claiming their right to know what happened. In the afore-mentioned article about "the '68 that children don't know," Beniamino Placido also addresses the problem with finding a welcoming audience when it comes to relating the story of '68 from the position of a former *sessantottino*. He portrays the dialogue with the younger generations as a disappointing play of misunderstandings. Placido dramatizes these imaginary, yet pressing demands on the part of the younger generations:

> To find a way to give an answer to the many, many younger people who turn to us to know more about the things we used to think about, the things we used to do and why, during those years. We are unable to answer and perhaps they don't know how to ask. Maybe it's like when, confronted with great historical phenomena, such as the French Revolution or the advent of Christianity, we ask where they came from, and why they appeared in that specific place and in that specific moment. Maybe it is fatal that we are unable to answer and that we don't even try to. But it is a good thing for us to keep asking ourselves these questions, quietly, without making noise, pretending to persist in that state that those who are younger will sooner or later call apathy, whereas apathy it is not. We may not eagerly talk about it, but we think about it all the time.
>
> [T]rovare un modo di rispondere ai tanti, tantissimi più giovani di noi che ci interpellano per sapere cosa si pensava, cosa si faceva e perché in quegli anni. Noi non sappiamo rispondere e forse loro non sanno chiedere. Forse deve essere come quando, di fronte ai grandi fenomeni storici: la Rivoluzione Francese, il Cristianesimo, ci chiediamo da dove siano venuti fuori, e proprio in quel posto e in quel momento. Forse è fatale che non sappiamo rispondere e che non pretendiamo di farlo. Ma è giusto che continuiamo a chiedercelo, a bassa voce, senza far rumore, facendo finta di permanere in quella che i più giovani di noi definiranno presto o tardi come la nostra apatia, mentre apatia non è. Non ne parliamo volentieri, ma ci pensiamo sempre.[8]

[8] Beniamino Placido, *Il Sessantotto che i ragazzi non conoscono*, 38.

Placido puts his finger on the problem, yet refuses to provide an answer, reproducing the same rhetorical strategy that affects many other accounts and memoirs that refer to that moment in time: stating the preeminence of his groundbreaking experience of those events while simultaneously denying the possibility of an articulated debate about them. Accounts such as these convey the message that their first-person narrators were there when everything changed ("Io c'ero," or "Io il '68 l'ho *fatto*"), yet they cannot really tell others what their ineffable experience was about. '68, then, is often featured as something that "has been done," but "it cannot be said." And many contemporary accounts present us with a vision of the '68 event where many dichotomies coexist, yet can never be reconciled into a unitary reading: as a consequence, triumph and loss, collectivism and individual *ethos* are elements at work within the same story to create the impression of a period that forever altered the continuous flow of time and entered Italy into a new modernity it is struggling to make sense of.

Mario Capanna's *Lettera a mio figlio sul Sessantotto* (1998), an open essay on the current significance of 1968 by one of the former leaders of the Milan Student Movement (Movimento Studentesco) as well as of the radical left-wing party Proletarian Democracy, stands out as a straightforward attempt to overcome his generation's self-imposed alienation during present times and bridge the cultural gap between those who determined the climate of radical civil unrest in the Sixties and the youth of today. The essay constitutes the second book of a trilogy on '68 published over the course of thirty years, preceded by *Formidabili quegli anni* (1988) and followed by *Il Sessantotto al futuro* (2008).[9] For each new decade — and at each new decennial commemoration of '68 — Capanna's writings propose a nostalgic and idealized reading of the '68 event, insisting on what he considers his main mission: rescuing it from obsolescence and from the wrongdoings of its critics and detractors, and asserting his own "truth" about the "formidable" uniqueness of the '68 generation. In *Lettera a mio figlio sul Sessantotto*, while Capanna's premise seems at times very similar to Placido's ambivalent rhetoric ("we are not always capable of answering questions, nor can we answer all the questions"), Capanna nevertheless aims at reaching out to his son in order to open a confrontation with those who "were not there" when the '68 "event" took place and are now eager to know exactly what was so momentous about that ill-represented, poorly-narrated time.[10] Capanna's letter opens with an admission: "I was hesitant to begin writing, not so much because I was afraid of putting a burden on you, […] but because I was afraid that you would consider me […] conceited. A risk that parents run very often. And fathers, maybe, even more so than mothers."[11] Once again, those who dwell in the past — with their unfinished work and their unrequited passions — are depicted as uncertain witnesses who carry the "burden" of an ever-present time that refuses to fade away. Being a bearer of the memory of 1968 is a burden because it forces those who carry it to inhabit a peculiar temporal dimension which, as resonant as it is with passions and actions that are clearly correlated with the freshness and intensity of youth, nevertheless sets them apart from their children's own experience of youth. In this sense, handing off the burden to their successors would not set these former *sessantottini* free, but rather condemn them to an even darker oblivion: that of a history that has been set in stone, and therefore is no longer susceptible to change. Furthermore, in establishing a connection with their offspring and relating the passions

[9] Mario Capanna, *Formidabili quegli anni* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998); *Il Sessantotto al futuro* (Milan: Garzanti, 2008).
[10] "[N]on sempre, né su tutto, si è in grado di rispondere." In Mario Capanna, *Lettera a mio figlio sul Sessantotto* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998), 165.
[11] "[E]ro restio a cominciare. Non tanto per il timore di caricarti di un peso, […] quanto per la preoccupazione di apparirti […] saccente. Rischio che i genitori corrono spesso. E i padri, forse, più delle madri." Ibid., 9.

of their youth, they admit to being very afraid of unwillingly reproducing the parental authority and control over the youth that they so vehemently condemned in 1968. While casting themselves as role models and educators, some of the former members of the '68 movement reject the traditional association of fatherhood with authority and find themselves at a loss for a more appealing definition of their own authoritative status. Even through its chosen epistolary genre, Capanna defies more traditionally didascalic ways to address a literary audience: *Lettera a mio figlio sul Sessantotto* poses itself as an open letter, not an essay. It is addressed to his son, who stands for the younger generation as a whole; yet his invitation to a conversation is also open to the Italian literary audience as a whole. Thus — while discussing several public issues regarding history, politics, and the future — this text asserts itself as a kind of confidential, dialogic statement that invites a response and hopes to ignite a continuing conversation: "furthermore, should you wish that, we will always be able to talk."[12]

Rather than asserting his authority by drawing diminishing comparisons between his own "heroic" generation and those that followed it in a straightforward way, Capanna repeatedly deploys the image of a questioning youth that demands his participation in an ongoing debate about history, politics, and the significance of being young. In his book, young people's curiosity towards 1968 seems somehow able to bring society toward a renewed awakenening of dormant energies that have long been repressed: "from multiple angles, people are hard at work to speed up its oblivion. […] Thus, it is useful to reaffirm the truth *of* '68 through the establishment of the truth *about* '68."[13] According to Capanna, beyond the necessity to define its historical contour, '68 — as a temporal category — retains a kind of transcendent truth that has the potential to be grasped again by those who are young, not jaded, and therefore still able to embrace it. Unlike the sterile "catch-all" narratives fabricated by "certain essays that drone on and on about a given topic, saying everything without really letting anyone understand anything," in this text the work of memory attempts to reach out towards the future by connecting the resilient affective matter of the past with the hopes of tomorrow.[14] Thus, for the former *sessantottino*, true historical understanding cannot be found in knowledge of the event '68 *per se*, for — paradoxically — "saying everything" could be a way of concealing the emotional vibrance of those times under a blanket of facts and data. Memory alone is able to provide an affective frame to such events, retracing the intricate texture of subjective experience; it can establish a bond of trust between the old storytellers and their young interlocutors by uncovering the core affective truth that pervaded 1968 and finding a way to convey the liveliness of the passions ignited during that unique time.

In order to establish his credibility as a narrator worth listening to, Capanna relies on a strategy that is the opposite of Placido's: while Placido declares that young people are unable to ask the right questions about the past and are ultimately incapable of understanding the lessons of history, Capanna claims that it is through the eyes of today's youth that he is brought to the realization of the need to put his story on paper. He utilizes two distinct episodes that involve conversations with young people to rhetorically affirm his self-appointed position as a truth-teller. In both of these episodes, he casts himself as a benevolent, meek father who would habitually keep modestly silent about his past, but does nevertheless heed the call of the youth to

[12] "peraltro, se lo desideri, avremo sempre modo di parlare." Ibid., 163.
[13] "da più parti si lavora con lena per affrettarne l'oblio. […] È dunque utile ristabilire la verità *del* '68 attraverso la verità *sul* '68." Ibid., 11.
[14] "una menata omni-comprensiva, come certi trattati che, su un dato argomento, dicono tutto senza far capire nulla." Ibid.

prove — through his authority, experience, and stories — that the spirit of '68 is, in fact, an affective disposition towards life, politics, and relationships that unfailingly continues to resurface in present times.

One of these episodes is centered around the figure of a high school girl who wrote a letter to Capanna to confess her nostalgic longing for 1968, a time she felt strongly attached to even though she did not have a chance to experience it first-hand. The student admits to feeling mournful about the disenchantment that pervades her own time, dominated by a paradoxical emotional landscape made up of "dreams without tomorrows" ("sogni senza domani"); on the contrary, she feels passionate and enthusiastic about the events that shook Italy in the late Sixties, a period that — though inexorably gone — she still finds more fascinating, lively and galvanizing than the present. According to Capanna, the student's letter highlights with precision "the distinction between the center stage taken by transformation back then, as opposed to today's time, 'flat, empty, chaotic.'"[15] Here, the attention is focused again on the mechanisms set into motion by the disjointed temporality that is so frequently connected with accounts of 1968: during that period of heightened awareness and collective excitement, the regular flow of time is perceived to be interrupted to make room for an expanded temporality where transformation itself — and not the people who allowed for that transformation to occur — encompassed the entire life of a generation and became a transcendent social force, the main protagonist of a dramatic epochal shift. As a consequence, transformation is here depicted as an embodied protagonist, a subject with a will of its own that controls and directs time itself and the multitudes who experienced it. Later, when the repercussions of such a momentous event start to fade, time — perceived as static and uneventful before '68 — returns to its incessant, dull flatness.

By choosing to begin his account with the student's testimony, Capanna sets the stage for the introduction of his own standpoint, one that confirms the opinion of the young schoolgirl: in both the girl's and Capanna's perception, the temporal split initiated by the generation of '68 first caused its protagonists to separate themselves from the archaic stasis of Italian society, thereby spurring a political renewal. Decades later, at the time when Capanna's book is written, that very same disjunction from traditional structures of genealogical continuity seems to have brought the generation of '68 closer to its children. In Capanna's desired scenario, the same revolutionary *ethos* that set his generation apart from its predecessors now attracts its own successors. Thus, thanks to the praise he receives "out of the mouths of children" for his lifelong work as a critic and opponent of the *status quo*, Capanna feels entitled to present his own version of the truth.

The other episode that characterizes the inception of a cross-generation dialogue in this book involves Capanna's own son, who inspires him to start writing his memoir on the day when, returning from summer camp, he recounts the story of an afternoon when he suddenly found himself to be the center of his friends' attention for wearing a T-shirt that displayed a map of all the main events that took place during the year 1968. Upon seeing the T-shirt, a small, young crowd enthusiastically surrounded him and started avidly reading the list of events, while asking many curious questions or commenting on how interested they were in the history of those times and in knowing more about their parents' own youth. The T-shirt had originally been given as a gift to Capanna himself, but he had never worn it for fear of appearing pathetically outdated, as if clinging to the glory of his vanished past. His son, however, eagerly chooses to appropriate the T-shirt and to wear it proudly when out with his young friends, showing his willingness to literally inhabit the past and to follow in his father's footsteps. It is through his

[15] "il divario tra il protagonismo della trasformazione di allora e il tempo attuale, 'piatto, vuoto, caotico.'" Ibid., 14-5.

son's own fervent attachment to a past that he never experienced first-hand that Capanna is led to a reflection about the endurance of feelings and modes of perception of history originated in 1968:

> "It's not true that '68 has passed; it is well alive among young people": this was your story's conclusion, set in stone and devoid of uncertainty.
> You used those precise words. I remember them well, because I was struck by your judgement, as well as by the vaguely literary expression you used: "it has not passed," used in its figurative sense, meaning "it is not forgotten," "it has not waned," "it has not gone beyond the horizon of memory."
>
> "Non è vero che il '68 è passato, è ben vivo tra i ragazzi": fu questa la conclusione, lapidaria e priva di incertezze, del tuo racconto.
> Usasti proprio quelle parole. Le ricordo bene, perché il tuo giudizio mi colpì, insieme all'espressione, vagamente letteraria, "non è passato", adoperata nel senso traslato di "non è dimenticato", "non è tramontato", "non è uscito dall'orizzonte della memoria".[16]

Capanna's own pride is ill-concealed behind his recounting of his son's experience; his very choice of wording when repeating the story and interpreting it for the readers further unmasks his desire to re-emerge from oblivion by borrowing the energies of the younger generation. While he casts himself as a taciturn, quiet and wise old man who harbors much uncertainty about his own status as a role model, his son is portrayed as an adamant believer in a sense of continuity between the forces that ignited the '68 struggles and those that inspire the youth of today. As with many other memory works on 1968 written by "those who were there," the question is posed in terms of a fatal battle between life and death, between survival and disappearance: for the unnamed son of the narrator, who stands as a representative of youth as a whole, 1968 is not "passed," both in the sense of temporal persistence — "non è passato" as "it is not part of the past," it does not belong to the realm of things gone and/or forgotten — and in the sense of not "having passed away," not having died. Since it has not passed away, 1968 is imagined by Capanna — through his interpretation of his son's story — as a vital historical subject still endowed with a physical presence. Not only is its presence still perceivable today; it is "well alive," for those who experienced it, and — most importantly — it survives "among young people": those destined to live on in the future. Interestingly, both here and in several other passages in the text, Capanna draws upon lengthy explanations of the linguistic roots, etymological meanings and Latin origins of the words that are often brought up when discussing 1968 to make his point regarding the significance of that event, its epic proportions and its relevance in present times. His insistence on the philological aspects of the terms called into question by an analysis of 1968 seems to betray an anxiety towards an all too easy periodization of that year. Through such a constant recourse to classical concepts and terms, the readers are being told that a thorough understanding of 1968 itself can only be fully achieved by transcending its own temporal and geographical coordinates and locating it in the realm of philosophical absolutes pertaining to human understanding of time and of the forces of history. Torn between the desire to describe the spirit of 1968 as an elusive, mobile, ever-returning force of history and the wish to "set its truth in stone," Capanna yearns for a new protagonist role for

[16] Ibid., 10.

himself as an interpreter of history: his use of Latin is yet another way to symbolically set his own experience as a new *exemplum*, a model that is both valid for all times and forever captured in history. He begins with an analysis of the term *contestazione* ("protest") as originating from both *contestor* (*con* and *testis*, "with" and "witness") and *contexo* ("to weave together") to make a case for the '68 demonstrations as a sign of the "Witness at work." According to him, the Witness is a collective subject that — in its act of refusal and denial of the *status quo* — connects the present and the future in an attempt to affirm the possibility of a change and of social renewal.[17] At a closer reading, though, it appears evident how Capanna is clearly casting himself as the Witness by definition, the untamed leader, the voice-of-god narrator who possesses the necessary knowledge of the past and can thus take on the role of the leader guiding his young apostles toward a better tomorrow; as such, the Witness is the personification of the only one able to weave together the misrepresented past and the unforeseen ("inedito") future. According to Capanna, his work as a witness may, after all, be capable of reconnecting through memory all the elements of a righteous rebellion that has long been betrayed and forgotten with the lively, yet unchannelled energies of the present youth.

The essay closes with yet another etymological discussion surrounding the word *ricordo* ("memory"), since memory has been the instrument through which the Witness has woven together the struggles and defeats of the past with the challenges of the present and the collective hopes for the future.[18] Warning his son against confusing memory with nostalgia, Capanna claims that memory is always of service to the future, playing an instrumental role in forging a deep awareness of what came before when trying to imagine a better tomorrow. As a result of his philological and philosophical musings around the term "ricordo," memory is said to activate together our feelings surrounding "the past," "imagination" (and therefore the future) and "the heart." The definition of the heart as the seat of memory is borrowed from classical culture and here invested with new meaning by the author, since memory represents to him much more than an intellectual activity: it is the affective reactivation of the past into a present made aware by the teachings of history.

In an interesting reversal of scenarios, Capanna's generation — having once firmly set itself against the oppressiveness it inherently saw in traditions — now imagines a new context in which memory and the new traditions it established can ironically be used as weapons to fight the forms of oppression — some new, some recurrent — that trouble the contemporary world and threaten to erase the legacy of their time:

> A real frenzy. As if they were overpowered by the fear that the alternative values then expressed, far from being extinguished, could affirm their validity again. As

[17] "La contestazione, dunque, non è solo denuncia, ma afferma in positivo, con un'azione di testimonianza che ricostruisce e fa emergere il contesto nel cui ambito tutto si collega e tiene insieme. […] Perciò, quando mette in discussione la validità dell'esistente, la contestazione non è mai pura negazione […], ma, proprio mentre nega, afferma la possibilità e la necessità di qualcos'altro che sia superamento. La Contestazione è il Testimone all'opera, che parla e agisce. […] Quando il Testimone risponde alla domanda, emerge l'inedito. Semplice e vero." Ibid., 41.

[18] "[I]l ricordo è a servizio del futuro. Diversamente dalla nostalgia, con cui non va assolutamente confuso. Anche l'etimologia ci aiuta. Il verbo latino *recordor* indica sì il 'ricordarsi' in quanto 'richiamare alla memoria' e 'rievocare nella mente', ma contiene anche l'idea di *immaginarsi* qualcosa al futuro. È composto da *re* e *cor*: il 'cuore' ritenuto sede della memoria. E il prefisso *re*, in composizione, significa 'indietro', ma anche *di fronte* e 'contro'. Il ricordare consiste nel richiamare qualcosa fuori dall'ombra del tempo, mettendola *di fronte* alla luce della mente, così essa ha il paragone per *immaginare* un che di diverso. Il ri*cor*dare, dunque, viene a stabilirsi come rac*cor*do e ac*cor*do tra passato e futuro, tramite il presente. È ciò che sta *indietro* e, insieme, *di fronte*." Ibid., 164.

> if they were gripped by the dread that the new book that was written back then by thousands of people could be read and understood again, perhaps encouraging someone to write some more pages. To burn it once and for all: this would be the solution that would appeal to them. But, as you know, book burnings were never able to incinerate ideas.
>
> Un vero e proprio accanimento. Come se sopraffatti dal timore che i valori alternativi espressi allora, ben lungi dall'essere spenti, possano affermare ancora la propria validità. Come se fossero attanagliati dalla paura che il libro nuovo, scritto allora da milioni di persone, possa essere letto ancora e compreso, invogliando magari alla stesura di altre pagine. Bruciarlo una volta per tutte: questa sarebbe la soluzione per loro desiderabile. Ma, come sai, i roghi non sono mai riusciti a incenerire le idee.[19]

In this passage, Capanna's reference to the imaginary, forbidden "new book" collectively written by his generation seems to respond to the accusation, leveled by historians and literary critics alike, that the '68 movement expressed itself with a language and a style that faded too quickly and consumed itself in the rituals of propaganda or in the formulaic language of slogans, without leaving a meaningful testimony to the future. The widespread rhetoric surrounding '68 often deems it to be a fleeting, ethereal, yet all too powerful historical object to be captured in words. Yet, here Capanna states his conviction that life itself and the transformation of time were the actual new texts that were collectively written in '68. He seems to suggest that his generation's legacy cannot be found in material testimonies presented in books, but in the impalpable, yet perceivable return of the same cycle of impulses and passion for political justice among the youth. The heritage of 1968 is, for Capanna, a different form of attachment to life. And just like life itself, it can never be fully articulated, thus leaving room for new chapters and endless returns.

As we have seen and will continue to see with Beniamino Placido, Mario Capanna, Anna Bravo and other narrators of '68, dealing with the thick affective matter that is attached to history often requires that the storytellers abandon any pretense of rigorous faithfulness to the conventions of a literary genre: historians are often pressed to address their own self-reflexive investment in the facts presented, thus also becoming memoirists; journalists do not want to be perceived as merely onlookers, casting themselves also as witnesses or protagonists of the story; essayists also delve into the complex matter of myth, narrative and fiction in order to appeal to their audience's emotional investment in '68. Genres and roles are blurred, just as much as the matter they aim to convey and interpret is elusive itself. This is also often the case with authors of fiction dealing with '68, as they frequently aim to assert their own versions of historical truths through the artifacts of imagination. Stefano Tassinari (1955-2012) is an example of such a practice: in his stories, the voice of the author blends so often with that of the historian, or of the fictional militant or survivor of intense political struggles, that it sometimes seems quite impossible to distinguish the author's persona from that of his protagonists. A politically committed writer, playwright, and screenwriter from Ferrara, Tassinari was also a long-time militant in far left-wing organizations such as Workers' Avantgarde (Avanguardia Operaia) and Proletarian Democracy (Democrazia Operaia). "long '68," particularly in *Assalti al cielo.*

[19] Ibid.,12.

Romanzo per quadri (1998) and *L'amore degli insorti* (2005).[20]His short stories collected under the title *D'altri tempi* (2011) address the question of memory and accountability by looking back, year by year, at pivotal social changes that took place during the 1970s through the words of a "survivor" of some sort: from the former guard of a psychiatric ward for prisoners ("1970: Carolyn"), to one of George Jackson's fellow inmates during his incarceration and death at San Quentin ("1971: Colors"); from the university professor who commissions a master's thesis on one of the many controversial deaths that took place during the Years of Lead and discusses with his students his own participation in those events ("1973: La dolcezza complice degli anni"), to the aged rebel who attended various iterations of the music festival at Parco Lambro in Milan ("1975: Parco Lambro") and is interviewed by a provocative young journalist. By reading the latter two stories in particular, we can attain a keener understanding of the contradictions at play when it comes to the difficulties experienced by young people when they attempt to relate to the older generation that "made '68," and vice versa.

In both of Tassinari's stories, the turning point of the narrative revolves around the question of empathy and "complicity" (as the title of the 1973 story reveals) that can be established across generations. In *La dolcezza complice degli anni* ("The Complicitous Sweetness of the Years"), the protagonists are two undergraduate students, Silvia and Federico, who are working on their final theses. Silvia, who is about to graduate in contemporary history, is working on the investigation and process that followed the death of student Roberto Franceschi, shot by a policeman on January 23rd, 1973, during a demonstration. Federico, who studies law, is interested in researching the underground political scene in Milan during the 1970s. Together, they visit professor Gervasi, a specialist in the history of that decade. During the meeting with the professor, the two students find out that Gervasi himself was involved with the Milan student movement at that time. As for many other students who decided to commit themselves to political militance in the 1970s, the University was for Gervasi "a second home — or better, a first home sometimes."[21] To Gervasi, Roberto Franceschi is not just a name in a half-forgotten history book, but rather the victim of an unjust episode of violence that he witnessed in the first person. The final acquittal of the policeman who was accused of shooting down Franceschi — which concluded a long, murky and controversial trial — represents for Gervasi an obvious case of "brutal State homicide" that never received the justice it deserved.[22] By revealing to the students his own personal investment with the movement, Gervasi performs a necessary act that is so often seen in narratives of the long '68: the establishment of a secret bond between generations, a gesture that posits a dissolution of boundaries between old and new and assigns a special, privileged status to the older interlocutor. Such a position retains all the authoritative and knowledgeable features of the master's role while opening a channel of exchange with the newer generations. It is benevolent, yet controlling; generous with the knowledge it intends to pass onto others, yet possessive of the status it occupies within the economy of collective memories. As such, Gervasi emerges here as the personification of a recurrent image of the '68-raised intellectual that is often present in Tassinari's work and elsewhere: at once a scholar and an activist; an intellectual and a political agitator; a subversive rebel and a well-adjusted member of

[20] Stefano Tassinari, *Assalti al cielo. Romanzo per quadri* (Bologna: Calderini, 1998); *L'amore degli insorti* (Milan: Marco Tropea Editore, 2005).
[21] "La Statale era la mia seconda casa — anzi, qualche volta era la prima." Stefano Tassinari, "La dolcezza complice degli anni," in *D'altri tempi* (Rome: Edizioni Alegre, 2011), 70.
[22] Ibid.

society; someone who is well-established within the institutions of the State, but quietly works to change them from within.

The conversation with professor Gervasi, his rational yet heartfelt condemnation of a tragic legal injustice, opens an unexpected window onto the past that resonates profoundly with Silvia and Federico. Thanks to this encounter, their perception of the past is irrevocably changed. The act of bringing to light the silenced truth behind the violence of the State against Franceschi acquires a new urgency, not just as a form of homage to a man who was unjustly condemned to premature death and oblivion. For the two students, and particularly for Silvia, researching and writing a thesis comes to represent the first true act of political commitment, a personal investment in the issue of collective memory. Her will to speak about an old injustice stems from her ethical urge to revisit the past so as to use that knowledge in light of the present. Unexpectedly, after her encounter with Gervasi, Silvia's final thesis appears no more to her as merely a technical affair, a way to obtain a diploma and move on with her life, but as an instrument that will allow her to exercise a form of political power intrinsic to the role of the witness (albeit an indirect witness, in her case). Her thesis, then, becomes more than a symbolic rite of passage into maturity; it is the vessel that allows her to cross the threshold of adulthood in light of the authority thrust upon her — as the heir and witness of an injustice uncorrected, entrusted with the responsibility of memory— by the anguished ghosts of the past. In taking charge of the burden of a traumatic history, she is simultaneously gifted with an awareness that will henceforth drive her participation in the present. Silvia's decision to address Franceschi's case thus shifts from being an inevitable and passive form of submission to the rules of an institution — as represented by the necessity to write a thesis in order to obtain a University diploma — to a conscious enactment of fearless speech, of *parrhesia*:

> Walking down the stairs, Silvia thinks about her thesis. Until a minute ago, she would have written it as if it were a high school class composition, a 200-page long composition rather than just four, something that needs to be turned in just to take another step forward, albeit a conclusive one. But that is not the case, because this story […] cannot be reduced to a technical matter.
>
> Silvia, scendendo le scale, pensa alla sua tesi, che fino a un minuto prima avrebbe scritto come se si fosse trattato di un compito in classe dei tempi del liceo, un tema lungo duecento pagine anziché quattro facciate, da consegnare solo per fare un altro passo avanti, seppure conclusivo. E invece no, perché questa storia […] non può essere ridotta a un fatto tecnico.[23]

As the path toward a responsible adulthood is here portrayed by Tassinari as a series of steps moving forward, Silvia's symbolic entrance into the rites of the adult years is quite the opposite of a conclusive movement: rather, it appears to be the beginning of a new, unexpected path guided by the desire to be an advocate against the injustices of the past. By accepting to delve into the messy matter of history, Silvia becomes suddenly invested with a wisdom that stems from a desire to speak the truth against the discipline of oblivion imposed by the dominant institutions. Her decision to become a fearless and truthful speaker projects her into adulthood and counterposes the ethical power of *parrhesia* to the silencing pressure of the State. In Michel Foucault's own interpretation of the term *parrhesia*, the ethical assertion of the truth in order to

[23] Ibid., 71.

demand justice is not merely a political act that determines a shift in power relations within the public sphere: "It is a political act. But […] it is also an act, a way of speaking which is addressed to an individual, to his soul, and it concerns the way in which this soul is to be formed."[24] Becoming a *parresiasta*, then, is a transformative activity that determines the formation of an individual's sense of ethics. In Silvia's case, the act of taking on an authoritative voice in defense of ghosts and to repair the memory of victims she never met inaugurates a peculiar take on *parrhesia*, one that serves retroactively to give justice to those who did not own a voice and were wronged by the coercive power of the State, while endowing the new generation with a burdensome, yet empowering ethical responsibility.

Furthermore, seeking the truth that hides behind a controversial history may, in this short story, represent an outward gesture of solidarity that fosters a more democratic society in present times. As observed by the historian Giovanni De Luna, remembering is a way of asserting the democratic principle of plurality, a form of expression that revolts against the homogenizing power of the present. Focusing on the present may present us with an opaque vision of a world "without a past and without history, open to all kinds of denials."[25] In this sense, dwelling on memories involves rejecting the seductive allure of oblivion, which would grant us the illusion of beginning anew while severing our sense of self from its roots (much like the 1968 generation did with its forefathers). When Tassinari's young protagonists salvage a forgotten story of State violence against an innocent victim, they are not just honoring and remembering the dead. They are subversively rescuing from oblivion the traces of "a past that must not pass," salvaging an inter-generational bond that brings closer those who experienced first-hand the oppression of the State and those who, thanks to them, come to reflect today on the nature of freedom, power, political activism, and self-expression.[26]

By the end of the short story, Silvia, Federico and their friends reflect on historical continuities between similar traumatic episodes across time, from the murder of Roberto Franceschi to the death of Carlo Giuliani, the 23-year-old anarchist and member of the no-global movement killed by a *carabiniere* in Piazza Alimonda, Genoa, during the demonstrations against the Group of Eight summit held in 2001. Similarly to what happened during the trial for Franceschi's death in the Seventies, all charges against Mario Placanica, the officer who shot Giuliani in the face, were dropped after a very controversial investigation. History, in Tassinari's stories, proves to inevitably repeat itself until the mechanisms of forgetfulness and repetition are broken by the acts of remembrance of those who will inhabit the struggles of the present:

> Immediately after, silence returns to the room. […] But it is not a silence that conveys finality, because memory remains open, presiding over that which wounded it a thousand times, over the faces and the places that are capable of bringing it to life again; and, again, over the solitary steps in the evening, tread and retread by those who look for someone they cannot find, if not within themselves. They are there to look at memory, still inside their young bodies, remembering — with the complicitous sweetness of their age — other bodies that will never get old.

[24] Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983* (New York: Picador, 2010), 194.
[25] "un mondo senza passato e senza storia, pronto a tutti i negazionismi." In Giovanni De Luna, *Le ragioni di un decennio: 1969-1979. Militanza, violenza, sconfitta, memoria* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2009), 155.
[26] "un passato che non deve passare," ibid.

> Subito dopo, nella stanza, torna il silenzio. […] Ma non è un silenzio da punto finale, perché la memoria resta aperta su ciò che l'ha ferita mille volte, sui volti e i luoghi in grado di ridarle vita e, ancora, sui passi solitari della sera, compiuti avanti e indietro da chi cerca qualcuno che non si può trovare, se non dentro se stessi. Loro sono lì a guardarla la memoria, immobili nei propri corpi giovani, a ricordarsi, con la dolcezza complice degli anni, di altri corpi che non invecchieranno mai.[27]

While the ghosts of those who died young and unjustly never really seem to find rest, condemned as they are to be remembered as both heroes and criminals by a contrived history, those who come to know them in remembrance are rescued and made powerful by their ethical commitment to speak truths that have long been denied."the complicitous sweetness of the years" evoked by the story's title appears to allude both to the indomitable energies of youth — which form a bond across generations between those who died young during their struggles against a world they considered unjust — and to the work of memory, which endows the past with new meaning in light of an attempted reconciliation.

In the instance of *Parco Lambro*, Tassinari's short story dedicated to the memory of the year 1975, we are presented with a very different kind of generational exchange than the positive, productive relationships envisioned in Capanna's "letter", or in *La dolcezza complice degli anni*. Here, a former *reduce* of '70s radical activism gives an interview to a young journalist who claims to be interested in his memories of the major musical event that took place at Parco Lambro, in Milan, in 1975. While the 1976 Parco Lambro festival is generally considered today as the moment when it became clear that the movement was falling apart and dispersing itself in "one thousand rivulets" ("mille rivoli") of different political shades, the 1975 iteration is remembered by the nameless protagonist of the story as the apogee of the movement's glory, an instant of achieved, if fleeting collective harmony. Despite the young journalist's attempts to reassure the older man about his genuine interest in his story, the protagonist is reluctant to share his memories. He is openly distrustful of young people's interpretations of the past (he soon warns his interviewer: "I will try to be trustful, even if…").[28] The older *reduce* feels jaded about young people's ability to truly understand the heightened emotional charge that accompanied his generation's activism. Right from the beginning of his dialogue with the journalist, he seems to partake in a widespread, pessimistic narrative shared by many former political militants: their belief that the dormant youth of today are emotionally incapable of understanding those times because they are unknowing victims of their own politically subdued and passive era. Nevertheless, the protagonist's own decision to consent to an interview betrays a desire to establish a bond with the younger generation and speak as a representative of his time, while simultaneously denying such a position:

> Either you start from the context or you will never understand. [I] don't feel like speaking on behalf of a whole generation. Not coincidentally, no one has been capable of producing a convincing literary or filmic work that could entirely represent that generation, and do you know why? Simply because it is not possible. At best, you can relate some fragments of it, and to this extent someone has done it quite well.

[27] Tassinari, "La dolcezza complice degli anni," 77.
[28] "Proverò a fidarmi, anche se…", in Tassinari, "Parco Lambro," ibid., 102.

> O parti dal contesto o non lo capirai mai. [Io] non mi sento di parlare a nome e per conto di tutta una generazione. Non a caso, nessuno è riuscito a produrre un'opera convincente, letteraria o cinematografica, in grado di rappresentare per intero quella generazione, e sai perché? Semplicemente perché non è possibile. Al massimo se ne possono raccontare dei frammenti, e in tal senso qualcuno lo ha fatto anche bene.[29]

Interestingly, the poetics of fragments as more reliable and accurate ways to convey truths about the "long '68" is an important textual strategy tinged with strong political connotationes. Such a strategy is evoked in a 2003 interview that Stefano Tassinari himself conducted with the writer Erri De Luca. Famously, throughout his work De Luca dealt extensively with the complex matter of his memories of the late Sixties and Seventies, but never considered writing a *magnum opus* about them, preferring to disperse them in short writings instead. Inquiring about the nature of the fragment, the two writers discuss what it means to advance one's own intimate account of history against the tide of the dominant versions proposed by the official narratives of the State:

> **Tassinari:** Some of [your] short stories are dedicated to a generation, our generation. But you have rebuilt these stories through the use of fragments, according to your style. Do you think that it's impossible to rebuild that history by writing, for example, a great novel, the way Americans do with their own events? Why is it, according to you, that it seems impossible or undesirable to come to terms with that period in a more exhaustive way, always choosing the fragment instead, as you do with your "micro-histories"?
> **De Luca:** […] Probably because this history of ours […] has been recorded by the offices of the tribunals, who offered their own definitive versions. This means that it is only through some small fractures, some small chinks in the underground, that partial versions of history can emerge. We — you, too, are complicitous in this process — have been working on partial versions for years, as injured parties of history; and, since we operate from below, we have to hold on tight to the fragment.
>
> **Tassinari:** Alcuni [tuoi] racconti […] sono proprio dedicati ad una generazione, la nostra. Però li hai ricostruiti attraverso dei frammenti, com'è nel tuo stile. Pensi che sia impossibile ricostruire quella storia attraverso, ad esempio, un grande romanzo, come fanno gli americani riguardo alle loro vicende? Perché, secondo te, non si riesce o non si vuole affrontare quel periodo in un modo più compiuto, ma si sceglie sempre la strada del frammento, così come fai tu con le tue "microstorie"?
> **De Luca:** […] Probabilmente perché questa nostra storia […] è stata verbalizzata dalle cancellerie di tribunale, che ne hanno dato la loro versione definitiva. Ciò vuol dire che solo attraverso delle piccole fratture, delle piccole crepe nel sottosuolo, emergono delle versioni di parte. Noi da molti anni — anche tu sei

[29] Ibid., 99.

> complice in questo — facciamo delle versioni di parte, di parte lesa della storia, e, operando da sotto, dobbiamo aggrapparci forte al frammento.[30]

With an intentional pun, De Luca discusses the "situated knowledge" of '68 narrators — knowledge that stems from a specific standpoint, to borrow an expression from Donna Haraway, who conceives of narratives as "historical textures woven of fact and fiction"[31] — as a "partial version," a truth that emerges from the standpoint of those who dwell in the "underground," the invisible and silenced side of history. This knowledge "di parte" is also "di parte lesa," the version of the injured party, uttered by those who were wronged by the official story that got passed down to the future generations. As a consequence, the fragmented knowledge that is rescued from the underground reveals itself as all the more precious — as minimal and insignificant as it may appear in contrast with the magniloquent official versions — since it allows for the survival of voices that would otherwise be extinct. Yet, the tension between the poetics of the fragment that occupy Tassinari's reflections and the desire to uncover great truths — to write about the "grand collective history" — is one constantly at work in his own fictional stories. During the fictional interview between the old *reduce* and the young interviewer that takes place in "Parco Lambro," despite his declared intention to refrain from acting as a spokesperson for a whole generation, the interviewee immediately proceeds to frame the terms of his reading of the youth movement in broad, absolute concepts. While advocating for a greater focus on micro-narratives ("fragments") as the only possible means of achieving an accurate knowledge of the Seventies and of the emotions at play within the radical movement that gathered at Parco Lambro, he still resorts to broad temporal and existential categories that seem as distant as possible from his initial modest claims as a narrator. The conversation with the young journalist keeps shifting back and forth between an attempt to capture the old man's recollection of the Parco Lambro music festival in 1975 and the urge to defend the affective and political impact of his generation. As the young interviewer meets his emphatic descriptions of the festival with an attitude that betrays his skepticism towards such stories, the old man quickly responds with resentfulness and threatens to cut the conversation short, withdrawing into the same kind of resentful disdain that, as we have seen, is shared by many of his contemporaries when it comes to drawing the sums of their existence. For instance, when the old man describes the concert of Area, a legendary progressive rock band, and their performance of the song *La mela di Odessa* ("Odessa's Apple"), which was criticized by the audience even if the interviewer personally considered it a "genius" piece of art, the interview takes a bitter tone, with the two characters clearly refusing to consider one another's perspective with respect:

> *Maybe, as I told you, it is because I wasn't even born at the time, but, rather than genius, it all seems very rhetorical to me.* […]
> What does this have to do with what I'm saying? Behind and inside that song there was an amazing story, which I won't waste time telling you because you wouldn't understand it anyway…

[30] "Il dialogo tra De Luca e Stefano Tassinari," http://www.raistoria.rai.it/articoli-programma/il-dialogo-tra-de-luca-e-stefano-tassinari/1283/default.aspx (last access: 12/01/2015).

[31] This fitting encapsulation of Haraway's conception of narrative is taken from Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 19.

> *Sarà che, come ti ho già detto, io non ero neanche nato, ma a me, più che geniale, sembra tutto molto retorico.* […]
> Ma che cosa c'entra? Dietro e dentro quella canzone c'è una storia bellissima, che però non starò qui a raccontarti perché tanto non la capiresti…[32]

The whole fictional interview continues as a series of contrapuntal rebukes between the two representatives of different generations: as the old man stumbles in his desire to convey what he perceived to be an extraordinary and intense collective experience that determined the start of a whole new historical era, his resentment and anguish towards a present — represented by the young interviewer — that seems unmoved by his stories grows and becomes evident in his replies. At the same time, the young interviewer's remarks become more provocative and take on a sarcastic tone as the old man seems to fall prey to the passions and unresolved conflicts reawakened by his memories. What started as a conversation about music becomes the ground for an embattled clash between two generations that seem never to be able to find a common ground. As with other narratives about 1968 that feature a dialogue between an *ex-sessantottino* and a younger interlocutor, the real issue at stake seems to be not so much striving to establish a channel to communicate or to create affective bonds between generations, but rather winning a debate over what constitutes the authentic experience of youth. The former *sessantottini* often make a proprietary claim to the definition of such a concept — having been part of a movement which was defined first and foremost by the collective young age of its participants — and blame the subsequent generations of being too submissive to rebel against the *status quo*, too unengaged to experience their own youth in its burning fullness. The specular reflection of this claim is the frequent recurrence to the image of the "living dead," the zombie that comes back from a past life and feeds on the energies and life force of today's youth: a haunting vision that, as we will see, appears in several memoirs and writings of former '68 activists, a form of nightmarish incarnation of their fear of oblivion and symbolic death. Tassinari is no exception: in "Parco Lambro," the interviewee resents his interlocutor's amused remarks about the old-fashioned terms ("stalinisti" ["stalinists"], "bandiere rosse" ["red flags"], etc.) he uses to describe what he considered the most vibrant time of his life, exclaiming in return: "Go on, keep on laughing! You think I don't know how distant the two of us are? For the majority of the people your age we are some sort of living dead, some residues of a century that ended at least another century ago…"[33]

In many ways, "Parco Lambro" encapsulates all of the tropes that accompany much of the literature centered around contemporary recollections of the Sixties and Seventies: a possessive and contradictory use of memory, through which the author simultaneously urges an exhaustive discussion around the forgotten traumas and unrequited passions that characterized the time of his youth while, in practice, withdrawing (or threatening to withdraw) from his own intentions and severing all channels of communication with those who inquire about his opinion; a heightened attention to the affective aspect of historical experience; the constant shift between micro-narratives and macro-narratives, often mishandled so to appear incompatible between them. In this sense, Tassinari's text is particularly problematic, as the opening statement regarding the need to only consider the "fragments" of history as potential bearers of truth is followed by the interviewee's sweeping statements regarding the role of his generation, its

[32] Ibid., 105.
[33] "E allora ridi, ridi pure! Credi che io non sappia quanto siamo distanti tu ed io? Per la maggioranza di quelli della tua età noi siamo una specie di morti viventi, dei residuati di un secolo finito da almeno un altro secolo…" Ibid., 95.

tremendous impact on history, the dramatic consequences of the political and existential battles of his time. Far from staying confined within his "fragmentary" role as a former activist and a mere participant in a countercultural music festival, the old man soon delivers a speech that encompasses his take on time, history, genealogies, and the consequences of political utopias, ending with an assessment of what it constitutes to be victorious or defeated when it comes to one's own participation in the failed revolution of the 1970s:

> The fact that the movement was composed only of people of a certain age was also its limit, because when that generation got old the movement itself was over, and on the other hand things could not have been different, because the whole world needed a generational rupture that could bring a forward leap not just by twenty years, but rather one hundred years, as in fact happened in reality. In short, the differences in terms of culture, ambitions and lifestyles between my mother and her grandmother were to a large extent smaller than the differences that separated my mother and me. […] We swept away everything. […] I know that many among us consider these achievements small things if compared to the failure of the revolution, but I […] judge them in positive terms anyway, even if I would rather have smashed everything and rebuilt it anew. That is why I don't feel defeated.
>
> [I]l fatto che il movimento fosse formato solo da persone di una certa fascia d'età è stato anche il suo limite, perché quando la generazione è invecchiata il movimento è finito, e d'altronde le cose non sarebbero potute andare diversamente, perché in tutto il mondo c'era bisogno di una rottura generazionale, in grado di far compiere un salto non di venti ma di cent'anni, come è avvenuto nella realtà. Insomma, le differenze in termini culturali, di aspirazioni e di modi di vivere tra mia madre e sua nonna erano di gran lunga minori di quelle che si sono verificate tra mia madre e me. […] Noi abbiamo spazzato via tutto. […] Lo so che molti di noi considerano queste conquiste poca cosa rispetto al fallimento della rivoluzione, ma io […] le giudico comunque in modo positivo, anche se avrei preferito dare una spallata e ricostruire tutto da capo. È per questo che non mi sento uno sconfitto.[34]

Here, the old interviewee counterposes his proud assessment of the political labor of his generation to the jaded assumptions of his questioner, who as many other critics of the '68 movement seems only able to draw conclusions on that era in terms of clear-cut victory or defeat of the revolution. In this sense, the old man's opinion is one well worth considering, since it goes against the wide tide of '68 critics who tend to read its history exclusively in terms of polar opposites: '68 as a modernizing force or as a chaotic loss of democracy; its impact on society invaluable or disastrous; its memory glorious or traumatic. As a consequence, much of the widely professed inability to define in distinctive terms what is the current legacy of '68 stems from a resistance to move beyond such a polarized lexicon. In "Parco Lambro," the old *reduce* counteracts the sweeping conclusions of dichotomous historical narratives with an aesthetic of fragments, praising the infinitesimal, but nonetheless powerful and life-changing repercussions of a massive event such as 1968 and its "long" aftermath. Coherent with an understanding of

[34] Ibid., 103-4.

1968 as the year that imparted a radical change to the notion of time itself and widened the gap between generations, the protagonist of "Parco Lambro" deploys paradoxical notions to convey the extent of the "rupture" that took place because of the impact of that year.

Towards the end of this fictional interview, a heated argument takes center stage in the dispute between generations, as the old man gets infuriated by the journalist's dismissal of his emotional recounting of the Parco Lambro event. As if to prove to him that the old passions are still very much alive today, the old man loses his poorly-controlled composure and refuses to continue the interview, showing the young man out the door. In his last enraged speech, he tells the interviewer that not all the former activists of his generation have sold out their dreams and ideals in exchange for some opportunistic, material benefits. As his anger grows, he literally returns to his former young self, staunchly and aggressively faithful to the ideas that shaped his most vibrant years and have not disappeared today:

> Listen, […] you asked me to talk about Parco Lambro and I consented, […] but if I had known that your goal was to drag me along the same level as those who reject their participation in the movement, or follow the new leading trend, which recites "when you start getting old you need to get wise," well… I wouldn't even have let you inside my home. And since I'm giving you about twenty seconds to leave now, while I walk you to the door — come on, come with me… — I'm going to make it so that you will leave with the worst possible image of me, providing a soundtrack for your way out the door made of quotes and slogans that will make you cringe, such as: "The revolution is not a gala affair," "Power is born out of the rifle barrel," or "Let's sell our mimeographs to buy some rifles." Happy now? Bye bye!
> The gall of him…
>
> Senti, […] mi hai chiesto di parlare di Parco Lambro e io l'ho fatto, […] ma se avessi saputo che il tuo obiettivo era quello di trascinarmi sul piano del pentitismo o di quella nuova moda imperante, della serie "quando si comincia ad invecchiare bisogna rinsavire", be', allora non ti avrei nemmeno fatto entrare in casa. E siccome adesso ti do una ventina di secondi per andartene, mentre ti accompagno alla porta — su, forza, vieni… — per fare in modo che tu te ne vada con la peggiore immagine possible di me, come colonna sonora del tuo percorso verso l'uscita ti snocciolo un po' di citazioni e di slogan, di quelli che ti faranno rabbrividire, del tipo: "La rivoluzione non è un pranzo di gala", "Il potere nasce dalla canna del fucile", oppure "Vendiamo i ciclostili, compriamoci i fucili". Contento? Ciao ciao!
> Ma guarda te…[35]

In the end, the wish that seems to be expressed in the narratives produced by so many *sessantottini* — both in Capanna's letter and through the words of Tassinari's "survivors of the long '68," whether represented as benign father figures or harsh critics of today's youth — is that the newer generation will be able to recognize that core of youthfulness that still resides in their attachment to memories. Once that complicity is established, their survival is granted. But if that bond is severed or fails to develop between the interlocutors, the narrative gives way to a

[35] Ibid., 108.

begrudged confrontation that ends with a violent separation. From a comparison between the two opposed narratives of survival and oblivion presented by Tassinari within the context of the same book, the theme of "resistance," of faithfulness to one's old ideals and opposition to decay and death, takes on a new meaning: "resistere" — witnessing one's own endurance in the face of oppression be embraced and applauded by the young generations — is also a way to "ri-esistere," to become alive again and experience youth for the second time in light of the acknowledgement offered by the future generations.

Subsequent generations of Italian radical activists and rebels inherited the same conception of time and genealogical conflicts: in his historical account of 1977 — the year when a new, violent wave of student protests took place all over the country, particularly in Bologna and Rome — Marco Grispigni talks about how, far from being role models, the former 1968 leaders who wanted to participate in the protests were called "zombies" by the students, who condemned their arrogance, their obsolete conception of class struggles, and the fact that they appeared to be out of touch with the pressing demands of the students' reality. The figure of the zombie, the living dead, appears particularly striking in this context, as it hauntingly returns across different accounts to personify the fear of oblivion and the desire for immortality that the 1968 generation returned to so often in its memories and in its writings. Ironically, Grispigni concludes his introduction to the book with a dedication to his two children, with the wish that never in their life should they encounter an old *settantasettino* who "like a 'zombie,' wants to inflict upon them a lesson about how revolutionary our generation was."[36] "living dead" witnesses of a past generation, Grispigni pronounces this wish to his children as he introduces a whole new emotional account of the battles of his generation.

Later in the book, Grispigni points to a related, fundamental problem with the intricate chorus of voices that dominate the storytelling scene of the "long '68" — and therefore of a whole decade — and thus shape its memory: the authority to speak and to represent the experience of many. Who, in this context, has the right to speak? And what kind of authority is the person claiming? When narrators intentionally blur the boundaries of their stories, how can we distinguish between the voice of the historian, that of the witness, and that of the protagonist of such a big, long-lasting event? In the chaotic overlapping of voices, roles and opinions, historical truth is revealed for what these narrators perceive it to be: not so much a matter of factual accuracy, but a question of emotional honesty. While certainly subjective and biased, such an epistemological approach also offers a different access to the story, one that has the potential to resonate with contemporary readers and build affective bridges across generations. In the end, telling the story itself — even with its strategic gaps, omissions, and silences — becomes an ultimate effort on the part of the storytellers to enter in dialogue with the future.
In his own account of 1977, Grispigni addresses this question at the very onset of his narration. To him, what is at stake is his own reliability as a narrator, as he is trying to hold together two very different roles: that of a historian and that of a protagonist of the 1977 events. Admittedly, this for him is the very

> source of a possible ambiguity, played along the lines of some sort of slippery, ill-defined boundary, where stepping over the line is always a possibility, thus privileging one's own personal memory to the fundamental characteristic of the historian, "the work on memory." Throughout the years, [...] I have become more and more convinced that a 'cold,' exclusively scientific language is incapable of

[36] Marco Grispigni, *1977* (Rome: manifestolibri, 2006), 11.

> transmitting fragments of truth about a social movement. It is only in the contamination of the historian's language with that of other narratives that one can rebuild an interpretative net which is capable of capturing the complexity of those experiences.
>
> fonte di una possibile ambiguità, giocata su una sorta di confine sdrucciolevole, non saldamente definito, nel quale l'andare oltre è sempre possibile, privilegiando la propria memoria personale alla caratteristica fondamentale dello storico, "il lavoro sulla memoria". Nel corso di questi anni, [...] mi sono sempre più convinto dell'incapacità di un linguaggio 'freddo', esclusivamente scientifico, di trasmettere frammenti di verità su un movimento sociale. [S]oltanto nella contaminazione del linguaggio dello storico con quello di altre narrazioni è possibile ricostruire un reticolo interpretativo capace di dar conto della complessità di quelle esperienze.[37]

Here, Grispigni is advocating for a different approach to historical narration, one that falls inbetween the categories of history and memory: on one hand, he does not want to let go of the status of the historian, whose work is supported by the evidence of "cold" facts; on the other, he reaches for the "warm" appeal of emotional storytelling to convey to the readers the aspect of those times that seems to have mattered the most: its affective impact on the lives of many. In a detailed description of his method, he makes an explicit reference to the discourse of time and of the collective attempt, on the part of a whole generation, to set itself aside from the inexorable progress of history. As Grispigni puts it, his storytelling technique should reflect the way in which his generation conceived of itself as a collective force forever in the making. To this extent, he quotes the words of Rossanna Rossanda, who in turn described the generation that fought during the Resistance as a force that "acted with precision while, at the same time, conceiving of itself chaotically."[38] There seems to be an ineffable aspect to the excitement and affective charge of those times that cannot be fully conveyed with words, yet needs to be called forth again and again in order to express its importance. When that does not happen, Grispigni warns,

> upon rereading the historical reconstructions and interpretations of those years, the feeling of inadequacy often strikes the ones who had taken part in those movements with a charged emotion that constituted the essence itself of that rebellious wave.
>
> la sensazione di inadeguatezza che spesso coglie, al momento di rileggere le ricostruzioni storiche e le interpretazioni di quegli anni, chi alle vicende dei vari movimenti aveva partecipato con una carica emotiva che fu la sostanza stessa di quell'ondata di ribellione.[39]

[37] Ibid., 8.
[38] "Chi scrive di quel tempo sui soli documenti non capisce che cosa furono quei rapporti, un fare preciso e un pensarsi caotico." Rossana Rossanda, *La ragazza del secolo scorso*, cit. in Grispigni, *1977*, op. cit, 8.
[39] Ibid., 9.

What seems to be missing from historical narratives are the characteristics of urgency and intensity that those memories still evoke in those who were there to witness the unfolding of those events. Keeping those feelings alive, justifying the urgency with which that generation acted and expressed itself, is a way of resisting death, of not turning oneself into one of those dreadful "zombies" that Grispigni's generation made fun of in their youth. Grispigni laments the fact that sticking to the mere facts while relating those historical events ends up completely missing the point. Being entirely accurate about factual details would, in fact, draw the focus away from the impact of the "violent stream of consciousness" that motivated his generation, as taken as they were with the feeling of "crossing over a threshold, of moving away from all known and reassuring sites, […] toward something else."[40] The vagueness and imprecision that characterize such accounts, thus, come to paradoxically represent more accurate ways of relating feelings, as they remain faithful to the impressionistic way in which that generation came to conceive of itself while attempting to incite a revolution. "Thinking chaotically," then, can also be a way to protract in today's accounts the confused, tentative, yet necessary urgency with which that generation formed an idea of itself, and to honor the reverberance of its wishful feelings — if not to attempt the realization of its radical aspirations — even after the fall of its hopes.

Section 2. A History Teeming with Feelings: The Continuing Resonance of Past Hopes

Confronting the effect of the strategies of textual production that surround the "long '68" makes us capture the persistence of a mode of representation of both the self and the world which initiated an affective paradigm shift: indeed, it imagined a different relation to time and history, a structure of enduring immediacy that yokes the events of that historical period with the feelings that congealed around it. 1968 is an elusive temporal and affective figure between the mass of factual information produced by academia and the media and the broken mechanisms of remembrance reported by many of its storytellers. This is the phenomenon that the historian Giuseppe Carlo Marino describes as "a sort of retention of the memory mechanisms, almost a methodical doubt and a painful paralysis of the soul."[41] A large number of narratives about 1968 move between two different, sometimes parallel strategies: they either lay out the facts or contemplate the psychic void left by those same facts. As we have seen with the stories of a number of "'68 survivors" such as Mario Capanna, Beniamino Placido, or the scornful protagonists of Tassinari's short stories, their struggle against a narrow and manichean form of historicism that aims at reading complex events in terms of clear-cut victories or defeats is perhaps the heaviest stumbling block they encounter in their attempt to redeem themselves from the oblivion of time. From their perspective, personal memories and affects are being trivialized in an effort to cast a rational judgement on the past in light of today. Paradoxically, though, in contemporary debates around "the years '68," a greater emphasis is often put on the dramatic end of its collective saga rather than on the manifold ripples of microhistories it generated. The long

[40] "oltrepassare una soglia, di allontanarsi da lidi conosciuti e rassicuranti. L'inebriante sensazione di movimento verso qualcosa d'altro, di rifiuto dello stato […] inteso non solo come potere dominante, ma nel senso letterale di immobilità." Ibid.

[41] "Una sorta di ritenzione dei meccanismi della memoria, quasi un dubbio metodico e un doloroso blocco dell'anima." In Giuseppe Carlo Marino, *Biografia del Sessantotto: Utopie, conquiste, sbandamenti* (Milan: Bompiani, 2000), 466.

decade that was inaugurated by the ’68 movement is observed in its wider contours and understood as a series of outcomes: the fall into political terrorism; the defeat of the radical Left and of the collectivist spirit; the phenomenon by which many of the leaders and talents of the movement “sold out” to the forces of capitalism; the retreat into the private sphere. Fewer are the debates that engage with a vision of the “long ‘68” as a cluster of complex historical processes that involved multifaceted aspects of society as well as a large number of individuals, each with their own specific social and political background and goals.

On the other side of the debate that counterposes memory and history, some scholars have felt the need to counteract the perceived predominance of a literature based on memory rather than on historical data, arguing that writings based on the imprecise sense of time inherent to memory work fall prey to two major limits. First, this kind of literature prevents knowledge from being founded on reliable data and places an excessive emphasis on individual recollections; second, it often overshadows the larger socio-economic phenomena at play in the outcome of complex historical processes, favoring a rather unilateral and often romanticized vision of the past. Both critiques hold valid points and are necessary in order to form an in-depth analysis of a historical period as a whole, contributing in important ways to unmasking the myth of 1968 as an “incomparable” event that defies all definitions and posthumous assessments. Yet, these kinds of studies do not account for the surplus of affect that dominates the collective investment on the memory of 1968, both on the part of those who lived through it and of those who inherited its problematic legacy.

Giovanni De Luna is one of the most eminent representatives of a critical approach to memory that denounces the problems posed by an excessive reliance on individual and collective mechanisms of remembrance. De Luna bases his critique on the genre of memory writing as a whole, criticizing it as a form of “monumentalization” of the past. As a historian, his work is not concerned with close reading and interpreting the fine details offered by the subjective narratives and genres that are associated with the personal recollections of ’68. Rather, De Luna views memory as an affect-based discipline that cannot help but succumb to the flawed perspectives presented by the wounded egos or traumatized recollections of the storytellers. When considered in this light, memory seems to set out to offer answers about a troubled vision of the past, but ends up eliciting even more questions that remain unanswered:

> After being frozen in forms of disavowal and escapism at the beginning of the Eighties, this kind of memory has little by little become an overflowing river. […] It is a sympathetic memory, which has developed on the basis of affect and participation, but that in many cases appears sterile, self-obsessed. You get the impression that many of the debates or of the forms of solidarity that are being evoked get exhausted within a very narrow circle of “survivors” who are ready to tear each other apart for some old grudges, or bond over passions who have faded away with time. […] The stories of the protagonists tend to give way to recriminatory or self-satisfied tones, using one’s experience as a way of excluding those who were not present and thus cannot understand how things went down. […] Thanks to these absences, and to the fact that those events involved so many people, making them feel as protagonists, “theorizing and practicing freedom of speech,” everyone today struggles to understand “that others can talk about that history.” Too much memory and too little history. Too many memories and too few documents, too many feelings and too little philology. There is […] the need

to shatter the "monuments," thus finally making accessible a kind of knowledge that does not passively reflect a public use of history.

> Dopo essere stata congelata nella rimozione e nella fuga agli inizi degli anni '80, questa memoria è diventata man mano un fiume in piena. […] È una memoria solidale, nutrita di affetto e di partecipazione, ma che in molti casi appare sterile, come racchiusa in se stessa. Si ha l'impressione che molte delle polemiche o delle solidarietà che vengono evocate si esauriscano all'interno di una ristretta cerchia di reduci pronti a dilaniarsi su antichi rancori, a ritrovarsi su passione sbiadite nel tempo. […] I racconti dei protagonisti tendono a soccombere a toni recriminatori o compiaciuti, usando l'esperienza come mezzo di esclusione di chi non era presente e non può capire come sono andate le cose. […] Grazie a queste assenze e al fatto che quegli eventi coinvolsero così tante persone facendole sentire protagoniste, "teorizzando e praticando la presa di parola", oggi tutti fanno fatica ad accettare "che altri possano parlare di quella storia". Troppa memoria e poca storia. Troppi ricordi e pochi documenti, troppi sentimenti e poca filologia. C'è […] la necessità di mandare in frantumi i "monumenti", rendendo finalmente accessibile una conoscenza che non sia il riflesso condizionato dell'uso pubblico della storia.[42]

While on one level historians such as De Luna advocate for a much more thorough and widespread work on the myriad microhistories into which the '68 movement could be dispersed, others — such as Giuseppe Carlo Marino — believe that putting too much emphasis on the inner logics of the movement would lead to grossly overestimating its role in the much larger social transformations that were taking place worldwide thanks to the advent of the information age and of globalization. From this perspective, the cultural and political changes brought about by the movement were primarily the early — and therefore more striking — effects of a modernization that was already underway, regardless of the contribution offered by the youth uprisings. While the youth movements battled throughout the late Sixties and Seventies in the name of an ideal society led by the working class, "workers were turning out to be far from opposed to the idea of improving their conditions as consumers, and many among the young rebels were showing similar inclinations, so much so that they became the privileged targets of numerous sectors of the consumer market."[43] As a result, many young revolutionaries ended up "betraying" the causes they set out to fight for and were assimilated within the larger, more pervasive power structures dictated by the new systems of neo-capitalism and the anti-ideological stances of postmodernism. Even the supposedly unique generational conflict imposed by the '68 generation, which claimed to have severed itself from the values and lifestyles of its predecessors, is seen by Marino as nothing more than a self-absorbed illusion: rather than setting themselves apart from the dynamics that had governed the conflicts between different generations, the *sessantottini* may just be considered another instance of a young Italian generation in revolt, which — just as in the case of the young idealists of the Risorgimento or the partisans, for example — criticized its predecessors for lacking the courage and the strength to

[42] De Luna, *Le ragioni di un decennio*, 161-2.

[43] "gli operai si stavano rivelando tutt'altro che contrari all'idea di migliorare la loro condizione di consumatori, e una gran parte degli stessi giovani ribelli stava mostrando un'analoga inclinazione, tanto da diventare destinataria privilegiata di numerosi settori del mercato dei consumi." Marino, *Biografia del Sessantotto*, 473.

overcome their own limits and failures in a neverending struggle against malicious forms of governative power: therefore, "when it got involved in a struggle against authoritarianism and the residues of fascism, the student body — which was composed of groups of youths enamoured with the revolution" may have simply "obeyed those same logics of overcoming that already animated the preceding generations."[44] Thus, Marino's reading proposes an opposite understanding of the "'68 temporality" than the one advanced by interpreters who saw it as a "rupture." Rather, Marino interprets it as merely a different form of cyclical exchange between generations: the only difference with the 1968 generation stands in its choice of an alternative genealogy for its predecessors: rather than following tradition, they opted to follow the example of previous generations in revolt. While the subjects involved may not be bonded by kinship, the ordinary process of generational exchange still appears unbroken.

In conclusion, Marino warns against the danger of falling prey to a simplistic fascination with the ideological categories that were used by the '68 movement and thus avoid a direct confrontation with the judgement cast by historians. According to Marino, historical lessons can be fully comprehended when coming to terms with the *praxis* and multi-faceted complexities of socio-historical phenomena. For him, it would be thus myopic to keep producing accounts that focus on the results of the movement's attempted revolution, reducing everything to a "'68-esque kind of debate" that speaks with the language of absolutes in an era that rejects ideologies. That is why — Marino tells us — *ex-sessantottini* have such a difficult time in acquiring a trustworthy status as narrators today. They speak an obsolete language that could not be more distant from contemporary society and try to impose old-fashioned critical categories on a deeply changed reality. With his jaded assessment of the work of a generation and his insistence on the larger historical frame in which *sessantottini* happened to operate — rather than influencing historical events with their own actions — Marino's position regarding today's legacy of '68 represents the polar opposite of the passionate and intimate recollections of former activists such as Capanna, Tassinari, and Grispigni. While such a broad vision of the workings of history is important to counter too many fragmented, emotional readings of an event, it fails to account for the intensity with which 1968 is remembered. As observed by Peppino Ortoleva,

> This may very well have been one of the most widespread and strongest rationalizations of the '68 events: reconducting a historical fact to some sort of physiological phase, a 'normal' happening in the biography of a generation. Certainly a deformed reading, but a reassuring one… A reading, on the other hand, that might make a properly historiographical reflection appear superfluous, as it flattens history against the theory of a generation 'turnover.'
>
> Una delle razionalizzazioni più diffuse e forti degli eventi del '68 può essere stata proprio questa: il ricondurre un fatto storico ad una sorta di tappa fisiologica, di vicenda 'normale' nella biografia di una generazione. Una lettura, certo, deformata, ma rassicurante… Una lettura, d'altra parte, che schiacciando la storia sulla fisiologia del 'ricambio' tra le generazioni può far apparire superflua la riflessione propriamente storiografica.[45]

[44] "il popolo studentesco dei gruppettari innamorati della rivoluzione, scendendo in campo contro l'autoritarismo e i residui del fascismo […] avevano ubbidito a quella stessa logica del superamento che era già stata delle precedenti generazioni." Ibid., 471.
[45] Ortoleva, "La sfinge '68," 39.

The particular circumstances that led to the formation and affirmation of the ’68 movement are still evoked today as the time during which the traditional binary that separated private existences from public life underwent a crisis. As a consequence, history — even at a distance — appears to be irreducible to facts, data, broad-ranging analyses. In fact, those who contributed to the birth of what many historians try to circumscribe as a limited, specific phenomenon still feel forever changed by that experience to this day. As the reverberations of those political passions still animate the struggles of today, there seems to be a need for a peculiar historical language, one that accounts for the impalpable, yet lively persistence of feelings around the ghostly matter of the past.

In an attempt to formulate new languages and modes of investigation that can render the complexity of the problem at hand, a third, more nuanced historical approach has tried to hold together the larger historical frame with the sense of personal investment experienced by those who happened to initiate political actions at that time. Such a perspective is offered by scholars such as Anna Bravo, Maria Luisa Boccia or Nicola Gallerano, who investigate the long-term survival of forms of life and strategies of social aggregation that were first experienced during the season of the radical movements associated with 1968. According to Gallerano, there is something about the collective life of a movement that always exceeds its material circumstances and the reasons why it came into being. The individuals involved, the bonds they establish among them, the particular places from which they operate, and the specific actions and reactions they set into motion cannot be reduced to a hasty judgement on the nature and the effects of the movement as a whole. While historians such as Marino emphasize the aspects of the ’68 movement that liken it to other movements of the past, Gallerano proposes to look at the survival of a certain way of looking at reality and a specific conception of the relationship between the personal and the political that were initiated in ’68 and can still be traced in contemporary political and social experiences, whenever and wherever new expressions of collective resistance and communitarian action arise. In this light, what matters the most to scholars such as Gallerano, Boccia, and others, is not so much understanding the “event ’68” in its most rigorous historical frame and correct social context. It is rather a question of grappling with its “long effects,” the impact the movement had on contemporary notions of time, youth, politics, activism, and culture. The survival of the evanescent, yet pervasive culture of ’68 thus becomes an object of study *per se*, one that is familiar with questions of affect, loss, memory, and amnesia more than it is with the problem of casting a cold, objective light onto the past. As Maria Luisa Boccia explains: “From this point of view, having given life to political movements has on one hand undoubtedly been the characterizing element of the matter, but on the other hand it would also constitute its outermost, and therefore not exhaustive aspect of their real impact.”[46]

When considered under the benevolent eye of studies that privilege the long-term resonance and affective significance of an event over an objective historical assessment, memory seems to focus on the persistent effects of intimate or collective processes. The endings of such processes are less clearly defined and are often conceived as positive — or at the very least redeeming — forces that are still at work in the present. It is no surprise, then, that the narratives that have coalesced around a troubled, yet vibrant time such as ’68 seem to acquire a deeper

[46] “Da questo punto di vista l’aver dato vita a movimenti politici se per un verso è stato indubbiamente l’elemento caratterizzante, per altro verso ne costituirebbe anche quello più fenomenico, nient’affatto esaustivo della loro reale incidenza.” In Maria Luisa Boccia, “Il patriarca, la donna, il giovane. La stagione dei movimenti nella crisi italiana,” in *L’Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta: Atti del ciclo di convegni, Roma, novembre e dicembre 2001*, ed. Francesco Malgeri and Leonardo Paggi (Catanzaro: Rubbettino, 2003), 258.

significance in light of memory, which simultaneously imposes an intellectual and affective discipline to the study of the past. In this context, the divide between personal accounts, memory studies and historiographical analyses of 1968 and its aftermath appears to be centered around questions of legitimacy and accuracy. What story is the most faithful? One that grapples with the emotional attachments that linger around the past and call into question the reasons for their stubborn persistence? Or one that, on the contrary, attempts to select and examine the sources of a story with an outsider's detached frame of mind, offering a critical reading that is unencumbered by personal investments? And are there any possibilities inbetween these two seemingly opposed standpoints?

The problem at stake is one of closeness to the subject of the story: when events prove so momentous as to alter the course of people's lives in ways that are both powerful and subtle, as in the case of the *sessantottini*'s experiences, it appears that the accuracy and reliability of the story can sometimes be offered by a honest admission of total partiality, as we have seen with Grispigni's claims in his account of the '77 protests. Transported to a different context, this epistemological approach is akin to one observed by Carlo Ginzburg in the case of the lively relationship that Jewish culture has with its past, whereby — he argues — Judaism has always questioned its own position in relation to questions of time and history, yet historiography *per se* has been assigned a subaltern role in passing down the knowledge of history within the culture. Ginzburg — citing the work of Yosef Yerushalmi — contends that, more than relying on historiography, the *lively* relationship with the past that exists within Jewish culture is based, on one hand, upon the work of prophets, "who explored the meaning of history" — thus favoring *interpretation* over the *study* of data and facts — and, on the other hand, upon "a collective memory transmitted by rituals, which communicated not 'a menagerie of facts to be contemplated from a distance, but rather a series of situations in which one could and should take part, or project oneself in an existential way.'"[47] Keeping proximity with the past by virtue of a reflection over the significance of an episode or an event, or through its emotional reactivation in the function of ritual or collective memory work is a way of re-experiencing the past anew, in all its complexity and relentless liveliness. For Ginzburg, this corresponds to an "ahistoric," perhaps even an antihistoric attitude that finds solace and meaning in a lively *experience* of the past (*res gestae*), rather than a detached *knowledge* of it (*historia rerum gestarum*). Within this perspective, memory — far from being a form of remembrance — is an "actualization" of the past, a way to return it to the realm of the present, affirm its survival and preserve it from the grip of oblivion. While particularly visible in Judaism, Ginzburg highlights the presence of traditions centered around collective memory rites in all cultures. Additionally, he remarks that discussions around the primacy of memory over history have abounded in particular over the last few decades. Among other reasons for this rise in the fortune of approaches based on memory is the frustration "toward an arid scientific attitude in relation to history."[48] This way of relating ourselves to history does not implicate initiating a sustained reflection upon "the distance that separates us from it," but rather it enacts in visible forms (tales, rituals, ceremonies, habits) the

[47] "Gli ebrei sono entrati in un rapporto vitale col passato da un lato attraverso i profeti, che esplorarono il significato della storia, dall'altro, scrive Yerushalmi, attraverso una memoria collettiva trasmessa dai riti, che comunicavano non 'una congerie di fatti da contemplarsi a distanza ma una serie di situazioni in cui ci si poteva e ci si doveva immergere, o in cui ci si proiettava in senso esistenziale." In Carlo Ginzburg, *Occhiacci di legno: Nove riflessioni sulla distanza* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2011), 173.

[48] "la crescente insoddisfazione nei confronti di un atteggiamento aridamente scientifico nei confronti della storia." Ibid., 172.

persistence of the past into the present inner life of a culture.[49] Such principles hold true also when it comes to the collective memory of 1968, a year remembered more vividly through the memories, legends, symbols, attitudes, slogans, and stereotypes that are attached to it rather than for the knowledge we have of it, which as we have seen continues to appear obscure and fragmentary despite countless attempts to define it.

And while remembrance ("ricordo") does entail an affective connection with the past, it merely limits itself to drawing the past nearer to us through the act of recounting stories of a time forever gone or intimately savoring our recollections of remarkable moments of the past that do not hold significance for the present. Memory, on the other hand, can serve as a form of "actualization" of passions and forces that still hold their grasp on present times. It is a way of strengthening the nexus between the past and the present, reconsidering the past in its vital aspects rather than the ones that have inevitably become obsolete or invisible today.

In the case of 1968, as Marino points out, there is a certain "difficulty in explaining how and why what in the short term had seemed to end in a failure, producing monsters, was instead to be considered as a success in the long run."[50] The stories of resilience and survival of betrayed ideals that the former *sessantottini* are producing today invite us to look at the demands of the youth movement from a new angle. The accomplishments and losses of the '68 movements have traditionally been measured by their critics on the basis of its incommensurable desires — a vaguely connotated, yet omnipresent revolution, the provocative claim to "want everything" ("vogliamo tutto!") — pressed against the weight of reality, of the movement's own internal schisms, of the radicalization of the protest into forms of violent subversion. Yet, from the perspective of memory, the final outcome of the movement — if there ever was one — seems out of focus, unimportant, secondary, when compared to its beginnings. And the beginnings are to be traced back to the creative leap that formed the movement, to the joy of the discovery of commonalities across deep differences, to the temporary merging of the individual into the fraternal embrace of the mass, to the pleasure of the *vita activa*. All of these life-affirming feelings were based on newly found commonalities that often brought together for the first time disparate political entities from all over the globe around a unifying cause, such as, for example, the protests against the Vietnam War. In that perhaps brief moment of public, collective happiness, the youth that participated to the '68 event emerged as something more than a new sociological category, something else than a profitable target for consumerist consumption, as it is often remembered today in historical narratives. Those beginnings — as the '68 survivors seem to suggest — were the catalyst of a long-lasting social metamorphosis, something that took place not so much in the practical world of political events and social struggles, as much as those were the very arenas in which the outer signs of a cultural shift were most visible. Rather, the stories of the *sessantottini* tell us that the changes appeared so radical because they stemmed from an intimate shift in self-perception experienced by many individuals at once. Such a transformation came from a rejection of the privileged bourgeois status that characterized the social and cultural background of many of the '68 rebels. In fact, in many cases the students were the harshest critics of the *status quo* precisely because they acknowledged their investment in it and unwilling contribution to the perpetuation of its logics. It was precisely through the economic privileges of the bourgeoisie that many students could find their way into the movement and initiate a transformative process within it: those who occupied the Universities

[49] Ibid., 173.

[50] "la difficoltà di spiegare come e perché quel che nel breve periodo era sembrato concludersi in modo fallimentare e producendo mostri fosse invece da vedersi, nel lungo periodo, come un successo." Ibid.

and demanded a more equitable, free, unbiased education were usually financially supported by their families and had therefore access to new opportunities for freedom and communitarian living than the previous generations, who often married younger and seamlessly seemed to continue in their parents' footsteps. The students of the '68 generation were often the first to leave the family nest in order to go study and live in bigger cities. They shared houses with other young people coming from completely different backgrounds, experiencing a much more liberated sexuality, opening up to new ideas and cultures that they encountered — whether directly or indirectly — precisely thanks to the opportunities offered by higher education institutions and because of their lives in stimulating urban settings. In short, this shared experience of youth temporarily released those who participated in the movement from the constraints of their familial and social background and provided them with the opportunity to become

> aware of the moral misery of the bourgeoisie, despite belonging to it by reasons of birth or familial conditions. Politics are thus demanded to act as a catalyst for an enormous educational effort aimed at denying one's own *natural* belonging in order to start a process of inner regeneration. Such a process is deemed capable of making a completely "new" man spring out of the ruins and detritus of the old personality.
>
> consapevoli delle miserie morali di quella borghesia a cui pure si appartiene per nascita e condizione familiare. Alla politica si chiede, quindi, di fungere da catalizzatore per un immane sforzo educativo, che punti a negare le proprie appartenenze *naturali* per avviare un processo di rigenerazione interiore che porti a far affiorare dalle macerie e dai detriti della vecchia personalità un uomo completamente "nuovo".[51]

Through the exciting new forms of collective bonding promoted by the youth's invented movement — spurred by a commitment to politics, "free love," artistic and intellectual engagement — the students of this generation were the first to revolt against their own roots, finding catharsis in a communion with others based on something other than kinship or class ties: the communal experience of being young together. Within the movement, the students found an alternative family that promoted appealing ideals of utopian equality. Such an egalitarian *ethos* invested the movement on more than one level and championed the idea that 1968 would be the start of a "new era": first, because of the newness and originality of the kinds of bonds formed within the movement, which promoted unprecedented experiments in the handling of power among individuals that were deemed to be equal. Some examples of such experiments would be the practice of the university or factory assembly, which would seek to give voice to all the members of any local expression of the movement; the myth of the "open couple," an equal arrangement between partners — based on the idealized model provided by the relationship between two icons of free thinking such as the philosophers Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre — that would leave room for individual growth and the autonomous pursuit of unstifled desires;[52] and later, the feminist consciousness-raising group, which would allow each member

[51] De Luna, *Le ragioni di un decennio*, 164-5.

[52] Later on, the publication of the correspondence between de Beauvoir and Sartre, published after their deaths in 1981 and 1986, contributed to the erosion of the myth of the open couple. See Passerini, *Autoritratto…*, 73-5, for a

of the group to find power, solidarity and support in the uncensored expression of one's own story of oppression.

Secondly, the young age of all the agents involved constituted an asset to the movement, perhaps its most powerful driving force: youth, in and of itself, was a feature that connected the individuals involved in a shared identity that was ideally not based on census, kinship, or economic status. At that precise moment in time, youth came to represent a state of being worthy of attention, a condition that granted access to empowering experiences as citizens, as political subjects, as sexual agents. It further promoted a sense of unprecedented and unforeseen novelty and spurred an antihierarchical spirit: tired of being deprived of a voice and confined to a limbo because of their condition as students — thus not deriving power from their productive positions as either members of the workforce or of the family institution — the youth of '68 reclaimed youth *per se* as a powerful force, free to exert its liberating influence on society precisely because of its being unbound by social ties based on profit, tradition, or interest.

As observed by Giovanni De Luna, "the movement did not experience youth as a transitory phase toward a more mature and adult age, but as a magical moment that would not repeat itself ever again."[53] And perhaps the movement's most powerful collective statement was the rejection of all relationships with the past. Symbolically, such an act allowed the movement to assert power over the present by virtue of the coincidence between the condition of being young and the energy to change the current state of the world. In this sense, the movement's achievements should never be assessed in terms of what it was capable of building or for the way it shaped the future: rather, its most revolutionary statement was to establish a correspondence between the energies of youth and an alternative understanding of time, one that consumed itself in the *now* and privileged horizontal relations of power. In fact, in imagining itself as devoid of roots, shapeless, elusive, constantly shifting, yet cohesive, it found its expression through the constant reaffirmation of its potentiality. The fleeting, "unfinished" nature of youth became the

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brief but incisive commentary on the influence exerted by the Sartre-de Beauvoir relationship model on the '68 generation: "It was the idea of transcending the frontiers, of doing everything, on the basis of a commitment: let's de-dramatize sexuality, we are fed up with all this. […] We had learned this formula from Simone de Beauvoir, or better from Sartre, who had reacted to the news that she wanted to spend a year in Chicago with Nelson Algren with the following words: 'Pourquoi pas?' On the basis of those two little words you could do many things which could at first seem purposeless. The purpose was to destroy. To abolish the connection between sexuality and love, to deny the family, to shatter the concept of faithfulness. […] The main example was still her, Simone de Beauvoir. She and Sartre did the things we would have liked to do […], sharing the world within their omnivorous couple. And yet they signalled a continuing distance between them by addressing each other as *vous* instead of *tu*. We too, my man and I, tried to put those models into practice. And by doing so we jeopardized the affection between us, our mutual admiration, our chances of experiencing a deep connection." "Era l'idea di rompere le frontiere, di fare tutto, sulla base di un impegno: sdrammatizziamo la sessualità, non se ne può più di tutte queste storie. […] Avevamo imparato questa formula da Simone de Beauvoir o meglio da Sartre, che così aveva reagito all'annuncio che a lei sarebbe piaciuto trascorrere un anno con Nelson Algren a Chicago: 'Pourquoi pas?' Su quelle due parolette si potevano fare molte cose apparentemente prive di senso. Il senso era distruggere. Abolire la connessione tra sessualità e amore, negare la famiglia, infrangere la fedeltà. […] L'esempio principale restava lei, Simone de Beauvoir. Lei e Sartre facevano le cose che avremmo voluto fare noi […], condividendo il mondo nella loro coppia onnivora. Eppure segnalavano il permanere della distanza dandosi del *vous* anziché del *tu*. Anche noi, io e il mio uomo, tentavamo di mettere in pratica quei modelli. Così facendo mettevamo a repentaglio il nostro affetto, la reciproca ammirazione, una possibilità di intesa profonda." For a satirical critique of the model of the open couple during the Seventies and the power struggles it triggered, especially at the expense of women, see Dario Fo and Franca Rame, *Coppia aperta, quasi spalancata* (Turin: Einaudi, 1991).

[53] "la giovinezza fu vissuta dal movimento non come una fase di passaggio verso un'età più matura e adulta, ma come un momento magico che non si sarebbe mai più ripetuto." De Luna, *Le ragioni di un decennio*, 163.

movement's ontological strength, asserting unpredictability and the potential to constantly change as crucial political values rather than crippling limits. Thus, the students of *Sessantotto* defined "themselves as an 'interminable movement', inside of which one could postpone to an undetermined future the choice of a finished physionomy. That imagined physionomy underwent a constant re-negotiation under a tight projectual tension."[54]

As a consequence of this monumental shift in values, the intimate and the collective dimensions of the movement never presented themselves as separate experiences. It was the yoke between the two dimensions that determined the birth of the movement. At the same time, those who were active in '68 were as much shaped by the movement as they shaped it themselves. Such a metamorphosis may not have been reflected in the material consequences of the events that followed that first revolutionary impulse, but it did change the self-perception of a generation in radical and unexpected ways. As expressed by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the student leaders of the French May:

> We were happy because we were aware of our own strength. It was this feeling of strength and unity that created the atmosphere of celebration and of barricades. Nothing more natural in those moments of collective outburst, when everything seemed possible, than the new simplicity in the relationships between demonstrators, especially boys and girls. Everything became simple, easy. The barricades were not merely a means of self-defense, they became symbols of a certain kind of freedom. That is why the night between the 10th and the 11th of May will remain unforgettable for "those who were there."
>
> Nous étions tous hereux, car nous avions conscience de notre force. C'est ce sentiment de force et d'unité qui créa l'atmosphère de fête et de barricades. Rien de plus naturel dans ces moments de défoulement collectif, où tout semblait possible, que la nouvelle simplicité des rapports entre manifestants, surtout entre garçons et filles. Tout devenait simple, facile. Les barricades n'étaient plus seulement un moyen d'autodéfense, elles devenaient symboles d'une certaine liberté. C'est pour cela que cette nuit de 10 à 11 mai restera inoubliable pour ceux qui "y" étaient.[55]

At a careful reading, statements such as Cohn-Bendit's — which reaffirm again and again the primacy of the live testimony of "those who were there" over any other second-hand interpretation — seem to acquire a more subtle meaning than that which is suggested by the rhetorics of the *reduci*. Rather than merely excluding "those who were not there" from partaking in the shared memory of a revolutionary time, Cohn-Bendit seems to be struggling to relate what was it exactly that made the French May so "unforgettable": more than the effects it produced, it seems that the simple act of "being there" spurred the momentous change for those who participated in the barricades. More than any other moment in time, it is the birth of the movement that liberates collective energies and defines the protagonists' lives forever. The triumphant sense of achieved, if fleeting, utopia in collective action that exudes from the stories

[54] "l'autodefinirsi come un 'movimento interminabile', al cui interno la scelta di una propria fisionomia compiuta veniva come rinviata a un futuro indeterminato, continuamente ridiscussa in una serrata tensione progettuale." Ibid., 165-6.

[55] In Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Le Grand Bazar* (Paris: Belfond, 1975), 67.

of the former *sessantottini* resonates in many ways with Hannah Arendt's crucial message of hope in the action of the plurality — conceived as a voluntary coming together of unique individuals — contained in her essay *The Human Condition* (1958); in fact, for Hannah Arendt the *vita activa* of the community consisted in the capacity for action even in the darkest of times and in spite of oppressive political circumstances. Unlike many Western philosophers — and, in particular, Marx, who according to Arendt had misconceived history as a force that could be shaped through the work and labor of the masses — she refuses to propose a blueprint for human action or offer a formula to explain how history is or should be *made*, but rather praises the power of the unexpected events that change the course of history. For Arendt, each individual and each new political agent — be it a single or collective entity — cannot be reduced to a predictable model, but has the inner capacity to begin something anew through the power of action. When humans act in concert, there is always a possibility for the unexpected to arise and change the course of events, and the human condition contains in itself the potential for endless new beginnings, as "the miracle of beginning" is inherent with every new birth, be it the birth of a child, of a new course of action, or a political movement.[56] Disappointments, betrayals, and decline will inevitably complicate any individual or collective story and provide a counterpoint to any utopian project. Nevertheless, shifting the emphasis on the importance of beginnings — and on the emotions associated with them — seems necessary when so much of the affective legacy of "the long '68" is founded on what appears to be a desire to capture through words and images the ephemeral vividness of a unique time of collective engagement. While focusing exclusively on the hopes and ideals that spurred the movement may produce partial accounts or nostalgic and idealized tales, an equal risk is posed by interpretations that limit the significance of an event to its results and its capacity to determine long-lasting effects. And even then, can long-lasting effects only be measured in tangible terms and material changes? Is a persistent attachment to an event not a sound enough reason to validate what seems to be a widespread attitude towards the memory of 1968?

Focusing on the emotions attached to a time marked by the prevalence of *vita activa* over collective disillusionment might very well provide important insights on the yoke between historical circumstances and collective emotional work. Furthermore, such work may not only provide an understanding of the importance of those feeling during a particular historical time. It can also explain some of the emotions at work today and explain why that moment in time is associated with a haunting desire to pose again the conditions for its resurgence. The investment in the birth of a movement is a key element in this equation. It seems that choosing the *vita activa* is, in a way, giving a gift of oneself that benefits collective work but also rewards the individual with unexpected benefits. As a result, judging the rewards of the *vita activa* only on the basis of its achievements provides a myopic lens to view its impact on aspects of life that cannot be reduced to material observations. As noted by Albert Hirschman in his essay *Shifting Involvements* (1982), individuals are pushed to join the *vita activa* because of a desire for happiness that has a value in and of itself. In Hirschman's view, those who choose the *vita activa* do not act merely on the basis of rational motivations, and while they do probably get committed to political causes in the hope of spurring material changes in society, they also enjoy a number of immaterial gains from that participation in the public sphere alone. For Hirschman, public happiness does not necessarily coincide with the attainment of a utopian dream or the advancement of a progressive agenda. In fact, looking only at the goals achieved by a collective

[56] See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), particularly Chapter V, "Action," and Chapter VI, "The *Vita Activa* and the Modern Age," 175-325.

movement may very well lead to inevitable disappointment, since changes are hardly ever as radical or sudden as the movement has envisioned them, and revolutions do create their own sets of disappointments. Rather, it is participation alone that constitutes a form of happiness in itself. In fact, the two aspects — hopes and achievements — appear strictly interrelated:

> [S]triving for the public happiness (in some concrete respect) and attaining it cannot be neatly separated. Indeed, the very act of going after the public happiness is often the *next best thing* to actually *having* that happiness. […] Striving […] turns out to be part of the benefit. […] The benefit of collective action for an individual is not the difference between the hoped-for result and the effort furnished by him or her, but the *sum* of these two magnitudes![57]

Hirschman explains what seems to be a recurring historical trend — the cyclical shifts from years, sometimes decades of widespread collective involvement in political or social causes to long periods of "selfish" investment in the private sphere — as a tendency on the part of individuals to seek different forms of happiness over the course of their lives. Thus, for Hirschman the disappointment that stems from the failure or imperfect results of a collective movement is only to be understood as a temporary phase in one's "shifting involvements" that is destined to give way to a time of inward focus, only to emerge again when times require it. When applied to the history and memory of 1968, Hirschman's equation may further contribute to explain why the memory of those times is today so rife with images of "walking deads," ghosts and irreconcilable arguments with the following generations. The protagonists of the *vita activa* in the Sixties have lived through the long period of backlash that followed the collapse of public involvements at the beginning of the 1980s and envision new potential for the *vita activa* to remerge in new forms at a different time, seeing themselves as good candidates to recognize those energies and channel them through a changed reality. At the same time, the new generations fail to draw the connections between the past and today, and the efforts on the part of the *ex-sessantottini* are inevitably read as obsolete attempts to revive experiences that have no relevance today.

While discussing what can be gained from an involvement in public life, Hirschman articulates a theory of individual commitment whereby the selfless giving of one's own energies for the good of the movement or of some political ideal is inextricably coupled with a sense of intimate pleasure. In his theorization, this experience is at once *cognitive* and *emotional*, as it can be at once described as a "revelation" (therefore requiring an intellectual step, a sudden change in one's state of mind) and an "intoxicating" experience, something that pertains to the realm of feelings and bodily states:

> Public action is often the result of a radical cognitive change, akin to a revelation. […] The sudden realization that I can act to change society for the better and, moreover, that I can join other like-minded people to this end is in such conditions pleasurable, in fact, intoxicating, in itself. To savor that pleasure, society does not have to be actually changed right away: it is quite enough to act in a variety of ways *as though* it were possible to promote change. […] Secondly, there is the opposite pleasurable experience: not that *I* can change society, but that

[57] Albert O. Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 85.

> my work and activities in the public arena change and develop *me*, regardless of any real changes in the state of the world.[58]

Being capable of experiencing a transformative event as it unfolds in the present; being aware of one's part in the making of collective history; contributing to the birth of a collective effort: these are all defining moments that recur in the narratives of those who took part in the '68 movements. It seems that, in a way, what constitutes the elusive uniqueness of the '68 event is its capacity to politicize and make public the experience of youth itself: the affirmation of hope as a fundamental value, the bodily exhilaration experienced during a time of rebellion, the heightened awareness of the potential of collective action are the binding elements that turn memories of that period into such vivid images. According to the political scientist Luigi Bobbio — a former leader of the Turin student movement in 1968, as well as one of the founders of Lotta Continua — for many in his generation becoming part of a movement did not constitute just a temporary commitment: it was a radical choice that invested all of life's aspects, and lasted a lifetime.

> To participate in the movement, to feel part of this general process by which the values and structures of society were placed under attack means changing one's own life, even in its daily dimension. It meant transforming oneself. […] Participating in the movement often implied breaking away from families, sometimes violently, getting out of the home, attempting to create, even in daily life, communitarian relationships with the "comrades," breaking away from the individualistic isolation of the bourgeois society.
>
> Partecipare al movimento, sentirsi parte di questo generale processo di attacco ai valori e alle strutture della società significa cambiare la propria vita, anche nella dimensione quotidiana, trasformarsi. […] La partecipazione al movimento implica spesso rotture anche aspre con le famiglie, l'uscita di casa, il tentativo di creare, anche nella vita quotidiana, relazioni comunitarie con i "compagni", rompere con l'isolamento individualistico della società borghese.[59]

In 1968, youth, hope and collective power, materialized in social life through the means of politics, determined the beginning of a transformative process for a whole generation. But what happened *after* that transformation? Like youth, a change that seemed so radical at the time was destined to be experienced, decades later, as something both fleeting — in that it did not live up to its intentions — and inescapable, in that its aftermath loomed large in Italian society for decades afterwards. The acts of reclaiming the present and making a collective statement about one's own generation — severing it from the past and declaring that the time has come for "a new beginning" — have, on one hand, endowed "those who were there" with a sense of hope that is attached to the unfaded memories of a vibrant time of collective engagement. On the other hand, it has condemned them to endlessly return to the memory of that time as the most salient and intensely meaningful experience of their lives. This stubborn attachment to a beloved past has often blurred and tainted the recollection of what came afterwards; as a consequence, these narrators run the risk of appearing both anachronistic and unreliable to modern readers. As Maria

[58] Ibid.
[59] Luigi Bobbio, "Il movimento del '68 nell'Università," in *Cinque lezioni sul '68*, 17.

Luisa Boccia eloquently puts it, when remembering a history so intricately enmeshed with emotions, it often seems easier to propose readings that are devoid of any emotional attachment rather than seeking to produce a honest account, as the task of untangling the affective knots that are tied to those life experiences still appears too painful to most:

> We have desired, loved, hated, endured and acted through the ambivalence and the richness of an exchange between the individual and the collective that constituted the peculiar mode of a lifestyle dense with politics (as such we experienced it and as such we conceived of it, too). It is difficult, not to say impossible, to translate this density into a transparent and linear analysis; it is much easier to take one's leave, as it befits to the time of youth, attributing to its intrinsic immaturity every excess, everything that appears unfinished, unresolved. What tends to prevail is thus an attitude that erases the passions which are blended into a collective biography. And with passions, the affect that is attached to that biography — *not only an affect of a fetishistic or nostalgic nature* — gets erased too.
>
> Abbiamo desiderato, amato, detestato, subito e agito attraversando ambivalenze e ricchezza di uno scambio tra individuale e collettivo che ha costituito la cifra peculiare di un vissuto denso di politica (così l'abbiamo esperito e anche pensato). È difficile, per non dire impossibile, tradurre questa densità in un bilancio trasparente e lineare; molto più semplice è congedarsi, come si addice al tempo della giovinezza, consegnando alla sua intrinseca acerbità ogni eccedenza, tutto ciò che appare incompiuto, irrisolto. Tende cioè a prevalere l'attitudine a cancellare le passioni di cui è intessuta una biografia collettiva, e con esse l'affezione, *non solo feticistica o nostalgica*, a essa.[60]

Boccia, thus, denounces yet again the ineptitude of a certain kind of historiographical work that denies a legitimate status to the feelings that are attached to a specific episode in time. The desire to propose a dispassionate appraisal of '68 may then coincide with an unwillingness to honestly come to terms with the unfulfilled desires and regrets of a time and of opportunities for "public happiness" that are inexorably lost, yet still perceptibly haunt Italian society. Erasing passions and affect from our collective sense of time may appear to be the reasonable, perhaps the wisest, adult thing to do, yet the unspoken power of emotions still troubles the perception of "those who were there." That residue of youthfulness that's trapped in the memory of '68 still contains a core sense of affect that — as Boccia says — is neither fetishistic nor nostalgic; this memory is not detached from the old loved ideals, nor does it long for them: they are still very much a part of today. It does not merely address the past: it relentlessly poses questions about the current state of the world. As we have seen, some of the '68 storytellers have held onto the idea of a time that never ended to affirm their will to survive and offer a testimony that may serve the youth of today. In the following chapter, we will encounter stories that resist the illusion of a time forever vibrant, confronting instead the traces of '68 from the perspective of a haunted history, a relentless faithfulness to the ghosts of youth.

[60] Maria Luisa Boccia, "Il patriarca, la donna, il giovane," 253. Emphasis mine.

Chapter 2

In Defense of Melancholia: The Call of the '68 Ghosts

Re-naissance or *revenance*?
Jacques Derrida[*]

Section 1. The Ethics of Ghosts

All stories of the Italian '68 are, in one way or another, preoccupied with troubling and expanding the notion of time. Lost time, lost opportunities, new epiphanies, momentous breakthroughs, sudden breaks in temporal continuity, irreparable fractures between generations, rises and falls of recurring political scenarios: such concepts and *leitmotifs* overcrowd the discursive landscape surrounding 1968, often standing in contradiction with one another.[1] The actions of the '68 movement are said to have been long eclipsed and forgotten, yet somehow — almost fifty years later — still exerting an influence, silently and from the underground, on the collective conscience of the Italian society. At the heart of this debate lies an anxiety towards what many narrators perceive as an unjust and premature death of the hopes and dreams of their generation in the face of a drastically changed political and economic reality.

In Chapter 1, I have demonstrated how much of the memory of 1968 has been framed by its storytellers in terms of a tension between generations, whereby the *sessantottini*, who were of college-age at the time, opened a cleft with the past by refusing to inherit the legacy of their predecessors. This happened both quite literally — with many '68ers fleeing their homes or leaving home to study in another city, or rejecting family traditions to embrace a new "community of equals" — and in terms of historical continuity — by denouncing the complicity of their parents' generation in the rise and consolidation of the Fascist regime, or condemning the orthodox political line of the PCI (the Italian Communist Party) for having settled into a minoritarian role within institutional politics, rather than pushing for a Communist revolution spurred by the partisan Resistance at the end of World War 2. According to the oral historian Massimo Ceriani, the rejection of forefathers was also caused by the deep disavowal, at the collective level, of both Fascism and the opportunities missed with the Resistance: "the kind of continuity that was being handed down belonged to the postwar era, the time of hard-earned ease and of material consumption. This was at the heart of the break with and rejection of a world to which we belonged, but for which we had no desire."[2] In essence, in the eyes of many '68ers,

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[*] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 44.

[1] For a theoretical approach to rethinking the categories of time and duration and their implications on notions such as history, culture, subjectivity, struggle, see Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) and *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). For a re-conceptualization of the relationship between time and politics in literary texts, see Mitchum Huehls, *Qualified Hope: A Postmodern Politics of Time* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009).

[2] "la continuità che veniva trasmessa era quella del dopo guerra, del benessere prodotto e sudato e del consumo materiale. Su questo si è innestata la rottura e il rifiuto di un mondo cui si apparteneva ma che non si desiderava." Massimo Ceriani (ed.), *Che cosa rimane: Racconti dopo il Sessantotto* (Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book, 2001), 236.

their rebellion was in turn originated in their parents' refusal to cope with the historical trauma of Fascism or with the memory of wartime despair. Additionally, as explained by the political theorist Angelo Bolaffi in a letter to Erri De Luca, the mass diffusion of television and the arrival of American TV programs in Italy brought news about what was happening in Vietnam, a "dirty war" that "led to the collapse of the two great political myths that had functioned as a source of moral legitimacy for Western systems": the use of force by the United States army as a channel of liberation, in the name of "world freedom," and the belief in the intrinsic goodness of US politics — and of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's presidency in particular. Because of the world news brought about by American television stations, Bolaffi says, "a whole generation learned to hate their parents' society each night, between one bite and the other, while having dinner in front of the TV."[3]

Despite their own revolt against all that was old, when the '68 generation entered adulthood, it yearned and struggled to establish a connection with those who came after, whether it was their own children or a new wave of politically-committed youth. As succinctly summarized by Ceriani, himself a *sessantottino*,

> today, being parents ourselves, we experiment with the difficulties of the parental role, and we are open to rereading, to transfigure that conflict, almost as if to silence the high peaks of our clash that were indeed there; there is also the feeling of inadequacy, an unease in communicating and being an example, the fear not so much of the clash itself, but that there exists no world in which we could meet and clash against each other.
>
> [o]ggi che si è padri, che si sperimentano le difficoltà del ruolo genitoriale, si è disposti a rileggere, a trasfigurare quel conflitto, quasi a zittire le punte alte di scontro che ci sono state; c'è anche la sensazione di inadeguatezza, di difficoltà a comunicare e a essere di esempio, la paura non dello scontro ma che non ci sia un mondo in cui incontrarsi e confliggere.[4]

As we have seen, the perception of a warped temporality inaugurated in 1968 has originated the narrative of an era without an end; former *sessantottini* often seek a mediation with the young generations as a way for themselves to get unstuck from their frozen attachment to the past. Theirs is a survival strategy which allows them to hope to escape becoming old and withering away, thus coming to experience once again the liveliness of the present moment, almost as if it were 1968 again. But if, in retrospect, 1968 appears to have been the epilogue to an era of collective engagement — rather than the dawn of a new revolution — what stories and values, if any, are worth passing down to the future generations? And how can time be redefined in order to accommodate the lively traces of those communal hopes, when historical archives seem like an unfit place for memories and myths still widely circulating across the nation, and still largely in search of answers?

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[3] "Con le *news* delle stazioni americane […] tra un boccone e l'altro, alla sera, davanti alla tv, una generazione imparò a odiare la società dei genitori. La scoperta che quella del Vietnam era una sporca guerra fece crollare i due grandi miti politici che avevano funzionato per oltre un ventennio da fonte di legittimazione morale dei sistemi occidentali, alla cui ombra eravamo cresciuti." Erri De Luca and Angelo Bolaffi, *Come noi coi fantasmi: Lettere sull'anno sessantottesimo del secolo tra due che erano giovani in tempo* (Milan: RCS Libri, 1998), 44.

[4] Ceriani, *Che cosa rimane*, 237.

Many have grappled with these questions by insisting that the fundamental issue lies in the lack of an authentic dialogue between the ’68 generation and the ones that followed. By focusing on the idea that the repository of energies, ideas and emotions that emerged so vibrantly in 1968 does not pertain to the past alone, but is in fact an imaginative patrimony that belongs to youth as an anthropological category, some interpreters of the “long ’68” have privileged a more optimistic view that sees the youth movement as a force still in motion, a legacy that transcends the changed political climate and is destined to reaffirm itself again and again. By doing so, they focus on the positive pole of the opposition between presence and absence that governs contemporary debates about ’68: the impact of the “long year” — they tell us — is still reverberating today, and we lose track of its powerful presence only because we are still immersed in the aftermath of the changes it brought about. Quite literally, a number of works produced over the last few decades boldly proclaim that ’68 is, in fact, not over, and that its effects are present among us; in fact, many contend that ’68 itself opened the way for a new conception of time where *presence* is all there is: by severing themselves from the dialectics of the past and not striving to build a utopia for the future, the ’68 movement inaugurated a different arena for political struggle, one where the intensification of the present appears to be all that matters.

The problem with ’68 has thus been predominantly framed as an opposition between presence and absence, logically followed by a struggle to understand how to properly handle the traces of its inheritance. On the other side of this binary understanding of the ’68 legacy, a number of authors and scholars have emphasized its negative pole: the *absence* of ’68, a discursive void marked by traumatized avoidances, embarrassed silences, the inability on the part of former ’68ers to establish themselves in a radically changed society, after the fall of the ideologies and of the causes they devoted themselves to so completely.

All along this spectrum of discourses, characterized by an anxiety towards the perceived lingering presence of a time not yet gone by, the image of the ghost is often deployed to give substance — albeit a deeply elusive one — to the troubled feelings of the ’68 storytellers. The ghost, a liminal figuration whose apparition seems to take upon itself all the bearings of such a contrived inheritance, is indeed a *presence*, yet it is not quite endowed with a tangible body. The ghosts of 1968 cast a long shadow, haunting the memory of “those who were there” and calling for those who came after to acknowledge their presence. Yet, they also refuse to be defined and — as a consequence — petrified in time, rebelling against all attempts to institute a shared narrative about the past, one that would perhaps put them to rest, silencing all the unrequited passions and unfulfilled hopes they still harbor.

In this chapter, I will investigate the connections between the memory, politics, and narratives surrounding the legacy of ’68 through the figuration of the ghost. First, I will define what counts as a “ghostly presence” when discussing the history of 1968. Drawing on the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, as well as on Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, I will then set out to highlight the usefulness of a “hauntological” reading of 1968 narratives for the purpose of construing an alternate understanding of historical priorities, one in which affect, ambivalence and melancholia are considered very meaningful elements of the story, rather than obstacles to a proper understanding of the past. I will then consider the ways in which listening to the demands of the ghosts may institute a melancholic response on the part of some ’68 storytellers. Through a reading of Erri De Luca’s letters to Angelo Bolaffi, I define ’68 melancholia as a disposition that refuses to let go of the dead by incorporating what is no longer

alive into one's own psychic landscape, as a form of resistance against the obliterating power of time and against the pressure of the changing outside world.

Section 2. Haunted by '68: Loss, Melancholia and Resistance

By reading certain narratives about '68 as ghost stories, I intend to highlight the particular coping strategies set in motion by those who have turned inward to question their own relationship with 1968 in the form of a haunted relationship with the dead. When discussing haunting and the ghostly figures that populate such stories, I do not intend to write about death in a literal sense. The "'68 years" saw indeed a number of "martyrs of the revolution": young activists who lost their lives in clashes against police or against right-wing extremists, at the service of the unattained goals of the youth movement in its fight against the power of the State or of an opposed political faction. This represents an important area of historical work that has been researched at length by historians such as Giovanni De Luna, John Foot, and Andrea Hajek among others.[5] The notions of haunting and ghostly presence I am interested in refer instead to a psychic scenario: the melancholic response to historical changes that characterizes a large number of '68 narratives.

Within this context, I take ghosts to stand for emotional residues, glimpses still present today of the disappeared (yet haunting) ideals that accompanied the '68 movement. Both these emotions and ideals are said by many *ex-sessantottini* to have been betrayed and thwarted by the events that followed the "'68 years." Contradictions and ambiguities are part and parcel of the affective legacy of 1968, representing the vestiges that remain after the end of an event that is considered to be so groundbreaking. These haunting feelings animate memories, stories, forms of commemoration, public discourse surrounding the chimeric "year that lasted decades."[6] Lingering feelings determine the way stories are crafted and handed down; they generate connections and produce gaps; they hold an incommensurable power over facts, and yet they have rarely been considered a useful element for our historical understanding of the past. If anything, scholars have denounced the ways in which feelings and possessive attachments to a certain history have prevented the work of memory from being produced in the first place, or made available as a universal, comprehensive narrative to be handed down to the whole nation. As we have seen, '68 is alternatively portrayed as the curse of 20th-century Italian history — the cause of all social evils and the beginning of a long-lasting moral crisis — or as the dawn of a time of renewed hope, a righteous movement too unjustly and too soon repressed by a corrupt government. The ghosts of 1968 emerge out of these opposed representations as unresolved emotional conflicts; as the manifestations of a long-lasting, widespread difficulty in coming to terms with the end of utopian affirmations on the part of the student movement; as the symbolic bearers of a collective sense of embarassment and loss for words denounced by many of those who tried to make sense of the aftermath of "the long year."

At times, the troubling traces of ghosts appear in the form of written memories or oral testimonies, while at other times they manifest themselves as silences. Often, narrators of '68 openly declare that, for them, it is utterly impossible to put these residual feelings into words. In

[5] See Giovanni De Luna, *Le ragioni di un decennio*; John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Andrea Hajek, *Negotiating Memories of Protest in Western Europe*.

[6] See Alessandro Portelli, "Introduzione," in Circolo Gianni Bosio, *Un anno durato decenni: Vite di persone comuni prima, durante e dopo il '68* (Rome: ODRADEK, 2006), 5-14.

my understanding, this form of ambivalent, suspended affectivity frequently appears as the reason itself why the memory of '68 is allowed to be kept alive: by refusing to concede to the failure of collective hopes and dreams, residual affective forces remain free to circulate, albeit in a ghostly form, in the political conscience of the nation. The melancholic power of '68 stories lies in the will of its storytellers to never let go, to never give up hope, even a paradoxical, *postmortem*, embittered form of hope. For "those who were there," accepting a narrative of failure and disappointment would determine the final demise of their story of personal and collective awakening and change, a narrative that founded their very sense of self for decades after 1968. Both exalted and vilified, the ghosts of '68 are the object of much self-referential talk on the part of former *sessantottini*; yet, they seem at the same time removed from the public debate. Much frustration, for '68 storytellers, comes precisely from not being able to convey with sufficient eloquence the power of the transformation they went through. Such difficulties are also denounced by sociologist Todd Gitlin with regards to his assessment of the long era of forgetfulness and political backlash that followed the mass political uprisings of the 1960s in the North American context. According to Gitlin, there could not have been such a widespread, powerful time of change without a subsequent, inevitable stage of counterreformation, a time of national mourning that, while pretending to honor the past, also represented an opportunity to overcome it by reducing it to an established, comforting narrative. Nevertheless, in the case of '68, no attempts to stabilize its memory — of labeling the entire story of the "long year" as a collective failure — have ever been entirely successful. Something always seems to be out of place. This is because so much of the affective constellation generated by the '68 movement is still alive, even when it appears to be buried and silenced:

> Disappointment too eagerly embraced becomes habit, becomes doom. Say what you will about the Sixties' failures, limits, disasters. [The] political and cultural space would probably not have opened up as much as it did without the movement's divine delirium. [T]he changes wrought by the Sixties, however beleaguered […] made life more decent for millions. The movement in its best moments and broadest definition made philosophical breakthroughs which are *still working themselves out*. […] However embattled, however in need of practical policy, these ideas sketch out a *living* political vision. A sort of *shadow movement remains alive*… […] The ideas of the Sixties remain murky, full of conundrums. A generation giddy about easy victories was too easily crushed by defeats, too handily placated — but uneasily, and for how long? — by private satisfactions.[7]

Gitlin, among others, questions the widespread assumption that this generation later embraced wholeheartedly the unabashedly capitalistic, hedonistic spirit of the 1980s. While he describes it as "placated," the '68 generation's torpor is also "uneasy" and may easily represent just a quiet phase of retreat before political tensions that have their roots in the history of the 1960s and 1970s rise high again. Despite the passing of decades, Gitlin characterizes the changes that took place in those years as still in the making, and a "shadow movement," the underground and quiet persistence of ghosts, still fills the emotional space that emerged during a time when idealism and unrest were vibrantly present in everyday life. If this is true, then the seemingly arrogant narratives of stubborn resistance produced by many '68 storytellers could be also read

[7] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 435-6. Emphasis mine.

as truths that have not yet been fully told, their intensity, complexity, and lasting consequences being too difficult to analyze even after all these years. Far from willing to be released from their state of suspension between life and death — between presence and oblivion — the ghosts summoned by the stories of '68 linger in the "shadows," a murky place where their presence may remind us to remain ethically connected to the past. Yet, that same condition also opens up a space for alternative political and social ideas to reappear again. Historian Luisa Passerini correctly identifies two of the major stumbling blocks that complicate the memory of 1968 with a generalized insistence, on the part of its interpreters, on the experience of death and failure, to which I would add betrayal as another recurrent trope. The temporal suspension we experience when reading these accounts is created by an impossibility of overcoming loss and moving on from that place of melancholic ambivalence. We feel stuck in time because the '68 storytellers resist closing the curtain on the drama of their generation. In fact, they claim that their story was cut short before it could fully manifest itself.

> The relationship with death is the one that keeps being suspended in this kind of approach to memory; because it is against and thanks to death that a tradition is founded; without tradition we can accept neither death nor defeat.
>
> La morte resta il rapporto in sospeso di tutta questa memoria; perché è contro e grazie alla morte che si fonda una tradizione; senza tradizione non si può accettare né morte né sconfitta.[8]

Because so many *ex-sessantottini* still reject the idea that the movement is dead and must be conceived as a thing of the past, Passerini argues, memories of '68 have always been perceived as intimate, individualistic, and they never attained a large audience. These memories could never appeal to a national audience because they are too partial, still too riddled with personal feelings. In my opinion, the trouble with many accounts of '68 and their wishful ambivalence does not quite pertain to the experience of death — of a confrontation with the past — *per se*; more precisely, it is related with the fact that these stories are suspended in the melancholic process, a way of keeping the past among us by not letting it go. The haunting stories of '68 celebrate the *undead* nature of the past, and the narrative strategies they produce are an attempt at keeping it so. Melancholia thrives on ambiguities; it holds on to the dead loved object by incorporating it into one's own psychic landscape. Death itself, on the contrary, does not allow for uncertainty, since mourning the dead is normally experienced as a movement toward a conscious liberation from the past. As such, national mourning has been experienced as a form of violence — particularly when imposed by the prescriptive power of the *status quo* or of official history — by those who refuse to give up their attachment to the past. As Jacques Derrida eloquently explained when describing the eagerness with which Marxism, as an ideology, was declared dead after the fall of the Berlin Wall, society needed to perform an official burial ritual. A death needed to be formally notified in order for time to move on and for a controversial history to be declared a thing of the past:

[8] Luisa Passerini, "Memoria della politica, politica della memoria. Perché è così difficile la narrazione del '68?" in *Il Manifesto 1968 – Supplemento al n. 300 de Il Manifesto* 12/21 (1988): 18.

> [n]othing could be worse, for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt: one *has to know* who is buried where — and it is necessary […] that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*. Let him stay there and move no more![9]

Yet there are more sides, more subtle nuances to the ghost stories of '68 than a mere recourse to a paranoid reading of history, an attempt at keeping alive what society proclaims to be dead. While betraying a defensiveness that constitutes a stumbling block to more accessible, articulated and factual versions of history, the stories of *ex-sessantottini* also shift the focus to another side of the question. The emphasis can be moved from an assessment of the victories and failures of a generation to questions of affective approaches to time and social experience. While the focus remains on feelings of shame, nostalgia, and on the reverberation of the past into the present, this state of affairs forces us to consider the emotional side of history, the way memory is not always founded on certainties, but rather on selections, ellipses, stumbling blocks and leaps of perception. Whether unwanted (as a form of ghostly possession) or welcomed (as a defiant attachment to a waned utopia) by those who experience them, the haunting feelings of loss, longing, regret, shame, nostalgia, and melancholia pervade a great number of the available narratives on 1968, leaving the sense that the memory of the "long year" is still unfinished business, after all this time. And while many critics consider these emotions a useless, distracting superimposition on the available body of knowledge about 1968, I contend instead that they represent one of the most intriguing and precious forms of inheritance that sprang from that entire event. As ambivalent and impalpable as they may seem, the lingering feelings connected with the sense of having collectively witnessed, experienced, and often *provoked* a historical breakthrough may very well be the very essence of that fugitive collective memory that so many yearn to establish, yet claim to be unattainable.

John Foot, among others, has argued that the '68 movement in Italy is indeed to be considered a defeat, primarily because of the impossibly lofty ambitions it set for itself. According to Foot, the memories that have been produced around 1968 manifest different reactions to the loss of the revolutionary dream that inspired that generation. In his view, those who produce memories about 1968 can be categorized under three groups:

> One group could be called "the deniers". These people rejected their past, blaming the whole period for problems both at the personal and a public level. A second group may be called "the claimers", those who stood up and commemorated 1968, who remained linked to and defenders of the past. Finally, the vast majority of people fell into a middle category, a grey zone of "agnostics."[10]

In essence, according to Foot, the historiographical imprecisions that are connected with '68 narratives can be explained by the fact that what we know about that era is also simultaneously corrupted by silence: '68 narrators remember selectively, partly because of their own political agendas, partly because there is no language available to them to express the subtleties of what they feel, and — finally — out of a sense of shame and dissociation from their former selves: they themselves have changed so much since 1968 — Foot argues — that they are merely able to recognize and grapple with their past convictions. Foot's categorization echoes a

[9] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 9.
[10] John Foot, "Looking back on Italy's 'Long '68'. Public, Private and Divided Memories," in Ingo Cornils and Sarah Waters (eds.), *Memories of 1968*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 115.

widespread Italian rhetoric about the fortune of former '68ers after the fall of the movement, one that produces yet another dichotomy between "deniers" and "claimers." The most brilliant encapsulation of this central conflict is dramatized, in my opinion, in an iconic scene from *Caro Diario*, a 1993 film by Nanni Moretti. Moretti, himself very politically active with the radical Left throughout the late Sixties and Seventies, has often times satirized the post-'68 social climate in Italy, beginning with his first film productions in the early 1970s. In this film, Moretti interprets himself riding a Vespa scooter on a hot summer day in Rome. During one of his aimless afternoons spent wandering around the city, Moretti ends up in a movie theater to watch an unspecified "Italian film." This film within the film, of which we are shown a short excerpt, features three jaded Italians in their early forties complaining about their lives and their former political ideals. Sitting on a couch and exchanging comments about the moral and emotional wasteland that is their present life, they lament their former allegiance to the radical ideals of the '60s and '70s, blaming their past beliefs for their present inability "to have authentic feelings." One of the actors sums up their existential anguish by declaring "We've grown old, we've grown sour, we are dishonest in our jobs. We used to shout horrendous, ultraviolent things during our demonstrations, and now look at how ugly we have become" (Fig. 1-2). Immediately after this mournful statement, the camera cuts to a shot of Moretti, back in the streets of Rome, riding away from the movie theater on his Vespa, his voiceover commentary stating his loyalty to the old ideals: "*You* used to shout horrendous, ultraviolent things and *you* have become ugly. The things *I* used to shout were right and today *I* am a splendid forty-year-old!" (Fig. 3)[11] Without explicitly mentioning any specific historical episodes or political allegiances, this scene complicates the all too easy classification of the '68 legacy as a story of mere opportunism and betrayal. Claiming that their past is precisely what makes them "horrendous" or "splendid" today, Moretti's characters reiterate the notion that the story of their youth is one that still profoundly determines their fortunes or misfortunes today. And in both cases, their betrayal or faithfulness to the past is formulated in the guise of a need to give voice to the haunting feelings that still connect them to their youthful dreams.



Fig. 1-2. *Caro Diario*: the three disillusioned '68ers in the non-specified "Italian film" within the film.

[11] "Siamo invecchiati, siamo inaciditi, siamo disonesti nel nostro lavoro. Gridavamo cose orrende, violentissime, nei nostri cortei e ora guarda come siamo tutti imbruttiti." "*Voi* gridavate cose orrende e violentissime e *voi* siete imbruttiti. *Io* gridavo cose giuste e ora sono uno splendido quarantenne!" Nanni Moretti, *Caro Diario*, 1993.



Fig. 3. Caro Diario: Moretti as a “splendid forty-year-old.”

If we follow Foot’s categorization, it would seem that the divide between the different ideological positions of former ’68ers has imposed a frozen vision of history, partly because the “deniers” and “agnostics” — the “horrendous” characters who are the object of Moretti’s satire — either refuse to remember or have trouble relating to a past to which “they still feel bound,” but are also very distant from. The “claimers” have instead produced a kind of self-referential discourse that spoke to itself and only about itself, refusing to engage “those who were not there” and therefore excluding other potential interlocutors. However, Foot’s proposed categorization sweeps over the specific circumstances and motivations that were at the heart of the production of narratives about ’68 in the first place. Is silence necessarily a symptom of “agnosticism,” or — as Foot suggests — of an embarassment towards the unbridgeable distance that ’68ers perceive today between their juvenile passions and their own mature selves? Are those who “claim” ’68 as a victorious time and defend their past exclusively motivated by a sense of nostalgia? How are such imperfect forms of remembrance on the part of this generation connected to the experience of being “haunted” and unable to move on from a place stuck in time? Finally, do silences always represent a way to escape from a confrontation with historical realities, or are they rather a way to let the ghosts, the unspoken traces of the past, take up a space of their own?

The dialectic between “claimers” and “deniers” has frequently been considered by historians as a flawed, incomplete form of memory that needs to be overcome through a proper categorization and periodization of “the long year”; by putting the emphasis on the ghosts, we are faced instead with the effect that raw and unreconciled emotions still have on writing. When taken at face value, many stories of ’68 reveal themselves to be not so much attempts at rewriting history or producing accurate accounts, but rather ways of witnessing an affective trouble that is indeed still at work. Questions around the sentimental attachment to 1968 on the part of those who experienced it first-hand have circulated widely in historiographical and sociological debates, yet the affective investment that still exists around ’68 has seldomly been regarded as a positive element. These stories have rarely been read for their own intrinsic worth, but rather as the negative sign of a problematic relationship with history as a discipline, something that needs to be overcome. Stepping out of the scholarly debate surrounding questions of objectivity, categorization or periodization of the year 1968, my investigation around the theme of haunting in the narratives produced by *ex-sessantottini* does not look for an ultimate truth or a final assessment, but seeks instead to provide an alternative reading of memory writing about 1968 through an interrogation of the deep structural and emotional content that has justified and produced such accounts. Such a shift in perspective is meant to uncover not so much the evidence of facts, but a trajectory that connects a variety of narratives that take history as a repository of affects, desires and conscious or unconscious power strategies.

In order to locate the ghostly traces in the legacy of ’68, one needs to first grapple with the narratives produced by the “claimers,” those who have broken the silence to address their own discomfort and seek to produce a language capable of expressing the subtlety of their feelings about their past. The “claimers” may not necessarily produce stories with the goal of overcoming their unease; in fact, they may very well be trying to perpetuate a sense of discursive suspension around ’68. Yet, their accounts show us that the phantasmagoric heritage of ’68 cannot be claimed without openly addressing the forms of memorialization — or the kinds of neglect — that have come to accompany it. While it is indeed fundamentally important to counter myths with facts and determine the historical accuracy of such testimonies, failing to listen to the ethical demands that are posed by such narratives would mean avoiding a confrontation with the most uncomfortable aspects of our relationship with the past: the traces of its unfulfilled promises, the lessons to be learned from fallen ideologies, and the ethical value of frustrated hopes.

In some cases, it was precisely because of a sense of duty towards the values they inherited from the youth movement that a number of former *sessantottini* decided to “take on speech” (“prendere parola”) — a ’68 expression that described the symbolic act of empowering oneself through the practice of free speech — and use their memories to offer their own perspectives on the past. By doing so, many hoped to counterbalance a perceived lack of serious efforts to talk about 1968 other than to bury it as a thing of the past. While these acts of speech have been often interpreted as negative efforts to prevent the institution of a shared memory or of an objective historical narrative, they may on the other hand be regarded as attempts to found a reparative reading of the ’68 history, one that longs for a reconciliation with the past without necessarily erasing its continuing influence on the present.

Writing about haunting, in this frame, represents a way to maintain one’s state of grief alive in order to be a more truthful witness. It is an attempt at making conversation with ghosts, not in order to exorcise them but, on the contrary, to acknowledge their presence in the interstices of historical discourse and memory writing; to make them visible in all their frightening contradictions; to heed their call as an ethical effort to keep hope alive even *postmortem*, after the death of the ’68 utopia. Neither strictly historical nor of a purely literary interest, the haunting stories of ’68 locate themselves in the interstices between disciplines. They provide insights that nuance our understanding of the past and of the people who inhabited it, yet they remain ambiguous and escape straightforward definitions. Following the ghosts of ’68 is thus not an endeavor that belongs to one or the other area of research; nevertheless, it allows us to utter questions that exist in the in-between space between disciplines. As defined by Roland Barthes, interdisciplinary work should in fact

> not [be] about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one.[12]

[12] Quoted in Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 7. Gordon uses this definition of interdisciplinarity strategically to make room for the possibility of “writing with the ghosts any haunting inevitably throws up,” in the sense of elevating to the stature of objects of research the ambiguous affective matter left out of historiographical and sociological accounts, all the traces that have been considered by-products of “proper” objective research until very recently.

At the border between history and fiction, the interdisciplinary work on the '68 ghosts thus consists not so much of combining the practices of two separate areas of investigation, but of defining new twilight zones, focusing on objects, phenomena and states of being that remain largely untold and unexplored. In her study on the pervasiveness of ghostly traces within the historical fabric of Western society, sociologist Avery Gordon defines the space of interdisciplinarity as a land of inquiry "not owned by anyone yet," and where therefore there still exists some room to make claims "rather than discipline […] meaning into existence."[13] Within this uncharted territory lies the potential to draw meaning from emotions, situations, and questions neglected by an academic discourse obsessed by the necessity to categorize, periodize, and provide ultimate answers. In Gordon's view, following the ghosts corresponds to giving voice to those silences neglected by historical and sociological discourses. This amounts to a deeply subversive act, as it defies the policing power of conventional disciplines, which dictate what gets to be kept and what needs to be discarded in order for a fetishized objective "truth" to emerge. In the case of the haunted narratives of '68, much of what is deemed to be the symptom of what Foot calls "possessive memory" — a sentimental excess that assigns too much importance to the past — can also be looked at from another angle and seen as the last remaining fragment of authenticity, a faithful form of belonging to a spatial and temporal dimension — that of the youth movement — that has been buried prematurely under the pressure of a changing society and has thus lost its language, its ability to communicate to the outside world. According to Gordon,

> encountering the specter of what the state has tried to repress, means encountering it in the affective mode in which haunting traffics. […] What looming and forbidden desire is this system of repression designed to inhibit and censor? Subversion, opposition, political consciousness, the struggle for social justice, the capacity to imagine otherwise than through the language of the state.[14]

As a consequence, the ghost appears as an improper symbolic figuration still reverberating with life, yet unable to emerge beyond the interstitial spaces of personal narratives to openly claim the domain of history. Studies, data, facts concerning 1968 are there to reaffirm the primacy of what actually *existed* and was tangible and measurable, yet the feelings of the *sessantottini* appear so burdensome and take up so much space that they cannot be ignored by historiographical writing. Therefore, as we have seen, scholars often take them briefly into consideration, only to soon dismiss them as futile or, worse, as an obstacle to proper historical understanding. Gordon makes a case for the positive "misleading" purpose of stories of haunting and survival: the ghostly feelings and memories for which we cannot seem to find a stable place continue to linger around. By distracting us — by making us stray from the path — they are inserting themselves in the crevices "between personal and social, public and private, objective and subjective, leading you elsewhere, […] making you see things you did not see before, […] making an impact on you."[15] According to Gordon, one stumbles upon the question of ghosts within historical narratives not because those presences are openly acknowledged from the start, but because ghostly presences unexpectedly crop up and disturb our conventional understanding of events, temporality, and history as a whole. Paradoxically, paying attention to this evanescent

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 127.
[15] Ibid., 98.

traces, to the things left untold, is in Gordon's opinion a way to turn scholarly investigations into a more "grounded" endeavor, addressing the most pressing questions one actually encounters along the way instead of trying to fit them within a disciplinary framework. Those questions may at first appear out of context, or lacking a proper methodology, yet they prioritize and care about what survives of the past, rather than what is ultimately dead. Despite being silenced and ridiculed, the persistence of ghostly images within stories of '68 — the fact that emotions are so often categorized as excess scraps in the fabric of historiography — may in fact highlight the limitations of "our prevalent modes of inquiry and the assumptions they make about the social world," and the way "available critical vocabularies [fail] to communicate the depth, density, and intricacies of the dialectics of […] critique and utopian longing."[16] Ultimately, venturing into the uncharted territory of silenced feelings and unattained utopias betrays a desire to repair the broken mechanisms of collective memory, to write down a history of emotions, to give justice to the way collective projects and utopias — in the case of '68 — have been experienced, imagined, and intimately processed by "those who were there" and who do not seem to find a proper place in the present world. Gordon eloquently describes the act of entering into a relationship with the ambiguity of the past as both a therapeutic process and a retroactive utopian outburst, an "intermingling of fact, fiction, and desire" that shapes the way stories about the past are told.[17] As such, these stories are never merely about the past, because they always include the possibility of emerging again in the future, "head turned backwards and forwards at the same time," in an attempt to insert the possibility of better outcomes within an overall story of disaggregation, betrayal of ideals and ultimate loss:

> To be haunted in the name of a will to heal is to allow the ghost to help you imagine what was lost that never existed, really. That is its utopian grace: to encourage a steely sorrow laced with delight for what we lost that we never had; to long for the insight of that moment in which we recognize […] that it could have been and can be otherwise.[18]

After all, being in dialogue with the ghosts may very well represent a way to inhabit the ephemeral dimension of historical becoming: neither sanctioned by official narratives, nor solidly established in the present, these haunting traces are to be found between the cracks of history. Insofar as writing about history and hauntings can keep the ghosts alive and allow them to claim their rights onto the world of the living, they represent not only the past, but "a reckoning with its repression in the present, a reckoning with that which we have lost, but never had."[19] Never memorialized, yet not quite forgotten, the ghosts of '68 materialize in the stories of those who lived on after the collapse of their utopias, yet were never capable of fully identifying with the time that came after.

In a note included in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), entitled "On the Theory of Ghosts," Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer discuss how official memorialization, "the busy cult of the deceased or, inversely, the forgetting rationalized as tact," serves no other purpose than to quell the living's anxiety, their fear of coming to terms with thoughts of total destruction and

[16] Ibid., 8
[17] Ibid., 24.
[18] Ibid., 57.
[19] Ibid., 183.

of the end of all hopes.[20] According to Adorno and Horkheimer, an authentic sense of continuity between the past and the present can only be established when one accepts to share an ethical dimension with the ghosts, acknowledging the reality of disillusionment and suffering that connects the living to the deceased. Metaphorically "embalming" the dead, presenting memory in a static, beautified, reconciled form, thus represents a way to ostracize them further from the domain of life:

> Only when the horror of annihilation is raised fully into consciousness are we placed in the proper relationship with the dead: that of unity with them, since we, like them, are victims of the same conditions and the same disappointed hope.[21]

This is reminiscent of the attitude of the *sessantottini* towards previous historical episodes, such as the Resistance war, whereby many at the time criticized the State's empty and formulaic respect for the dead partisans and the way in which that time period was commemorated through official ceremonies, plaques, and pompous rituals. The student movement condemned the postwar political climate — as well as the subsequent long period of economic boom — precisely because, while laying the foundations of the nascent Italian Republic on the cult of the Resistance, it also carried on an effective betrayal and disavowal of everything the Resistance stood for.[22] Perhaps out of awareness for the way official rites of memorialization work towards setting a distance from the past altogether, with no consideration for what may still be a lively political or moral force today, so many of those who speak today of their participation to the '68 movement categorically reject all forms of officialization of their past. The same could be said about the discursive space around '68: perhaps the relentless calls for a "precise historicization" of that cherished time may be read not as attempts at producing more truthful accounts, but of erasing the raw grief that still permeates the story of the movement's decline. The oft-denounced feeling of displacement that recurs so incessantly in post-'68 memoirs — the sense of being homeless, or part of a scattered community of refugees in a deeply changed society — is well reflected in Adorno and Horkheimer's observations about the violence inflicted upon those who refuse to submit to a socially-imposed eradication of historical awareness:

> just as the idea of history, outside of the specialized activities of the academic discipline, makes up-to-date people nervous, the past of a human being makes them furious. What someone was and experienced earlier is annulled in the face of what he is now. […] The threateningly well-meaning advice given to emigrants that they should write off their prehistory and start an entirely new life, merely inflicts verbally on the spectral intruders the violence they have long learned to do to themselves. They repress history in themselves and in others.[23]

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[20] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 178.
[21] Ibid.
[22] See, for example, Guido Viale on growing up in the 1950s in Italy: "The years of my adolescence were the same as those of the economic miracle; that is to say, […] years of hard work, but also of consumerism. […] But the main commodity […] were the children. […] There was nothing we could choose; everything was pre-ordered." ("Gli anni della mia adolescenza erano stati gli anni del miracolo economico; cioè, […] anni di lavoro duro, ma anche di consumismo. […] Però il bene di consumo principale […] erano i figli. […] Non c'era niente da scegliere; tutto era preordinato.") Guido Viale, *A casa* (Naples: L'Ancora, 2001), 106.
[23] Ibid., 179.

And yet, in the case of the '68ers, there is a further dimension of grief that emerges in their stories when they contemplate the way their past has been violently obliterated in present times, since it was precisely their generation, back in 1968, that insisted so relentlessly on expunging the past in order to impose a regime of "sheer presence." Their ghosts — often represented in dreams and visions about the storytellers' dead parents — are condemned to haunt the stories they tell, simultaneously accusing them for their ideological mistakes and serving as symbols of a private reconciliation with their past. As such, the omnipresence of ghosts in the available narratives about the Italian '68 reveals a profound ambivalence toward the way people yearn for a sense of intimacy with the past while nonetheless resisting to give in to that very desire: being in conversation with their own past almost inevitably leads the *sessantottini* to question their once radical beliefs about the previous generations, the fact that — as I discuss in Chapter 1 — their generation's ethos was founded on the concept of a "chosen orphanhood," on the fantasy of having severed all ties with their predecessors. The ghost, in this instance, reveals a deeply subversive nature: while keeping company with those who remember and cherish a time gone by, it also places upon them the burden of their own wrong-doings and misconceptions. Ghosts, therefore, are not only bearers of feelings of consolation for the "survivors" of '68. They seem to possess a certain autonomy, coming back to haunt the living and organizing a hierarchy of memories without their consent.

Echoing many of Adorno's and Horkheimer's concerns about the role of ghosts in the preservation of collective memory, Jacques Derrida wrote *Specters of Marx* (1993) to lament Western society's premature burial of Marxism together with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Soviet Communism. Derrida maintained that Marxism — though perhaps failed as a material political project (the pursuit of Communism) — should be regarded positively as a philosophy of responsibility, in the literal sense of "response-ability," the ability to heed the call of the past. Rather than condemning Communism altogether and declaring it dead, as Western society seemed all too eager to do after 1989, Derrida wrote instead of "ideologems" as the inevitable residues of philosophical beliefs and unattained utopias that persist after the fall of a collective political project. Ideologems can be seen as ways to "learn to live" in the liminal space between life and death, where ghosts dwell and demand ethical answers, enabling us to re-imagine "a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generations."[24] Memory, inheritance, generations: a conceptual triangle that indeed governs the narratives of 1968. It appears that the persistence of ghostly figures in '68 stories is motivated precisely by the dialectical relationship between these elements. Ghosts emerge out of a warped temporality that allows for the past to reverberate into the present, while memory attempts to endow with affective meaning our imperfect representation of the past; at the same time, the unresolved questions of inheritance between generations alter the linear flow of temporalities, reactualizing and dramatizing past conflicts. This interplay of ghostly elements brings us to question society's pervasive attempts to "normalize" the past by annihilating all melancholic attempts to keep it alive. The ghost, Derrida explains, must indeed belong to multiple temporalities. The very existence of spectrality is a defiance of conventional temporalities: a ghost represents some aspect of the past escaping its boundaries to invade another time. As such, when ideas that were declared dead return to haunt us, they also have the potential to stir new changes, to lead to the comeback of what normative history has tried so hard to repress: "It is a proper characteristic of the specter, if there is any, that no one can be sure if by returning it testifies to a living past or to a living future."[25] And that is

[24] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, xviii.
[25] Ibid., 123.

where its subversive power lies most evidently. When considered in this light, accepting an inheritance appears as a process that is founded on ambiguities and acts of defiance, ways through which individuals come to terms with their own transient nature, rather than forms of rationalization of the past:

> if the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it. We would be affected by it as by a cause — natural or genetic. […] The critical choice called forth by any reaffirmation of the inheritance is also, like memory itself, the condition of finitude. The infinite does not inherit, it does not inherit (from) itself.[26]

Specters of Marx is a book written in the name of an intellectual and affective resistance to a post-Marxist counterreformation, a collective effort to exorcise the specters of history and reject a failed ideology altogether, with the inclusion of the aspects of its legacy that could still provide valuable lessons for the present. According to Derrida, whenever a society attempts to push the ghosts back into the realm of the dead, it does so out of fear of their grip on the future, since a ghost, by its very nature, is bound to haunt the living: "a specter is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*."[27] By its mere "hauntology," its quality of being a perceivable presence that yet belongs to the past, the ghost personifies all the qualities of an unhinged temporality, a time that cannot be contained and understood if we restrict it to one dimension, but rather overflows outside its rationally-conceived borders. If spectrality is a conceivable dimension in our struggle to come to terms with the past, Derrida argues,

> there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present […] and everything that can be opposed to absence, non-presence. […] Before knowing whether one can differentiate between the specter of the past and the specter of the future, […] one must perhaps ask oneself whether the *spectrality effect* does not consist in undoing this opposition […] between actual, effective presence and its other.[28]

In the case of events such as '68, when its "survivors" describe their relationship with the past as troubled and riddled with ghosts that refuse to be put to rest, it seems like the ethical choice — the only acceptable compromise between utter denial and self-referential forms of memory that deny access to anyone who did not directly partake in the '68 events — would be to grant ghosts the right to a hospitable memory, one that includes the recognition of the movement's "ideologems," but also of their surviving emotions and sense of loyalty to a disappeared world. As Derrida argues, "in order to watch over the future, everything would have to be begun again. But in memory, this time, of that impure impure impure history of ghosts."[29]

There is a resilience to these stories of psychic and social transformation that permeates not only the memory of the event itself, but represents a form of survival and resistance that may

[26] Ibid., 18.
[27] Ibid., 11.
[28] Ibid., 48.
[29] Ibid., 220-1.

encourage us to think of 1968 melancholia as an affirmative disposition. As Judith Butler formulates it, melancholia constitutes a form of repressed revolt, "a rebellion that has been put down, crushed. Yet it is not a static affair," not can it be erased by outside pressures:[30] it originates a form of critical agency on the part of melancholic subjects, whose ideal has been annihilated by the power of the state, while still residing within their psyche in the form of an internalized attachment. In her impassioned analysis of Freud's theorizations of mourning and melancholia as they evolved throughout his works — from *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) to *The Ego and the Id* (1923) — Butler discusses how melancholia is central to the formation of identifications of the subject with an extinct ideal. Thanks to the incorporation of the lost ideal, the loved object — in the case of the memory of '68, this is represented by the movement as a sort of "utopia in the present" — is phantasmatically preserved within the psychic landscape of the survivor.[31] Following Freud's famous distinction between mourning and melancholia, mourning can be defined as the conscious process by which the bereaved individual can overcome the death of a loved person or the loss of an ideal by eventually acquiring some distance from the traumatic event and allowing oneself to continue living. The melancholic, on the contrary, refuses to let go of the lost ideal, especially in Freud's earlier formulations of his theory, whereby the lost love is "magically retained as part of one's psychic life. The social world appears to be eclipsed in melancholy, and an internal world structured in ambivalence emerges as the consequence."[32] The melancholic process revolves around the Hegelian concept of *Aufhebung*, a term which describes a dialectical movement based on the ability to stabilize and subsume the past. However, in Butler's view the term *Aufhebung* "carries a notoriously ambiguous set of meanings, [such as] cancellation but not quite extinction; suspension, preservation, and overcoming."[33] Therefore, through *Aufhebung* no break with the loved object is ever performed — as is instead the case with mourning, where the object of love is transformed through a self-distancing act. In a melancholic scenario, the withdrawal of the dead loved object from the world is also accompanied by an act of psychic preservation, a refusal to entirely let go:

> this *Aufhebung* — this active, negating, and transformative moment — is taken into the ego […] to withdraw it from external reality, and to institute an internal topography in which the ambivalence might find an altered articulation, […] indeed, a fabulation of psychic topography."[34]

The melancholic response to the death of an ideal, such as in the case of the '68 survivors, thus takes the form of an unavowable loss, one that cannot be fully articulated, "that resists being brought into the open, neither seen nor declared." The melancholic subjects withdraw from uttering their grief, suspending the "verdict of reality that the object no longer exists. What cannot be declared by the melancholic is nevertheless what governs melancholic speech — an unspeakability that organizes the field of the speakable": what so many '68ers describe as a silence heavy with meaning.[35] While causing the melancholic to withdraw from the sanctioned

[30] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 190.
[31] See ibid., 132.
[32] Ibid., 167.
[33] Ibid., 176.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 185-6.

mechanisms of mourning and from an unsympathetic society, the unavoawble sense of loss they experience simultaneously influences at a deep level their relationship with society and with the overall outside world. According to Butler, the melancholic insists on exhibiting the symptoms of a grief that can never be fully overcome: "as private and irrecoverable as this loss seems, the melancholic is strangely outgoing, pursing an insistent communicativeness which finds satisfaction in self-exposure."[36] Butler thus emphasizes the deep implications that social pressure and sanctioned understandings of how to properly dispose of the dead and honor their memory have on the melancholic process. Because society and the repressive power of the state will "regulate what losses will and will not be grieved," those who experience the death of an ideal may respond to the social foreclosure of their grief by melancholically withdrawing onto themselves, protecting the loved object from being completely forgotten and overcome.[37] The experience of melancholic loss is thus sustained by an "indirect and deflected relationship" to the repressive power of the social world. And the melancholic's drama plays out in a ghostly scenario, whereby his wish to be reunited with the loved object — or to see the loved ideal re-emerge from the ashes of the past — is a paradoxical one, since it takes place *postmortem*, after the death of love: paradoxically, "the melancholic seeks […] to reverse time, reinstating the imaginary past as the present."[38] In the post-'68 scenario, the insistence on ghosts and on a time that never really expired, but rather protracted itself phantasmatically into the social consciousness of the Italian nation, thus represents both a form of psychic resistance and a paradoxical political project that aims at reinstating the "state of being" of 1968 in the current world.

In the next section, I will address the problem of haunting feelings in '68 narratives by reading the work of an author who consciously acknowledges the discomfort, ambivalence and selective perception that seem inextricably connected to the collective memory of 1968, yet he views no viable alternative to this state of affairs. As we will see, Erri De Luca deliberately chooses to stay in the presence of ghosts, contemplating the open wounds left by the passage of time.

Section 3. Writing in the Presence of Ghosts: Erri De Luca

With each decennial anniversary, a host of new accounts of the 1968 experience is published in Italy, but despite the passing of time they all seem to ask anew the same questions, like a skipping record playing the same notes without reaching any sense of completion: what do we make of '68? How can we come to terms with its problematic legacy? Is 1968 a thing of the past or can learning about it provide valuable lessons for the future? This recurring tradition within the Italian publishing industry is proof in and of itself of the existence of recursive forms of memory that seem to be stuck in time, reiterating the same concerns over and over again rather than building on an accumulated patrimony of knowledge. Myriad personal memoirs and historical summaries of 1968 that claimed to be looking for "a final assessment" of that time appeared in 1988, 1998, and again ten years later, in 2008. Nevertheless, their strategies to grapple with the '68 dilemma seem to either pertain to the genre of "objective" historiography or

[36] Ibid, 186.
[37] Ibid., 183.
[38] Ibid., 182.

to a more introspective kind of writing, one that acknowledges the authors' emotional investment in the past, but still does not openly admit to the problem of being haunted by it.

Come noi coi fantasmi (1998), by Erri De Luca and Angelo Bolaffi, emerges as one of the most notable exceptions to this otherwise very stable divide. This short book includes a number of letters exchanged between De Luca, a prominent writer of fiction with a long-standing background as an activist for the extra-parliamentary movement Lotta Continua and a factory worker, and Angelo Bolaffi, a philosopher and political scientist who was active with the Italian Communist Party during the '60s and '70s. The two authors, who are only a few years apart in age, use their correspondence to spark a joint reflection on the meaning of '68 and of the decade that followed it, as well as on their own investment in the teachings of that time. While Bolaffi appears skeptical regarding the continuing legacy of '68, essentially considering it "a fortunate mistake" — a movement that was based on flawed premises, but nevertheless obtained a number of positive results — De Luca obstinately lays claim to the importance of that experience, which dominated his youth and shaped the rest of his life. Starting with the very title of this collection of letters, De Luca opposes Bolaffi's doubtful reflections on the time of their youth and describes his very own existence today as the life of a "specter of '68," someone whose past appears to his readers and interlocutors as a fascinating, yet completely obsolete adventure.

In this section, I will focus mostly on De Luca's letters rather than on his overall exchange with Bolaffi since, of the two intellectuals, it is De Luca who certainly addresses the question of ghosts as a central aspect of the memory of '68. Interestingly, De Luca's frequent musings about the long resonance of past political allegiances in Italian society — his denunciation of a State that harshly condemned and relegated to the role of collective foes those who continued living by their '68 beliefs — are evidenced by very recent events resulting in him being put on trial for a statement he made in a 2013 interview about the issue of the No-TAV protest movement. No-TAV (No ai Treni ad Alta Velocità / No to High-Speed Railways) is an environmental rights movement originated in the 1990s in a Northern Italian area named Val di Susa (Susa Valley), in the Piedmont region. The movement aims at protecting local communities from the impact of invasive infrastructures, and over the years it has violently clashed numerous times with the police and the law, becoming more and more popular in other Italian regions as well. During an interview with the *Huffington Post*, De Luca openly offered his solidarity to some No-TAV activists who were being prosecuted for terrorist acts. On that occasion, De Luca famously declared that the TAV project "needs to be sabotaged."[39] Following the publication of

[39] "La TAV va sabotata." See the original interview: http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2013/09/01/tav-erri-de-luca-va-sabotata_n_3851994.html (last access: 11/01/2015). Interestingly, the trial against De Luca immediately appeared as an indictment of his past history with former youth movements as well as of his political convictions, as evidenced by many newspapers articles that related his current assertions against the TAV to his past involvement with the factory workers' protests and Lotta Continua during "the '68 years." Extracts from the first hearing of the trial showed that the prosecutors seem convinced that De Luca's opinions may have influenced the TAV activists in their decision to disrupt the construction of the railing infrastructure. De Luca, on the other hand, pointed out how his use of the term "sabotage" is connected with how he grew to understand acts of sabotage during his years of activism with Lotta Continua: political actions not meant to terrorize, but rather as acts of civil disobedience meant to hinder the oppressive decisions of the State. See, for example, Andrea Giambartolomei, "Erri De Luca e No tav, al processo guerra di dizionari: 'Mai parlato di molotov,'" *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, May 20, 2015. http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/05/20/erri-de-luca-e-no-tav-al-processo-guerra-di-dizionari-mai-parlato-di-molotov/1701849 (last access: 12/01/2015), in particular the following excerpt from the hearing: "Right away, the public prosecutor Rinaudo asks for the meaning of 'sabotage': 'According to the Italian dictionary it has numerous meanings — answers the accused. The first one is related to material damage, while the other meanings involve the verbs to hinder, to obstruct, to impede. So I believe I have said that this high-speed railway had to be impeded,

this interview, two public prosecutors from Turin accused De Luca of having instigated — through his statements to the press — further criminal acts against the construction of the TAV. This caused an uproar in the international intellectual community, with many intellectuals petitioning the Italian State to stop prosecuting De Luca for what is perceived by many to be a serious insult to the writer's freedom of speech, a persecution carried out against a dissenting intellectual. In the press and on social media, many have connected the prosecutors' hostility toward De Luca's declarations with his relentless defense of his past as a Lotta Continua activist, thus proving once again De Luca's own theories about the ghostly presence of '68 "nightmares" in today's Italian political reality and the need to forcibly repress them at all costs.

In *Come noi coi fantasmi*, the exchange between Bolaffi and De Luca starts off immediately as a confrontation on the question of the troubled sense of 1968 temporality and of its "afterlife." Where were the two of them in 1968? How do the three years of age that set them apart count when remembering that momentous year? What are the feelings that prevail today, when looking back at their political commitments and experiences? The book's subtitle — *Lettere sull'anno sessantottesimo del secolo tra due che erano giovani in tempo* ("Letters about the sixty-eight year of the current century between two people who were young in time") — hints at a larger argument that unfolds throughout De Luca's letters to Bolaffi: the idea that those who came of age in 1968 belonged to a fortunate group of people who benefited from an extraordinary set of political and cultural circumstances that allowed them to experience youth — conceived as a kind of intensified, prolonged, collective state of excitement — in its full potential. After the fall of the youth movement, De Luca considers such circumstances to have disintegrated. The book's subtitle relies on a pun: "due che erano giovani in tempo" is used in opposition to the more common Italian expression "due che erano giovani un tempo" ("two people who once upon a time were young"). This wordplay echoes a widespread perception that travels across several memoirs written by *ex-sessantottini*, according to which '68 was youth's last opportunity to change the course of collective history by disrupting existing power structures. At the same time, '68ers often claim that they were not entirely responsible for their actions, as it was the spirit of that year — a somewhat irresistible *daemon* inherent to the unique temporal dimension opened by 1968 — that appropriated their lives; not coincidentally, '68 is often portrayed in memory writing as a personified element endowed with a spirit, a soul, or a defiant laughter.[40] According to De Luca, young people in 1968 ran a race against time to be part

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obstructed, hindered.'" ("Subito il pm Rinaudo chiede il senso di 'sabotaggio': 'Secondo il dizionario della lingua italiana ha numerosi significati — risponde l'imputato. Il primo che risulta è danneggiamento materiale, gli altri significati coinvolgono il verbo intralciare, ostacolare e impedire. Quindi ritengo di aver detto che questa linea ad alta velocità andava impedita, ostacolata, intralciata e di fatto ostacolata'."). See also Erri De Luca, *La parola contraria* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2015), as well as De Luca's speech at the 2015 International Journalism Festival, where he talked at length about the meaning and consequences of the trial against him and about freedom of speech: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWnrf7M6Dus&feature=share (last access: 12/01/2015). Following the opening of the trial, many fellow writers, such as Paul Auster and Salman Rushdie, public figures such as the French Prime Minister François Hollande, and common citizens have signed petitions and taken to social media — through the hashtag #IstandwithErri (#IostoconErri) to denounce the Italian prosecutors' intention to vilify De Luca for his personal history with the movement and to prevent him from exercising freedom of speech. On October 19, 2015, De Luca was acquitted after the Turin prosecutors demanded that he be sentenced to eight months in a State prison for "criminal solicitation" related to the No-TAV actions in 2013.

[40] For instance (as we have seen more at length in Chapter 1), the collection of short essays *La risata del '68* features Guido Viale's description of '68 as an existential condition that "happened upon them" and took over their lives; while Viale claims to be aware that '68 cannot be repeated, he hopes for "something new" to capture the lives of the younger generations and lead them to be as "deeply and collectively involved" as their generation was in political

of a revolutionary movement before the window of opportunities for true change shut down forever. De Luca thus thinks of himself as having been just "in time" to catch the wave of '68 changes; but the expression "in time" may also stand here for the quality of being "one with time," perfectly and intimately fused with the '68 *zeitgeist*. And finally, having lost himself in the dream of an everlasting state of youthful rebellion, he is doomed to feel perpetually excluded from any other temporal configuration, thus seeing himself inhabit the present as a living ghost of the past.

In order to conjure the image of 1968 as a new beginning, a time devoid of roots, De Luca opens his first letter with the tale of a new beginning, describing how being "born again" to his new lifestyle was inextricably coupled with his own intellectual coming of age. Leaving his parents' house for the first time at eighteen, De Luca claims, was a necessary step to strip himself of an education he could not identify with:

> I never had as much courage as I did back then, when I procured for myself a debut among the dispersed, leaving my home, my studies, my city and my origin altogether. […] When I came back to Naples, it was to pack my suitcase better. For example, I didn't pack any books. All of those I had read belonged to a fallen origin, and the new ones I would have met elsewhere. Among the books of the past and the ones that came after there was a present time that did not want to be accompanied.
>
> Non ho mai avuto tanto coraggio come allora che mi procuravo esordio tra i dispersi lasciando casa, studi, città e tutta l'origine. […] Quando rivenni a Napoli fu per rifare meglio la valigia. Per esempio non c'infilai alcun libro. Tutti quelli letti appartenevano a un'origine caduta e i nuovi li avrei incontrati altrove. Tra quelli del passato e quelli venturi c'era un tempo presente che non voleva essere accompagnato.[41]

The episode De Luca evokes here is related to a commonplace rite of passage for young, middle-class Italian men in the Sixties and Seventies: a trip to Northern Europe, taken in the summer following their high school graduation.[42] In 1968, De Luca travelled to Scandinavia with his friend Nave ("Ship") — a nickname he considered "auspicious," as it evoked a sense of adventure and the idea of being initiated to a life of travels in foreign lands, away from the too familiar Mediterranean coasts. Later, this first brief foray into a more carefree, nomadic lifestyle spurred De Luca's decision to leave Naples permanently. This event acquires a legendary dimension in De Luca's memory, since leaving home coincided with his eighteenth birthday, the

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activism. Marino Sinibaldi and Guido Viale, *La risata del '68* (Rome: nottetempo, 2008), 118. See also Viale on his reasons for joining the movement in the first place: "I had not chosen that life: at least not in the sense of having designed it, wanted it and organized it that way, even if I experienced it as a form of atonement, for having dared to *want everything*. It had fallen over me." ("Quella vita non l'avevo scelta io: per lo meno non nel senso di averla progettata, voluta e organizzata così, anche se la vivevo come una sorta di penitenza, per la trascorsa protervia di aver *voluto tutto*. Mi era caduta addosso.") Viale, *A casa*, 103.

[41] De Luca and Bolaffi, *Come noi coi fantasmi*, 7-8.

[42] The trope of the journey to the North in search of wider, more open and welcoming spaces and cultures is represented in a number of works about Italian youth culture in the '60s and '70s, including — most famously — the book *Altri libertini* (1980), by Pier Vittorio Tondelli (in particular, the short story "Autobahn"), and at the beginning of the film *La meglio gioventù* (2003), by Marco Tullio Giordana.

year of his symbolic entrance into adulthood, but also because it altogether represented a radical rejection of his roots. His home, studies, and city are conflated in one expression, "all of the origin": under the revolutionary auspices of the year 1968, De Luca extracted himself at once from all family and community bonds, traditions, practices, affects and political affiliations. His ties needed to be severed so he could join his "true" elective community, albeit in this case a very peculiar one: De Luca's chosen people are in fact the "dispersi," those who are missing, lost, strangers to their families and perhaps even to themselves as they wander aimlessly in search of meaning. Dispersion — the quality of being scattered about, fragmented — resurfaces as an aesthetic choice across De Luca's literary production. De Luca's poetics of the fragment has already been discussed in Chapter 1 (on the occasion of his conversations with Stefano Tassinari); in *Come noi coi fantasmi*, fragments stand not only for mishandled bits of historical knowledge, but also — quite literally — for displaced people, wanderers who appear to De Luca as the most acute seekers of truth precisely because they have given up all former allegiances. Dispersion is a state of being that allows to break free from societal expectations, but also to exist in the moment, neither indebted with a past nor in search of a future. For De Luca, the fantasy of having severed with a "fallen origin," a family and cultural lineage he rejects any affiliation with, sustained his prolonged desire — which continued throughout the 1970s — to be immune from the demands of bourgeois existence. Such a life, organized around a sense of belonging or around the traditional dialectics of becoming and moving forward (the need to grow up and become an adult according to the family's expectations), appears meaningless and constrictive to the eyes of a young man who is following the political uprisings taking place all over the world. At eighteen, De Luca "goes missing" and gets "dispersed," but he does so voluntarily. He is not looking to reach any goals, but rather to reject certainties altogether:

> I was eighteen in 1968, and that was not my debutante ball, but the *tarantella* of the homeless, those who left home.
>
> Avevo diciotto anni nel 1968 e quello non era il ballo dei debuttanti, ma la tarantella degli scasati, di quelli che erano usciti di casa.[43]

De Luca's initiation rite to adulthood is not remembered as a "debutante ball," a seemingly graceful tradition symbolyzing the acceptance of one's expected place within family and society. The debutantes are here assumed to be proudly and tidily moving in a comfortable setting where social roles, expectations, beliefs and rituals are handed down by the older generations and embraced by the new. The kind of movement that marks De Luca's rebellion is compared instead to a frenzied *tarantella*.[44] Unlike the debutantes, the sparse community of the "scasati" De Luca feels akin to is one who proceeds haphazardly, frenetically, and with no other aim than keeping a distance from home, the repository of all known and reviled traditions.

When it comes to 1968, De Luca's entire affective constellation revolves around images of fragments going adrift in the sea of memories, lost homes, eradicated roots. Such landscapes constitute the background upon which his haunted feelings about home, family, and generations are defined. With De Luca, we see in fact very clearly how the relationship between the authority

[43] Ibid., 13.

[44] Originated in Southern Italy (and particularly in the Apulia region), the *tarantella* is a folk dance marked by loud rhythms and quick steps, historically associated with tarantism, a form of hysteria believed to be caused by the bite of a tarantula.

of fathers and the authority of books was conflated by the '68 generation in a single narrative that attempted to denounce all genealogical ties as false, repressive, and artificial. Fathers and books are merged in a symbolic act of defiance against traditional forms of *logos*: they both stand for authoritative, yet invalidating powers, fading residues of a worldview that must be left behind in order to join a present dimension that will only reveal itself when discovered autonomously, without the "accompaniment" of old, obsolescing norms. In De Luca's letter, estrangement from home is not the natural epilogue of a story of conflict between fathers and sons, but the tale of a self-inflicted symbolic death so that a different form of adulthood can begin: one that is unencumbered by heritage. In fact, De Luca does not dwell on the reasons why home feels hostile to him. As a result, his rejection of home appears stark and absolute: incompatibility, grudges, rebellions born inside the home would still have retained an intimate dimension; perhaps they would have spurred the need for an ultimate domestic reconciliation. By omitting specific details, he conjures instead the idea of a radical dissolution of bonds, one that had its origins in the '68 *zeitgeist* rather than in one's own private misery. Such a dynamic is most powerfully represented in a passage where De Luca narrates the circumstances of his final departure from home:

> The house was losing me without an attempt at seizing me back, exhausted by the efforts of a year spent trying to catch me. The house wore its mourning in just one room. Without being Jewish and being unaware of this practice, I believe, my father ripped apart the shirt he was wearing when I walked down the stairs for the last time. I did not hear that noise then, so I am condemned to hear it again and again. There is a whiteness ripping itself apart from the top to the bottom each time I sleep.
>
> La casa mi perdeva senza un gesto di presa, sfinita dagli sforzi di un anno di intrattenimenti. La casa portava il lutto in una stanza sola. Mio padre senza essere ebreo e credo senza conoscerne l'usanza, si strappò addosso la camicia quando scesi per l'ultima volta le scale. Non ho sentito quel rumore quella volta, perciò sono condannato a risentirlo sempre. C'è un bianco che si squarcia dall'alto verso il basso in ogni mio sonno.[45]

Here and elsewhere in De Luca's letters, the family home is described as a personified force in the author's young life, an old soul shaken by the ghosts who populate old family tales. The father's house is seen as a presence capable of seizing young De Luca and keeping him tied down, holding him back with the promise of comfort, but also distracting him with the false seduction of ease and of a sense of belonging. The word "intrattenimenti," in this context, speaks to the ambiguous, dual nature of the family home: it refers to the pleasurable, yet dangerous comfort of family affects, which can distract from the allure of the unforeseen and the promise of growth that independence brings with it. The family home, benign but possessive, comforting yet constrictive, is an enigmatic place that keeps De Luca from beginning his life journey.

De Luca's recollection of his father's refusal to let him go is replete with a mournful imagery, most vividly represented by the father's act of tearing apart the white shirt he is wearing. The shirt here appears simultaneously as a symbol of lost innocence (another consequence of De luca's rejection of the "fallen origin") and of the distance he gains from more

[45] Ibid., 9.

conventionally respectable forms of bourgeois masculinity. In this passage, De Luca draws a symbolic connection between his father's gesture and the tradition of the *keriah*, the rending of garments, an expression of grief seen during Jewish family funerals. During the *keriah*, the closest family members of the departed tear their garments as a way to release their sorrow and sublimate in a religiously-sanctioned way the destructive impulses that come with the death of a loved one. The practice of the *keriah* also implies a dual symbolism, one that appears very revealing in light of De Luca's reflections about the condition of being haunted by his former choices, despite still being convinced they were the only ones available to him. The *keriah*, in fact, is not only a material gesture that allows the family to express its grief for the loss of one of its members; it is, simultaneously, a way of acknowledging that the bond between those who survive and the dead is not inexorably broken. The body is seen as a garment that may tear and break, while the soul laid bare underneath the bodily fabric remains intact, connected to its deeper origins. In part a form of denial, in part a way to cope with loss, the practice of the *keriah* is evoked by De Luca to symbolize the end of an era in his life and his transmutation into a new, chosen embodiment. The broken bond with his father is meant to return as a recursive form of haunting in the author's mature years. In this specific story, the sharp noise produced by his father's act of ripping the shirt apart acknowledges the rupture between two generations and condemns the son to a long-lasting feeling of shame. De Luca's feelings of shame and regret, the sense of having made the right choice while, at the same time, alienating what was most important to him, is precisely what ties him to the memory of his father. The image of the "whiteness" that "rips itself apart" captures the fatality of De Luca's deed: by leaving the father's home, he relinquished his roots, rejected his father's bourgeois legacy (symbolized by the white shirt, a garment associated with respectability), and broke all ties with his middle-class education. But despite the dramatic nature of this gesture, the idea of doing away with one's bonds appears only as an illusion: his father's sorrowful deed is destined to be enacted again, in a ghostly form, throughout a lifetime of disturbing nightmares.

De Luca's new life begins in 1968 Rome, where he joins the students' protests, soon becoming one of the leading members of Lotta Continua's patrol group. Once immersed in this political climate, he begins to see the revolutionary ideals that bring the movement together as the tenets of a world turned upside down. These early experiences with the movement forge one of the recurring narrative tropes of De Luca's writing: the idea that "truth" is always a distortion fabricated by the media, one that can only be dismantled by those who collectively shaped and experienced a historical event in the first person. Far from constituting a shameful memory, the night when he is first captured by the police and taken to a Roman jail along with other demonstrators turns for De Luca into the occasion for a groundbreaking insight: the Communist revolution — the long-awaited utopia of the masses — may not be an ideal condition to strive for, but a transient state of being that can only be attained in the present. It is a moment of collective release of subversive energies, a universal time of solidarity that is destined to evaporate quickly, only to return again and again in the contained, yet expanded space of the street protest. After that first night in jail, De Luca pledges his loyalty to his newly-discovered revolution, declaring his intention to return again to that exalted state of being, as ardent as that of a religious devotee:

> I didn't belong to Naples anymore, nor to anything else. […] I was born out of the melee like a cabbage, neither from a womb nor carried by a stork. That night I learned about myself that I would do those things for as long as I lived. I didn't

> have to swear it to myself, I knew it by way of physical evidence, without imagination, an awareness I later recognized […] only in people of religious faith.
>
> Non ero più di Napoli e di niente. […] Nascevo dalla mischia come un cavolo, non da un grembo né portato da cicogna. Quella notte sapevo di me che avrei fatto quelle cose finché durava vita. Non dovevo giurarmelo, lo sapevo con evidenza fisica, senza immaginazione, una notizia che poi ho riconosciuto […] solo nelle persone di fede.[46]

Using images from the Italian folklore related to the way newborns are "found" under a cabbage in a field or delivered by animals endowed with magical functions, such as the stork, De Luca emphasizes how — albeit somewhat accidental and unexpected — his participation in the '68 movement can only be described as a second birth. Being re-born in a field of cabbages, a humble, almost vile condition, is conceived as a more congenial state for him than being carried by a stork or inside a womb, symbols that carry instead an element of selectivity, the sense of having been desired, chosen and delivered into one's own righteous destiny. With his rebirth in the Roman jail, De Luca abdicates the security of the bourgeois condition he was granted by birth. By giving up all privileges, he escapes in a fantasy of eternal youth granted by the incessant repetition of a state of frenzied excitement, the unhinged temporality of '68. With every fleeting victory and every temporary alliance, he finds an inner state of "endless revolution" that cannot be repressed precisely because it is the manifestation of an intimate, affective turn, not the materialization of a historical process. The nightmare of real socialism looms large in De Luca's memories: in order to separate his own understanding of the Communist dream from the concrete political agenda that was actualized in China or the Soviet Union, he emphasizes the ephemeral dimension of the Italian '68. In one swift passage, he overturns the Marxist notion of Communism as an ideal in the making, a future condition to yearn for, transforming it into the very negation of the Marxist vision. Revolution is seen here as a condition of cyclical, temporary exhilaration that has no other end in sight but its own consummation in the present; the only lasting relics of such revolutions can be experienced exclusively in the form of memories and feelings. De Luca's idea of Communism is indeed a state of being, an affective feature of collective experience. Yet it is within those fleeting, ill-defined moments of Communism that his utopia is found and lost again, destined to reappear only through memory:

> [I]n each of us, the birth of a new year had taken place. […] For one night, that territory was the freedom we had obtained, Communism achieved between dusk and dawn. You don't believe me, you think I'm not allowed to call that way a night of fires and lit up bulbs? You may say I'm wrong, but I never understood what Communism is, if not that committed, contagious community, capable of provoking love and fury in the people around it. It produced actions that were uncalled for, unwanted, just a rough brotherhood, one that was effective and that easily dissolved in the morning, with an indelible goodbye. Later, we would experience more of those Communisms that lasted for whole nights.

[46] Ibid., 15.

> [I]n ognuno di noi era avvenuta nascita di un anno nuovo. […] Per una notte quel territorio era la libertà ottenuta, il comunismo avuto tra un tramonto e un'alba. Non ci credi, non posso chiamarla così una notte di fuochi e di lampadine accese? Dammi torto, non l'ho capito mai il comunismo se non era quella comunità coinvolta, capace di contagio, di suscitare affetto e furia nel popolo d'intorno, che produceva gesti non chiamati, non voluti, solo fraternità brusca, efficace e sciolta subito al mattino, con un saluto indelebile. Ne avremmo avuti ancora di comunismi lunghi notti intere.[47]

He reiterates the idea that '68ers did not act in order to open the gates to a better future, but out of a desire to cause the very notion of time to implode, leaving only the present to set the scenario for the movement's actions: "Within that present time protracted with a vengeance, day after day for years and years on end, there was that void of power we obtained, the space we conquered around it, inside of which our Communism was taking place."[48] Here, De Luca plays with the different meanings of time, space, and political affiliations to recombine them into a consoling fantasy. Holding so tightly onto the present is here conceived as a political mission. During the space of those "Communisms that lasted the span of a nighttime," De Luca's community invented new forms of political commitment: one that escapes from the logics of delayed gratification that the future promises, while at the same time depriving the past of its authoritative role. Later in his letter, De Luca reaffirms the absolute necessity of his generation's rebellious move against the passing of time and the unfolding of life as prescribed by the traditional Italian society they were confronting: "Here lies the heresy of it all: we did not want to win, just to get jammed for a long time, prolonging the time of the revolt."[49] Communism was thus made and unmade swiftly, in the space of a spontaneous demonstration, of a community gathering, of sudden and fleeting, disorganized forms of resistance to the establishment. Yet, the movement's fast and ephemeral actions inspired society to take note and gathered worldwide attention. The memory of '68 remains so puzzling today partly because it evokes an image of unleashed potentiality, rather than established achievements. In its beginning, "auroral" condition — as defined by Angelo Bolaffi in his reply to De Luca's letter — the movement's state of grace is to be found in its original philosophy that combined "living and practicing."[50] During that year of new beginnings, such inspired practices invested every aspect of life, giving the young rebels the impression that they were finally "legitimized in contesting [their] fathers' generation's monopoly of political reasoning, their government over collective morals."[51] And because of its ever-moving, ever-changing composition, the movement represented a collective, immaterial construction that took concrete shape only in the form of many small bursts of

[47] Ibid., 16-7.

[48] "Noi non eravamo il futuro ma la volontà di non perdere il presente. In quel tempo presente proseguito a oltranza, giorno dietro giorno per anni, c'era quel vuoto di potere ottenuto, conquistato intorno, in cui avveniva il nostro comunismo." Ibid., 25-6.

[49] "[Q]uesta è la bestemmia: non volevamo vincere, solo inceppare a lungo, prolungare l'età di rivolta. Non abbiamo inseguito vittorie, ma trascinato giustizie." Ibid.

[50] In the sense of Antonio Gramsci's formulation, *Praxis*, a long-aspired condition on the part of the Left in Italy, a state in which every action is deeply inspired by critical thinking and motivated by a political agenda or ideal.

[51] "Quegli iniziali, del '68, furono mesi davvero indimenticabili. Pieni di luce e di gioia, prima di incupirsi nei giorni dell'odio settario. Uno stato aurorale. Quanto stavamo vivendo e praticando (eccola finalmente la parola fatale: *Praxis*!) ci sembrò come la definitiva legittimazione a contestare alla generazione dei padri il monopolio della ragion politica e delle regole della morale collettiva." Ibid., 36.

energy. In other words, the force of the ’68 movement seems to be represented by its solid, yet intangible collective subject, one that was easily and strategically disaggregated after each outburst, only to reappear again, without a single goal or a material aim in mind: “We [were] that divided and militant community, contagious and spread across the whole territory.”[52] Taken at face value, De Luca’s reconfigured revolutions appear, on one hand, to have granted the ’68 generation the ability to experience utopia in the form of an intensification of the present, while — on the other hand — it deprived them of a *telos*, and consequently led them to bury their collective dreams prematurely. The memories of such extemporaneous Communisms are thus only remembered as ghostly fragments, incongruent traces of a history only experienced as an intimate, yet collective saga. As Derrida argued, Communism “has always been and will always remain spectral. it is always still to come and is distinguished […] from every living present understood as plenitude of a presence-to-itself, as totality of a presence.”[53] In retrospect, the ’68 revolutions described by De Luca appear just as elusive as the one imagined by Marx, since the youth movement’s sporadic revolutions, too, can only be experienced as haunting ideals that consume themselves fast, only to reappear again.

These considerations on the ephemeral nature of historical events lead De Luca to meditate on the importance of passing down the memory of his generation: in the context of a country such as Italy, which seems so eager to forget all the incongruent episodes that characterized the 20th century, what purpose does memory serve, beyond consoling “those who were there”? What kind of life is it possible to lead once the conditions for the extemporary, fleeting revolution of ’68 have been removed from the nation’s horizon? These seem to be the obsessive concerns that inspire the remainder of De Luca’s conversation with Bolaffi. Despite professing a pessimistic attitude toward the project of handing down the memory of his youth, De Luca seems motivated to speak out of a refusal to give into the rhetoric through which the media, political leaders and a good number of historians have seemed too eager to deride and dismiss the “long dead” ’68 dreams. But there is also a deeper desire at work in his memory writing: if narratives about ’68 were to end, then his own life’s most vivid moments — which took place in the ephemeral temporality of ’68 protests — would be forgotten once and for all. At this point in the letter, the autobiography of his involvement with the youth movement starts to lose its defined contours to acquire instead the elusive, blurred tones of a ghost story. Yoking together his troubled relationship with the family home as a place of frustrated longings and his sense of self as an aging ’68 comrade, De Luca seems to admit between the lines that the feeling of being haunted has been the only constant element in his life, perhaps the only form of continuity that ever existed between him and the past. As a young man, De Luca had nothing but contempt and impatience for the folkloric, irrational ghost stories that his family handed down from each generation to the next. As a consequence, those tales were lost when he and his siblings refused to carry them onto the present. Today, De Luca finds a similar attitude in the young people who become familiar with his ’68 story:

> I wrote earlier on about the ghost stories that were still told at home and that we, the children, condemned to extinction once we stopped telling them. Today young people look at us from back then, to their contemporaries from thirty years ago, to those stories, the same way we did with ghosts. A bit suspecting that they’re being told lies and a bit shivering at the thought of our midnight, which struck between

[52] “Noi, cioè quella comunità divisa e militante, contagiosa e sparsa sull’intera superficie territoriale.” Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

> anger and freedom. […] The jail where a residue of us dwells […] appears to them as one of our most natural places to be. Chains suit ghosts well. '68 is dead and, as such, it is condemned to haunt the closed fortresses.
>
> Ti scrivevo poco fa delle storie di fantasmi che ancora si ripetevano in casa e che noi figli abbiamo condannato all'estinzione non raccontandole più. Oggi i ragazzi guardano a noi di allora, ai loro coetanei di trent'anni fa, a quelle storie come noi facevamo coi fantasmi. Con un po' di sospetto di ascoltar balle e un po' di brivido per la nostra mezzanotte scoccata tra collere e libertà. […] Il carcere dove un residuo di noi risiede […] sembra a loro un nostro luogo naturale. Le catene si addicono ai fantasmi. Il '68 è morto e come tale è dannato ad aggirarsi nelle fortezze chiuse.[54]

In this passage, the boundaries between history, memory and legend are intentionally blurred as De Luca strives to claim for himself both the elusive nature of the ghost and that of the ghost storyteller. As a teller of ghost stories, he knows he is not going to be believed, since his tales contain many elements that seem so out of context in contemporary Italy: the triumphant revolutions conjured in his stories do not fit into the picture of today's nation. Though woven into the fabric of Italian contemporary history, the impact of '68 achievements is not publicly acknowledged, or remains nowhere to be seen. As a ghost, De Luca's life as an activist for the youth movement appears to have taken place in a very different reality, one that bears only vague resemblances with the present world. His memories elicit skeptical responses and dreadful feelings. In this passage, the memories of '68 inhabit their own warped temporality, as they emerge at midnight, an hour that, in Italian folklore, corresponds to the time when ghosts are set free from their chains, compelling the living to help them resolve their unfinished business. His generation's "midnight" is one suspended between oxymorons: oppression and liberation, "anger and freedom," a set of paradoxical states of being that appear forever irreconcilable. The shadow temporality of '68, chimeric yet historically defined, buried yet everpresent, stems from the special status that the movement claimed for itself: '68 was declared to be immortal, yet it eventually was trapped forever by the broken mechanisms of memory. Ghostly "survivors" such as De Luca, restless in their failed attempts to appeal to the living, can only wish that today's youth will finally see the shared investment that "their contemporaries from thirty years ago" have in the formation of a shared body of memories. The passage also includes a reference to the prisons where some of the former '68 militants who later joined terrorist organizations in the 1970s are still incarcerated today. These particular ghosts have been twice forgotten: they represent only "a residue," an infinitesimal part of a movement that has been long repressed. Italian history has moved on without openly coming to terms with the trauma of political terrorism, thus condemning that chapter of the nation's history to oblivion without healing the wounds it opened at the collective level. The image of the former terrorists locked in a prison appears absurd, yet terrifying to De Luca's young audience, since they cannot imagine a life thrown away in the name of a political ideal (whether a positive or negative one): De Luca accuses them of being completely disengaged from civil society, dull in their inability to understand political passions. In including a reference to political terrorism in the composite map of post-'68 movements, De Luca sets himself apart from a large number of non-violent leaders of that era, who have gone to great length in their own accounts to distance the student movement

[54] Ibid.

entirely from the violent deviations of the Years of Lead. The "comrades who make mistakes" ("i compagni che sbagliano") — according to an expression widely used by non-violent left-wing organizations during the 1970s to refer to terrorist organizations — are here remembered by De Luca as repudiated, abject mistakes in Italian national memory, shadows hidden from history because no one wants to come to terms with their present existence — neither those who prefer to selectively remember only the positive sides of the "long year," nor today's youth.

With the end of the "'68 years," Italian society seemed ready to dismiss all ideologies and political utopias as harmful, useless and obsolete, thus favoring a collective retreat into the private sphere. This led to the opportunistic political era that was inaugurated in the 1980s, continued through the Bribesville scandals (which began in 1992), the end of the First Republic (1994), and culminated with Silvio Berlusconi's governments (1994-2011). When considered in light of the emergence of an era of neo-liberalist economy and widespread corruption — a long period that followed the demise of the left-wing utopias of the Sixties and Seventies — the '68 generation appears to be the last to have followed in the footsteps of its chosen predecessors, the partisans during World War Two or the Communist and Socialist leaders that were persecuted and died during Fascism. This line of interpretation of 20th-century Italian history is rather widespread among historiographers and *ex-sessantottini*. Yet, it runs completely counter to the so frequently professed belief in the radical "newness" of 1968 and of its "orphaned" aesthetics. De Luca is no stranger to this conundrum, and in *Come noi coi fantasmi* he deploys this narrative in order to construe a melancholic fantasy about the past, one that allows him to figuratively put his own ghosts to rest, fulfilling a desire to establish an affinity with his own forefathers. Yet, at a closer look, his reconciliation with the past is not a nostalgic, conservative move towards past values and realities he so vehemently despised, but an even more staunch attempt at distancing himself from any present *status quo*. His appreciation for the remote past and for the romantic notion of an interrupted cycle of inheritances between old and new generations is not born exclusively out of a need to make peace with the past, but out of a desire to assert even more vigorously his sense of "otherness" and alienation from present times. This leads him to yet another reconceptualization of the temporal dimension of '68, a dimension that — as we have seen — is so charged with conflicting desires and clashing interpretations that pinning it down seems to be the authentic "chimera" in any discussion about the "long year." De Luca argues:

> Now I know […] that our youth was not starting anything anew. We did not participate in a debut. […] We came into the world to finish some work, to put the seal on a visionary century. […] Therefore, we weren't young when we were twenty, either. I am ironically reminded of the words in a song by Bob Dylan: "Oh but I, I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now."
>
> Ora so […] che la nostra gioventù non andava a inaugurare niente. Non siamo stati parte di un esordio. […] Si era al mondo per terminare un'opera, sigillare un secolo visionario. […] Non siamo stati perciò giovani nemmeno a vent'anni. Mi fischia a scherno la strofa di una canzone di Bob Dylan: "Oh but I, I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now."[55]

Without openly acknowledging it, De Luca is here recalibrating the scope of his understanding of 20th-century history as a whole. According to this different interpretation, the '68 generation

[55] Ibid., 21.

was invested with the mission of continuing the legacy of left-wing opposition initiated by their elective forefathers during the first half of the century. De Luca's only disavowal of his youth comes in the form of a slight revision: he admits that his generation's mistake is not to be found in their actions and ideas, but rather in the belief that, collectively, they were creating something entirely new. Rather than the outcome of a collective "rebirth," he now considers the movement's experience to be the concluding act of a long saga of resistance that found a tragic ending in the demise of all political utopias. Ironically, De Luca's complaints here sound eerily similar to the concerns voiced by Pasolini when the first "capelloni" — the long-haired revolutionaries — appeared in the anthropological landscape of the 1960s:

> After us, nobody wanted to collect the debt. Those that came after have given up their inheritance and they — yes, they — are indeed completely new and therefore able to inaugurate a new time. They are pioneers without a journey, searching for a new substance. […] Maybe their children will be moved when they will think of us, who will be as old as grandparents by then, out of a sudden archeological interest.
>
> [D]opo di noi nessuno ha voluto raccogliere il debito. Quelli di dopo hanno sottoscritto una rinuncia all'eredità e loro sì sono nuovi del tutto e possono inaugurare un altro tempo. Sono pionieri senza viaggio, in cerca di nuove consistenze. […] Forse i loro figli si commuoveranno di noi che avremo età da nonni, per un soprassalto di archeologia.[56]

Despite this disillusioned appraisal of the broken cycle of exchanges between generations, De Luca still reaffirms the value of "ghost storytelling" as the only channel available to those who, like himself, feel left behind by an amnesiac society. As Avery Gordon noted, following ghostly traces means establishing connections with history that, while focused on the past, are able to transform the way we see ourselves and look at an entire landscape of social relations in the present. According to Gordon, giving justice to the forgotten presence of ghosts "is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look."[57] Writing ghost stories, uncovering the layers of representational fallacies that lie underneath the fabric of historiography, is an act of justice towards the past, but also — and most importantly — it pushes towards the establishment of a "countermemory"; in Gordon's formulation, countermemory is a heritage of feelings that matter first and foremost because they are directed towards the future. This is for Gordon a "more exact" way of putting the ghosts to rest by acknowledging the emotional energies still at work in the present, their lively potential in the construction of the future.

When describing to Bolaffi the outcome of his conversations with young people who ask him about his experiences during the years at Lotta Continua, De Luca confesses that the exchange proves particularly alienating because — while his memories are still vivid, at the forefront of his mind — "talking about that time [with young people] evokes the image of a séance."[58] Like participating in a séance, establishing a connection between people who belong

[56] Ibid., 22.
[57] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 22.
[58] "Parlare di quel tempo con alcuni di loro fa effetto di seduta spiritica." De Luca and Bolaffi, *Come noi coi fantasmi*, 23.

to such radically different eras appears to be a form of reparative, yet fragile endeavor with the potential for much disappointment on both parts. Just as during a séance, messages conveyed by the ghost appear confusing and blurred; they are often misunderstood by their recipients, or the channel through which they are exchanged proves rudimentary and flawed. De Luca's attempts at conveying the importance of his stories are perceived as pathetic, indecipherable: "They ask questions from an incredible distance, from an impossible wisdom. Sometimes they seem reproachful, other times it looks like they are trying to heal a wound. […]They cannot heal me."[59] The whole conversation has a paradoxical tone: the ghost (De Luca), though full of life and knowledge to share, cannot reach out to those whose mere acknowledgement would enable him to resurrect from his deadly isolation; the young interlocutors' judgement is inspired by an "impossible" sense of wisdom and self-assurance, based on their flawed knowledge of the ghost's life and times. Throughout the exchange, the old take on the persona of the young, and viceversa: while De Luca feels youthful in his tenacious attachment to the rebellious spirit of the 1960s, his young interlocutors pose as mature, detached experts of history. De Luca perceives their attention as a form of aggression, since it comes from a place of judgement, rather than from a desire for an authentic connection. Instead of helping to bridge the distance between generations, De Luca's ghostly séance renews the sense of isolation and incommunicable loneliness that plagues his life: "When I get out of one of these encounters […] I want to guzzle wine so I can stray a bit and feel the rain dance in my blood. There is a sadness in them — whether pained or ironic — at the end of a conversation about '68 or its related years."[60] A miserably failed attempt at resurrecting the dead, the scene of the ghostly séance serves instead as a performative act meant to reinstate a death sentence pronounced by the whole of Italian society for the year 1968 and for anyone who was involved with it. Why is the conversation experienced by both parties as such a failure? De Luca blames the radical alterity of today's youth, their prejudices and lack of curiosity. I, however, contend that, in each of these encounters, what fails to be delivered appropriately is the "structure of feeling" [61] — to borrow a famous expression introduced by Raymond Williams — that accompanied this generation's political coming-of-age; the three elements of this equation — time, politics, affect — were inextricably linked: failing to see the tight yoke between '68, political action and affective involvement means missing the message entirely.[62] Erri De Luca, along with other '68

[59] "Fanno domande da un'inverosimile distanza, da un'impossibile saggezza. Hanno a volte l'aria di rimprovero, altre volte l'aria di voler curare una lesione. […] Non mi possono curare." Ibid.

[60] "Quando esco da uno di questi incontri […] ho voglia di inghiottire vino per sbandare un po' e sentirmi nel sangue la danza della pioggia. C'è una loro tristezza, ironica o commossa, alla fine di una chiacchiera intorno al '68 o annate connesse." Ibid.

[61] Williams used this concept to describe "the lived experience of the quality of life at a particular time and place," a concept simultaneously "as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests" yet operating "in the most delicate and least tangible part of our activities." See "Structure of Feeling," in Michael Payne (ed.), *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Reference, 1996). Williams maintained that our sense of cultural belonging is shaped by a set of social and material "qualities of relationship," deploying the notion of "style" to define the peculiar combination of modes that determine the specific emotional makeup of a culture, which is at once historically determined and open to change. The style of 1968 narratives is clearly informed by the structure of feeling to which it relates, one that fostered the merging of subjective experience and collective vision as well as open-ended, imaginative narratives of progress and social metamorphosis. For an introduction to the notion of the "structure of feeling," see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). See also Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975).

[62] Mitchum Huehls points out how the term "structure of feeling" is problematic precisely because it wants to capture "an ambiguous configuration of the social that has not yet fully emerged. […] The crucial feature of structures of feeling, then, is not the presence of feelings, but the presence of the present and our compromised

storytellers, admits to the impossibility of recreating those spontaneous, short-lived capsules of "public happiness" that he identifies with a kind of *blitzkrieg* Communism. Nevertheless, as a self-identified ghost still lingering around and searching for a connection with the present, he yearns for his interlocutors to learn to tap into the rich repository of feelings that populate the stories of '68. And yet, he reproduces the same mistake by refusing to see the youths he is in dialogue with for their own individuality and in the context of their times. To him, they remain cyphers just as much as, to them, he keeps representing an enigmatic ghost:

> At their age, we claimed that we knew the history that preceded us better than those who had lived through it. […] We were new by contrast. Today's youth is new out of detachment, because they drifted away, because they discarded us without digging their fingers in the pages of recent history.
>
> Alla loro età noi pretendevamo di conoscere la storia precedente meglio di quelli che l'avevano vissuta. […] Si era nuovi per contrasto. Oggi i giovani sono nuovi per distacco, deriva, per averci scartato senza ficcare le dita nelle pagine della storia recente.[63]

The distance that separates them seems to be caused by their lack of a common language. In an emotional economy that only values inheritance in terms of the handing down of achievements or losses, the two parties in this imaginary conversation are missing a shared vocabulary that can connect them on the basis of an affective awareness of their common condition (as Adorno and Horkheimer put it, "victims of the same conditions and the same disappointed hope"). The fear of extinction, of his own utter disappearance from the horizon of history, troubles De Luca: "No one should ask about us, about our time back then, to the youth of today and of tomorrow, if they don't want to hear them answer: 'Who?'"[64] Ultimately, Erri De Luca remembers the time of his youth as the defining period of his life, one in which he voluntarily remained trapped out of a stubborn refusal to confront the depressing changes in the Italian political landscape; in light of the intensity of his youthful deeds, his relationship with the past is melancholic, focused on incorporating within himself the traces of a time that he perceives to be at risk of extinction. And while De Luca identifies completely with the image of the ghost, his friend Angelo Bolaffi defines life after '68 in terms of a story of resilience:

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perspective on it. As part of his broader attempt to make materialist social analysis more attuned to time, Williams locates structures of feeling in the process of the moment—so much so that we can recognize these structures only retroactively, at which point they have become the 'finished products' that Williams intends the concept to resist. In short, if you can identify a nexus of social relations and experiences as a structure of feeling, you are either observing a historical configuration that has lost its indeterminate dynamism, or your observation will be imprecise and provisional because structures of feeling actually precede articulation." I find Huehls' point particularly productive when transferred to the context of the experience of haunting in '68 memory writing, where whether 1968 can be considered concluded or not is still a lively matter of contention, and yet the impressionistic effect of these memories is largely attributable to emotional and experiential structures still at work. See Mitchum Huehls. "Structures of Feeling: Or, How to Do Things (or Not) with Books." *Contemporary Literature* 51, no. 2 (2010): 419-28.

[63] De Luca and Bolaffi, *Come noi coi fantasmi*, 23.

[64] "Ai ragazzi che vengono e verranno nessuno chieda più di noi, di allora, se non vogliono sentirsi rispondere: 'Chi?'" Ibid., 27.

> Within this time — in the short span of months that seemed to last for an eon and yet slipped out of our hands, becoming a memory while it was still in the making — we left a piece of our lives. […] We, my dear friend, are survivors.
>
> Lì dentro, in un breve arco di mesi che sembrò durare un eone e pure ci scappò di mano diventando, ancora in corso d'opera, già ricordo, ci abbiamo lasciato un pezzo di vita. […] Siamo, caro amico, dei reduci.[65]

According to Bolaffi, 1968 was thus not the point of connection of a plethora of desires and frustrations that had accumulated along the span of several generations fighting for justice and equality in Italy. Rather, 1968 appeared to him like the "unexpected turn of an era," a strange phenomenon that no one could predict. Bolaffi, too, acknowledges the distortion in temporal perception that always seems to accompany the memory of '68. Yet, his response to those memories is one defined by the mechanisms of mourning: the beloved time of their youth is lost forever. Bolaffi "survived" because, in dying, 1968 took a piece of his life but left the rest intact. In De Luca's melancholic case, the undead "long year" never really vanished because, while fading, a piece of that past was secreted away in his memory, and never allowed to rest in peace.

In '68 accounts, haunting feelings are primarily a symptom that something is missing: they signal the absence of a common language between generations, a crippling amnesia, or a vaguely-defined sense of loss towards the past. Nevertheless, when reading De Luca's letters we discover that ghosts also inhabit a liminal space of presence, serving a healing function for the aging writer: the intimate, cherished memories of his youth keep him company throughout his mature years, otherwise described as solitary and alienated. Paradoxically, ghostly traces appear to have the power to correct the violent obliterations and exclusions operated by mainstream historical narratives. Subjective memories — and stories that address the experience of being haunted — appear to some *ex-sessantottini* as ways to honor the afterlife of the revolution, a channel through which personal and collective errors (both committed and suffered) can be corrected. But even this conceptualization of the haunting experience is an object of contention when it comes to debates about '68, as other writers and intellectuals confronted the problem of ghosts from the opposite standpoint: while acknowledging that ghostly feelings do indeed exist and need to be confronted by society as a whole, they consider them to be the real stumbling block that prevents memory from being formed in the first place. In the next chapter, I will investigate the double nature of the ghost figuration by reading Giovanni Moro's work as a different kind of '68 narrative that conjures an imagery of "hauntology" almost identical to De Luca's, reaching nonetheless the opposite conclusions. Turning against melancholia, other authors — such as Guido Viale, Luisa Passerini, and a new generation of writers relating the story of '68 from the perspective of those who were children at the time — outline the transformative potential of ghosts, using them as a strategy to turn the symptoms of a collective melancholic withdrawal from reality into valuable, healing hermeneutic practices.

[65] Ibid., 32-3.

Chapter 3

Surviving ’68: Memory as a Site of Resistance

Section 1. Intimate Epics of Collective Survival: Guido Viale and Luisa Passerini

Around the turn of the 21st century, Italy saw an increase in the number of publications reflecting on the legacy of 1968. At first sight, there seems to be no manifest reason for such a sudden return of the “’68 ghosts,” since the country had already undergone a profound trasformation during the 1990s in the passage from the First to the Second Republic, a period that seemingly swept away all the remaining residues of the old ideologies. The Italian Communist Party — which had proved both friend and foe to the youth movement during the ’70s — had dissolved in 1991, and the country’s government alternated between the leadership of Silvio Berlusconi’s neo-liberal right and that of a center-left coalition that strived to distance itself from its most radical components. The turmoils of the “long year” seemed far behind. Yet, at a closer look, we may identify some of the reasons that brought to the re-emergence of Italy’s ill-concealed anxiety towards the “survival” of a ’68 mythology in the political arena. For instance, there was the sudden appearance of a new, heterogeneous, radical political movement: the no-global or anti-globalization movement, which was first noticed by mainstream media during the 1999 Seattle WTO protests, and later made worldwide news during the traumatic events of the 27th G8 summit in Genoa (July 19-22, 2001), when thousands of protesters took to the streets and were violently repressed by the police. Immediately, news channels and commentators drew parallels between the new demonstrators and their ’68 “ancestors,” highlighting the commonalities of their ideas, goals, and methods. Perhaps because of this climate, new questions emerged about the effective distance the country gained from the revolutionary Sixties and Seventies, prompting many to wonder whether 1968 had been buried too soon in collective memory. Furthermore, between 1999 and 2006, a number of political homicides led to the discovery of a web of new extreme-left terrorist organizations which claimed that they were continuing the work of the old Red Brigades toward the disintegration of the “fascist” and “capitalist” State. The New Red Brigades — as they were labeled by the media — reproduced the same tactics of the groups that were active during the Years of Lead and spoke in the outdated, ideologically-laden language of the Marxist-Leninist groups from the 1970s. Perhaps as a consequence of these events — which seemed to literally bring the ghosts of the “long year” back to life again — or perhaps out of a millenaristic fear of losing touch with the foundational episodes of the previous century while waiting for a new temporality to unfold, the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium saw a new wave of debates trying to make sense of the relationship between contemporary Italian society and its troubled, revolutionary past.

Scattered amidst the ruinous terrain of post-’68 memory writing, a number of stories emerge as earnest attempts at offering a personal assessment of that era. But this time, in addition to providing their own point of view or pouring their own feelings into their recollections, some of the ’68 storytellers aimed at becoming spokespeople for their whole generation, not on the basis of past achievements — as former party, movement, or community leaders, for example — but out of a desire to identify and give voice to the commonalities in the fate of the *ex-sessantottini* after the movement’s disaggregation. Contrarily to some ’68 interpreters, such as

Erri De Luca, who highlight the solipsistic dimension of the experience of haunting — the way ghosts pull us back and prevent the nation from establishing a common language about the past — other writers, like Guido Viale and Luisa Passerini, have turned their own melancholic relationship with 1968 into an opportunity to construe a poetics of collective survival. By putting their own individual experience at the service of the movement's memory, their stories successfully operate a synthesis between rigorous historical research, personal recollections and collective affect. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which different responses to haunting and melancholia animate Viale's and Passerini's work, transforming their mournful relationship with "the long '68" into a story of survival after the death of their dreams. In doing so, I will return to the question of the '68ers' ongoing preoccupation with generational continuity, connecting their experience of loss with their yearning for a reconciliation with the generations that preceded them and the hope to be laying the groundwork for a renewed relationship with the youth. In my final section, I will discuss how the '68ers' ongoing interrogation of the problem of genealogical inheritance is interpreted in the writings of a number of "children of '68," such as Giovanni Moro, Maddalena Rostagno, Anna Negri, and Benedetta Tobagi. By yearning to establish truthful forms of memory for themselves as well as for the whole Italian nation, this younger generation of writers attempts to bring closure to their unfulfilled desire for a connection with such a controversial past.

In the fall of 1967, Guido Viale rose to sudden and unexpected fame as the charismatic leader of the Turin student movement during the occupation of Palazzo Campana, a university building.[1] He later joined the ranks of Lotta Continua. Today, he works as a political journalist and organizer and is an expert in environmental rights. In his memoir, *A casa* (2001), Viale grapples in a straightforward manner with the fundamental question that many other '68 accounts seem to be dancing around without ever answering: What kind of life is possible after the death of collective dreams? While at first his answer may appear anti-climactic, Viale's account of his retreat into the domestic space — his journey "home" — sparks a thought-provoking reflection on the nature of memory, the inheritance of a failed utopia, and the relationship between the individual and the collectivity during a transitional time. While many *ex-sessantottini* find consolation in the company of ghostly memories, or — as evidenced in Chapter One with the case of Mario Campana — they seek a new purpose by resurrecting old ideas and ideologies in the name of a re-branded "'68 for the future," yearning for the support of the younger generations, Guido Viale defines his post-'68 life as an interminable odyssey centered around a stagnant dimension: his own private home. Far from celebrating his return to the domestic sphere as the story of a sobering-up process at the end of the "collective intoxication" of '68, Viale envisions the home as the last barricade for the resisting survivor of a defunct era.[2] By Viale's own admission, the book's title is in dialogue with Jack Kerouac's aesthetics of travel in the novel *On the Road* (1957) — a seminal book for the whole 1968 generation. Conceived as a personal follow-up to Kerouac's celebration of a free-spirited youth, Viale's *A casa* is the honest account of a forced retreat into domesticity, the story of a former revolutionary leader's coming to terms with failure and isolation. Viale prefaces his story with a declaration of intent: his book

[1] For a history of the Turin youth movement and the occupation of Palazzo Campana, see Marco Revelli, "Il '68 a Torino. Gli esordi: La comunità studentesca di Palazzo Campana," in Aldo Agosti, Luisa Passerini, and Nicola Tranfaglia, *La cultura e i luoghi del '68: Atti del convegno organizzato dal Dipartimento di Storia dell'Università di Torino* (Milan: Francoangeli, 1991), 212-66.

[2] The expression "collective intoxication" is borrowed here from Peppino Ortoleva, "La sfinge '68," 38. See Chapter 1 for a detailed analysis of the implications of such an image in the context of Ortoleva's reading of the '68 events.

will not offer an autobiography, but rather a personal interpretation of a historical shift that took place after the end of the long season of youth protests. While claiming to observe history from his own situated perspective, Viale also contends that the reality he describes pertains to the collective dimension of post-'68 "survivors," and therefore his story mirrors that of a whole generation, "perhaps a whole era."[3] The private home is the place where Viale finds a bitter kind of solace at the end of the 1970s: the antithesis of Utopia, home is to him a shelter from a society that has no place for those who survived the drama of the Years of Lead. It represents the "zero degree of new itineraries" — the place where one stops to ponder about the past without any investment in the future or any hopes for what will happen next — since he believes that, after '68, the road to utopia will stay forever closed. As a whole, Viale's memoir is about the long transitional phase during which he found himself alone, raising his son as a single parent in the same city (Turin) that had witnessed the beginning of one of the most important chapters of the Italian '68. As a young man, he was considered by many a hero of the Turin protests, revered by his comrades and beloved by many young women in the movement.[4] Once "at home," he is confronted with his own ineptitudes, rebuilding a career from the ground up and learning how to support a child in a world that rejects everything he stood for during his years as an activist. The squalid apartment he shares with his son and dog reflects "the image of his shaky soul," traumatized by the disappearance of the political horizons that shaped and bolstered the story of his generation.[5] Viale's words conjure an emotional topography where an incommensurable sense of triumph is followed by a pitless despair, and incompatible opposites seem to find an uneasy balance. This is evidenced, for example, in the following passage, in which he describes the emotional consequences of the decline of utopias, yoking together his own political and emotional trajectory with the fall of the entire Turin radical movement, determined by the downward spiral in which the FIAT factory workers — who had been so central to the radical struggle for over a decade — had fallen:

> Now that the workers' force had been dismantled, […] each of us was tested for their autonomy; their resilience; their ability to find resources to make sense of their lives. […] Moreover, this was not happening in the euphoric climate of the construction of a bright future, or in the enchantment of our present adventures; rather, […] it happened in the darkness of a reality dominated by the somber, spectacular deeds of the terrorists; while the doors to our future were barred and we were left with no keys to open them, or even maps to locate them. The world that had evolved over the years around our communal engagement had dissolved.

[3] "I have chosen to narrate several crucial passages of recent social transformations through my personal recollections and fantasies, because this solution granted me a greater freedom of expression when describing situations that may result difficult or risky to describe, or inevitably irritating for many reasons. But my exercise has an interpretative, not an autobiographical purpose. I think that, in their own way, the events told in these pages are typical of a generation, perhaps of a whole era." ("Ho scelto di raccontare diversi passaggi cruciali delle recenti trasformazioni sociali attraverso ricordi e fantasie personali, perché questa soluzione mi concedeva una maggiore libertà di espressione in campi dove avventurarsi è difficile, rischioso e, per molti versi, inevitabilmente irritante. Ma l'intento di questo esercizio è interpretativo e non autobiografico. Penso che a modo loro le vicende narrate in queste pagine siano tipiche di una generazione; forse di un'epoca.") Guido Viale, *A casa*, 8.

[4] In the short story "L'anno ribelle," the novelist Lidia Ravera wrote about her passion for a young, extremely popular Guido Viale in 1968, when she was a young and unknown member of the movement. See Lidia Ravera, "L'anno ribelle," in *La risata del Sessantotto*, 132-45.

[5] "Quella casa era diventata l'immagine della mia anima dissestata." Ibid., 112.

> Leaving us looking around, dazed and confused, after ten years of life exclusively dedicated to the revolution.
>
> [A]desso che la forza degli operai era stata smantellata […] veniva messa alla prova l'autonomia di ciascuno; la sua resistenza; la sua capacità di trovare risorse con cui dare senso alla propria esistenza. […] Per di più, non nel clima euforico della costruzione di un radioso avvenire, o nello stupore per le avventure del presente; ma […] nelle tenebre di una cronaca dominata dalle iniziative cupe e spettacolari del terrorismo; con le porte del futuro sbarrate; e senza chiavi per aprirle; e nemmeno mappe per riconoscerle. [S]i era dissolto quel mondo che si era sviluppato negli anni intorno al nostro impegno comune. [L]asciandoci, dopo due lustri di vita dedicati solo alla rivoluzione, a guardarci intorno stralunati.[6]

Viale's stylistic trait, so common across the "haunted" narratives I examined in this chapter, seems to me to represent the authentic language of post-'68 narratives, as replete as it is with oxymorons, references to the experience of trauma, fantasies about a broken temporal cycle, haunting images, stark contrasts and frequent recourses to the old rhetorics of the revolution, now voiced with ironic detachment instead of ideological fervor. By reading Viale in conjunction with a number of other "haunted" *sessantottini*, we can identify stylistic and poetic continuities across different narratives that altogether possess the "deliberately contradictory" nature of Raymond Williams' structure of feeling. By Williams' definition, in fact, the structure of feeling is a set of dominant ideas and emotions that reverberate throughout a culture or subculture, operating in the "area of interaction between the official consciousness of an epoch […] and the whole process of actually living its consequences."[7] Today, through the accumulation of numerous accounts reporting similar experiences of ghostly possession or of the struggle for survival after the fall of utopias, the post-'68 landscape appears indebted to the structure of feeling of the 1960s and 1970s — often reproducing its rhetorics, honoring its intellectual constellations, deploying a similar revolutionary imagery — yet it has also produced new literary conventions in its own right, mainly pertaining to the experience of haunting. In light of these reflections, the effort to establish a common language that may relate the experience of '68 — an effort that, as we have seen, many critics of the *ex-sessantottini* seem to be invested in — may turn out to be superfluous, since that chimerical language has in fact been there all along. In fact, the structure of feeling within which the *ex-sessantottini* operate today seems to be defined precisely by its linguistic elusiveness, its recourse to affective categories, its complex way of conjuring a world of relations, hopes and intricate events that seem all the more accurate when they prove to be entirely subjective. As Williams notes, a structure of feeling is such that it can be perceived operating in a set of works that are not strictly connected. Those who operate within it are not entirely aware of it: it is a shared condition "of feeling much more than of thought — a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones, for which the best evidence [are] often the actual conventions of literary and dramatic writing."[8] As a consequence, the quixotic search for an ideal "shared language" of '68 memory may end in the recognition that the words for relating those experiences do indeed exist already: yet, they often depict incomplete scenarios or express ambiguous ideas precisely because the emotions evoked by '68 writers are largely still at work in

[6] Ibid., 48.
[7] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (New York: Verso, 2015), 76.
[8] Ibid.

the present, connecting the intimate sphere of subjective memory with the public domain of collective history and negotiating the commonalities between them. One example of the way these narratives operate can be found in Viale's account of the end of Fordism, a socio-economic structure he identifies with "the plague of the century": his depiction of the objective conditions that led to the decline of the FIAT automobile industry is a very detailed one, intricately describing the entire web of social actors and material circumstances — from the capitalist establishment that governed the city of Turin to the industrial history of the Piedmont region, from the ideological reasons that led the student movement to idolize the factory workers to the role of all subaltern groups (Southerners, workers, women) within the social makeup of the movement. While evoking in painstaking detail the socio-political climate of Turin throughout the "long year," Viale never loses sight of the two other threads that, together, compose the fabric of '68 memory: the collective affective dimension and the story of his individual relationship with the movement as it unfolded. When told in this fashion, the parable of the decline of the workers' movement within the FIAT factory implicates larger phenomena at work within the whole Italian society, while mirroring the collapse of a whole generation that suddenly lost the entire affective and ideological constellation upon which it had defined itself. As Viale declares, the "downhill path" of the end of Fordism generated an intimate grief in the heart of the protesters who had nevertheless opposed the factory so vehemently for a decade: while the students and workers had passionately wished for that worldview to become obsolete, the actual circumstances under which this phenomenon took place caught them off guard and erased the role of the movement from the horizon of history. The polarized conflict between capitalists and workers had now lost its traction, leaving the movement to face a different enemy, a brand new post-Fordist society they did not have the tools to understand nor the means to antagonize. In the changed reality of the 1980s, the movement was materially and psychically disintegrated, prey to a delocalized power that had no more strongholds to conquer. As Viale elaborates, the decline of the Fordist economy brought with it — faster than the movement had ever imagined — a sudden change of circumstances and a sense of oblivion that "was destined to be ingrained in the soul and in the mind of my generation. […] One by one, we would have to empty out the drawers of our mind only to fill them once again, if and when we would be able to, with something else." [9]

The '68 generation had come to know itself primarily through the webs of relations they established within the different elements of the youth movement: the "new beginnings" of '68 were experienced more acutely when in groups, at mass demonstrations, in the barricades, during festivals or school assemblies, or in the context of a self-consciousness raising group session. As virtually every single account of '68 highlights, the true revolution was witnessed in the discovery of a shared affective dimension experienced through political activism. With the advent of the 1980s and the disaggregation of the movement, those who had lived by that collective ideal discovered that not only had the outside circumstances that had shaped their worldview suddenly eroded, but the collective bonds that had sustained the movement for so long were not as solid as they had thought, after all. Viale laments: "In reality, there were still many things we could share, but for too long they mostly concerned the past."[10] In the midst of a new paradigm shift that invested the whole Italian society, the '68 generation — beat and

[9] "Quella parabola discendente è una storia che si sarebbe incisa indelebilmente nell'anima e nel cervello della mia generazione. […] Uno per uno, avremmo dovuto svuotare i cassetti della nostra mente, e riempirli, se e quando ci fossimo riusciti, con qualcos'altro." Viale, *A casa*, 146.

[10] "Le cose da scambiarsi, in realtà, erano ancora molte; ma per troppo tempo avrebbero continuato a riguardare soprattutto il passato." Ibid., 99.

disappointed by its lack of concrete victories — lost sight of its most precious achievements: its collective force and the way their combined power also sustained them through the individual challenges they faced.

Too taken with their attachment to the old glories of their youth, many old '68ers isolated themselves in a nostalgic dimension where nothing but the past seemed to matter. In the very opening of the book, Viale admits to being a victim of this collective trauma, thus suffering from a "condition," a syndrome also known as *prosopagnosia*, the inability to recognize the facial features of people he was once close to. This condition — which in his case is both material and symbolic of his state of mind — affects his whole relationship with his past, especially at times when he encounters one of his former comrades in the streets of Turin. Just like Erri De Luca — who, as we have seen in Chapter Two, is troubled by his memories of the many ephemeral "Communisms" that the '68 movement brought about — these encounters compel Viale to reflect on the feelings that still tie him to other former activists:

> It almost seems like I am ashamed of my past, or that I am trying to hide it, which is the opposite of my intentions; […] But when, finally, […] we recognize each other, we are inundated by a warm wave of empathy and understanding: it is our sense of belonging to the same community, one that extends over time, despite the fact that our lives have taken different paths years ago, after a few months or even a few weeks of a communal existence; our sense of belonging is not damaged by the fact we both are unaware of what happened to each other *after*, because even then, during the hot season of our struggle, we knew very little about each other. A perfect community of strangers, held together by the intimacy of a common adventure. A very strange kind of intimacy, born out of our amazement toward the things we were doing together.
>
> Sembra quasi che mi vergogni del mio passato, o che lo voglia nascondere, cosa che è all'opposto delle mie intenzioni; […] Ma quando, finalmente, […] ci riconosciamo, una corrente calda di simpatia e complicità si diffonde immediatamente tra noi: è il senso di appartenenza a una medesima comunità, che si prolunga nel tempo, nonostante che le nostre esistenze si siano divaricate da anni, dopo pochi mesi o poche settimane di vita totalmente in comune; un'appartenenza che la reciproca ignoranza di come si sono dipanate *in seguito* le nostre vicende non scalfisce, perché anche allora, cioè nei momenti caldi della lotta, sapevamo poco l'uno dell'altro. Una perfetta comunità di estranei, tenuta insieme dall'intimità di un'avventura comune. Un'intimità molto strana, che nasceva dallo stupore per quello che quotidianamente insieme si faceva.[11]

This passage highlights the ambivalent quality of '68 temporality quite effectively: Viale describes himself and his former comrades, with whom he has not stayed in touch, as still intimately fused in a state of being that transcends the years they spent separated, the radically changed reality in which they are immersed, and the circumstances in which they were close, themselves characterized as extremely ephemeral (since, by his own admission, they "knew very little about each other" even in 1968). This ironic juxtaposition of depth and superficiality, obsolescence and endless duration, remoteness and closeness constitutes precisely the essence of

[11] Ibid., 12. Emphasis mine.

"what is left" of the '68 affective legacy. Despite a rhetorical insistence, within Italian culture, on the need to circumscribe once and for all the temporal borders of "the long year," it seems to me that they have been defined quite precisely by those who chose to narrate their stories of survival or ghostly haunting. The memory of 1968 reveals a dimension where estrangement and intimacy, hope and melancholia can indeed coexist, opening up a psychic space where the experience of being haunted, possessed by the past, can be turned into a therapeutic act based on the recognition of the commonalities that still bind "those who were there." It is in this process that the structure of feeling of '68 operates in full view. Here, the *prosopagnosia* suffered by Viale — his inability to recognize the aged faces of his former closest companions — can be read as an embodied form of resistance to the erasure of the past, a way to keep alive, in memory, that imagined "community that extends over time" despite the fact that time itself has changed the members of that community so profoundly that they struggle to recognize each other when they meet. In light of Viale's portrayal of the past, it seems thus very appropriate for him to conclude his reflection on his '68 allegiances by citing Walter Benjamin's notes on the *Angelus Novus*, a moving interpretation of Paul Klee's painting as a representation of the "angel of history," an enigmatic figure looking at the past with its back turned to the future.[12] But while in Benjamin's interpretation the angel appears to be looking at history in the form of human beings moving through time, Viale offers a melancholic reading of the same image that accurately reflects the paradoxes of '68 temporality. Now aged, Viale sees himself looking ahead at his future, but he can only see the past — the half century that has gone by since his birth — holding him under a spell:

> It is as if I were retracing my life backwards, while it extends in front of me for more than half a century. […] The ruins accumulate in front of me, as with Klee's and Benjamin's Angelus Novus. […] And I realize that, even more than before, that community made up by those who don't have a community, to whom I have always belonged, is now founded on a daily familiarity with some of our dead. […] The presence of so many ghosts creates a muffled atmosphere that emanates a vast sense of anguish (it is my small descent into the Hades).
>
> È come se ripercorressi all'indietro la mia vita, che oramai si stende di fronte a me per più di mezzo secolo. […] Le macerie mi si accumulano davanti, come di fronte all'Angelus Novus di Klee e Benjamin. […] E mi accorgo anche, e sempre più, che quella comunità di chi è senza comunità, a cui da sempre appartengo, è oramai fondata su una familiarità quasi quotidiana con alcuni dei nostri morti. […] La presenza di tanti fantasmi crea un'atmosfera ovattata da cui promana un'angoscia diffusa (è la mia piccola discesa all'Ade).[13]

[12] In a famous passage included in his ninth thesis on the philosophy of history, Benjamin writes: "A Klee painting named Angelus Novus shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (New York: Knopf, 1969), 257-8.
[13] Ibid., 185-9.

Stuck in-between their epic memories and their mundane realities, many members of the '68 generation were left to confront the future alone, finding a compromise between their loyalty to the radical beliefs of their youth and the necessity to "invent another life for themselves, as well as a new image and a professional curriculum with which they could present themselves in public again."[14] Often, Viale intentionally accentuates the contrast between the prosaic "afterlife" of the movement and the magnitude of the trauma its members experienced by borrowing the epic imagery of classical mythology and transferring it to the commonplace challenges of bourgeois existence. Despite having conceived of themselves as outside the confines of everyday social rituals, the '68ers experienced a rude awakening when the practical necessities of life forced them to adopt the expectations and behaviors they opposed so vehemently. Defining their search for a new, respectable identity after the failed revolution as a series of dramatic episodes within a "minor Odyssey," Viale points out how the disaggregation experienced by the movement in the 1980s made the loneliness of its members stand out even more starkly, especially since — in their grief and confusion — they were still sharing many commonalities: "Each one of us was individually adopting that strategy; now, the fact that we were all doing the same thing lifted the curtain on our collective drama."[15] This sense of estrangement would eventually fade for some and remain eternally vivid for others, such as Viale himself, who would continue to confront the burden placed upon him by the ghosts of '68 even as he strived to survive into the post-Fordist Italian landscape: "Upon these experiences — which I went through accompanied by a sense of nostalgia for something I still don't know (a home?), and keeping in my heart and in my memory the traces of my past participation to the long war of the Seventies — I would in time build the skeptical, a bit irreverent wisdom of my mature years."[16] Home, then, is not just the space for a disillusioned retreat into the private sphere: in a time of political backlash against everything '68 stood for, it becomes for Viale a bastion of integrity — the place where he can still be himself — but also a nostalgic fantasy, the memory of the "home" he found in the collective space of political struggle.

Home is also for Viale a place for forced idleness. Writing *A casa* in 2001, Viale claims in fact that Italian society still has not found a place for people like him. Having to imagine a new career for himself, he opted for becoming an advocate for environmental rights, with a focus on waste management. And it is in Viale's depiction of the industry of waste management that we can find a fitting allegory for the individual and collective ending of the '68 *epos*. He devotes several pages to the significance of waste in contemporary Italian society, "a distorted mirror of our lifestyle; or rather, the faithful mirror of our deformed lifestyle, […] showing us the dark, unavowable, unpresentable, unbearable matter of our existence."[17] Even if he does not draw a parallel between his interest in the politics of waste management and his investment in the politics of memory, Viale's practical efforts to recover, manage, and rescue all the "diamonds in

[14] "[R]iciclarsi, lontano da tutti coloro che potevano averti conosciuto in passato; rifarsi una vita, un'immagine e un curriculum professionale con cui ripresentarsi in pubblico." Ibid., 124.

[15] "Ciascuno di noi stava perseguendo quella strategia in forma individuale; e ora il fatto di ritrovarci tutti lì riuniti sollevava il sipario su un dramma collettivo." Ibid., 124.

[16] "Su queste esperienze, vissute con la nostalgia di qualcosa che ancora non conosco (una casa?), e portando nel cuore e nella memoria le tracce della mia trascorsa partecipazione alla lunga guerra degli anni Settanta — avrei costruito la saggezza scettica e un po' irriverente della mia età matura." Ibid., 123.

[17] "Avevo scoperto nei rifiuti lo specchio deformato del nostro modo di vivere; o meglio lo specchio fedele del nostro stile di vita deformato. […] Il mondo dei rifiuti ci restituisce la parte oscura, […] rimossa, impresentabile, insostenibile della nostra esistenza." Ibid., 141-2.

the rough" — the material waste that society pushes away or tries to hide — reflect his similar commitment to uncover and bring to light again the lost memories of '68 "survivors."

In the end, Viale's trajectory after '68 is one of survival, albeit an inglorious, anti-climactic one. At home, he finds a place of salvation, spending years hidden away from a changing society in the effort to raise a child by himself, working odd translation jobs while rebuilding his resume. Within closed doors and in a chosen solitary confinement, Viale discovers that resistance can be practiced in the most interstitial spaces of society:

> For me, home is the place of exile from the dissolved community of my past political militancy. Thus, neither the promised land of a collective project, nor the evening-time, familial shelter from the daily fatigue of living. Rather, it is the land of my exodus: […] exit, that is to say getting out, desertion. For me, home is the forced exile from the factory division, from the lab, from the office, from the classroom.
>
> La casa per me è il luogo dell'esilio dalla comunità dissolta della mia trascorsa militanza politica. Non, quindi, la terra promessa di un progetto collettivo, né la meta familiare e serale della quotidiana fatica del vivere. Bensì, il territorio del mio esodo: […] exit, cioè uscita, defezione. Per me la casa è un esilio forzato dal reparto, dal laboratorio, dallo studio, dall'ufficio, dalla cattedra.[18]

In the section entitled "Cronache da una società senza padre, 1981" ("Chronicles of a fatherless society, 1981") Viale grapples with another long-standing issue of the '68 legacy: the need to come to terms with his generation's foundational act of severing ties with its own forefathers. In Chapter One and Two, I have discussed at length how the preoccupation with genealogical continuity appears to be central in the majority of '68 narratives. Viale is no exception to this rule. Having lost his father at a very young age, his orphaned condition is not merely symbolic, as in the case of other former '68ers, who have been accused of hypocritically rejecting their families' demands while simultaneously benefiting from the bourgeois privileges that their parents' status or their own condition as university students granted them. In addition to his thoughts on the lost ties with his dead father, Viale's later experience as a single parent, reluctantly confined within the space of the home, contributes to the development of a theory of generational exchanges that mirrors his beliefs about post-'68 temporality in general. Unfit for a conventional office job and banned from the public streets and squares that constituted his natural environment during the era of the youth movement, Viale remains at home with his son, looking after the child while trying to make ends meet through a series of odd jobs. At that point, Viale finds out that he represents an oddity in the industrious, traditional society of Italian men. Too taken with their careers or other interests, too sexist to see themselves in the role of caretakers, the men around him take no charge of their children's education: they are virtually invisible, ghostly in their own way. As a consequence, Viale's new social topography is constituted by a series of "fatherless" spaces — the home, the playground, the park — inhabited by unconventional outcasts, figures ignored by the dynamics of economic progress: children, stay-at-home mothers, solitary old people. This strikes Viale as one of the perversions of the modern age, a sad state of affairs that should be corrected by learning anew "the meaning of life's temporality, thanks to a contiguity between generations that would allow us to get in touch

[18] Ibid.

with the needs of our age and respect them more."[19] This is an ironic twist in Viale's trajectory: the orphaned man who led a male-centered movement of "orphans by choice" — a movement criticized by feminists for reproducing the same kinds of exclusions and hierarchical structures of more traditional patriarchal institutions — later in life is confronted with the issue of his own lack of a legacy, and finds himself advocating for a rapprochement between the old and the young. The terms of the generational equation here appear completely reversed when compared to the slogans of '68: in lieu of the glorification of the temporal break brought about by 1968, Viale praises continuity; in lieu of separation, he demands contiguity; in lieu of creative conflict and rebellion, he preaches mutual respect. As in Erri De Luca's case, Viale's dreams during his mature years betray an anxiety toward his own obsolescence, as well as the desire to see himself reinserted in a harmonious intergenerational dynamic. In his dreams, he is visited by his dead father and other elusive ghosts, vague images of his former comrades forming together "a selected Oedipal clan of mostly indistinct figures."[20] The drama of a broken relational cycle — instituted both collectively and individually with the "rupture" of '68 — is played out once again in the oneiric dimension, merging Viale's desire to reconnect with his lost origins with his equally intense dread of being destined to repeat his father's life despite all efforts to set a different example:

> My son's name is Matteo. This story between him and me had begun long before he was born. I dreamed of my father (who had been long dead), of Matteo and myself. […] In the dream, I was my father, with myself as his son; but I was also Matteo, with myself as his father. In essence, any psychoanalyst's wet dream.
>
> Mio figlio si chiama Matteo. Questa storia tra me e lui era cominciata molto tempo prima che lui nascesse. Sognavo mio padre (morto da anni), me e Matteo. […] Nel sogno, io ero mio padre, con me che gli facevo da figlio; ma ero anche Matteo, con me che gli facevo da padre. Un sogno da mandare in solluchero qualsiasi analista.[21]

Though at first sight it may seem to depict an exclusively private drama, the play of mirrors enacted in Viale's dream is also representative of a whole generation's dilemma. The three men in the dream (the old ghost, the adult, the child) seem stuck in roles forced upon them, having lost track of their proper function in the genealogical cycle. None of them really belongs to the spaces society has assigned them: the father refuses to rest in the realm of the dead and comes back to haunt the living, still exerting his authority and demanding his son's respect; the adult man is paralyzed by his own uncertainties — having "never ceased to see himself as a child" — since he rejected the old paradigms of fatherhood while failing to create new ones; and, finally, the boy is invested with an unprecedented authority, having become his father's teacher, the vessel through which Viale "can live again — or imagine — everything through Matteo's eyes," feeling whole again "despite this constant sense of psychic disassociation."[22] Similarly to De

[19] "Non si poteva tornare un po' alle origini? Riprendere qualcosa del branco? Imparare il senso della temporalità dell'esistenza grazie a una contiguità tra le generazioni che ci facesse toccare con mano e rispettare di più le esigenze della nostra età?" Ibid., 118.
[20] "una ristretta combriccola edipica di figure in gran parte indefinite." Ibid., 185.
[21] Ibid., 104.
[22] "La verità è che non avevo — e non avrei — mai smesso di sentirmi un bambino: […] Adesso che potevo finalmente rivivere — o immaginare — tutto quanto con gli occhi di Matteo, ripassare le fasi della mia vita come se

Luca's oneiric image of the ripped white shirt — which I discussed in Chapter Two — Viale's uncanny vision of three generations merged into one betrays a desire for reconciliation. Afraid of disappearing from the historical horizon without having a chance to pass down their legacy to the future, the '68 generation is obsessed with the idea of identifying its location within contemporary history; yet, it still struggles to define the contours of its long-term legacy. Forever children, yet now called to take responsibility for their actions and omissions, '68ers struggle to claim a different role for themselves, a role that may preserve the memory of their identities and their actions against the passing of time.

The *leitmotif* of orphanhood recurs in '68 memoirs with an obsessive insistence. The omnipresence of this theme across disparate narratives signals a desire to reinterpret the meaning of their "chosen orphanhood," the act through which the '68 generation "disowned" their predecessors and thus claimed to have freed itself from the ties of tradition. Yet, today they strive for a different interpretation, signaling the transformation that the memory of this act has undergone throughout time. What once looked like a necessary step '68ers had to take in order to free themselves from a suffocating bind now appears like their generation's original sin. Today, having disobeyed the "law of their fathers," but having failed nonetheless to impose a new worldview, some feel shame and would like to repair the original wound, while others question what other paths could be taken. As such, the memory of the "severing act" — once deemed so righteous and necessary — now proves singularly painful because it can never be resolved or fully repaired, except through the therapeutic function of dreams or in a collective effort to establish a new relationship course with their (familial or ideological) successors.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, the theme of orphanhood — of a suspended relationship with one's origins — is tightly intertwined in '68 narratives with the trope of birth, or rebirth — either as a fantasy of beginning anew under the auspices of the youth movement, or as a desire for a closer connection with the young generations on the part of the now aged *sessantottini*. In Luisa Passerini's *Autoritratto di gruppo* (1988) both aspects of this question — which fundamentally reflects an overarching anxiety toward the passing of time — are central. The very opening page of the book confronts straightforwardly this unsettling nexus: "I lie here defeated, under the weight of my own contradictions. I never wanted children and I will never have them."[23] Here, the author is referring to her state of dejection during a time when — while beginning to work on a book of interviews with *ex-sessantottini* about the relationship between history and memory — she was also inspired to write a personal journal. Passerini kept the journal for a year, while she was working on the interviews, which were meant to converge in an oral history of '68. The journal would instead chronicle all the insights that the interviewees offered for her private meditations about her own relationship with the past. At first, the mention of her lack of children appears incongruous in relation to the rest of her journal entry, since having children — by her own admission — was never a goal she wanted to pursue in her life; yet, it occupies a central position among the reasons she lists for being frustrated with her life. At a closer look — and when considered in light of Passerini's reflections on the nature of memory, survival, and genealogical continuities — the early mention of the motif of motherhood in the journal takes on an important symbolic meaning that continues to unfurl throughout her narrative. In the following pages, I will investigate Passerini's deployment of a number of

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le avessi riviste in *replay*, mi sembrava proprio di aver ritrovato me stesso; nonostante quella specie di continua dissociazione della personalità." Ibid.

[23] "Giaccio sconfitta, sotto il peso delle mie contraddizioni. Non ho voluto figli e non ne avrò." Passerini, *Autoritratto di gruppo*, 9.

metaphors connected with the theme of birth — being born, being an orphan, giving birth, motherhood — to draw some conclusions on the role of generational continuities within the haunting memory of 1968.

In its narrative conception, *Autoritratto di gruppo* plays with the conventions of the autobiographical genre: it is partly the story of a woman's year-long psychoanalytic and personal journey, partly a collection of interviews on a number of intimate subjects related to the history of '68. Finally, it is also an oral historian's self-reflective attempt at drawing conclusions on the work of memory by using the same principles through which the '68 movement developed its own existential approach: that is, by holding together the personal and the political, the private dimension and the collective subject. As I have previously noted, the uniqueness of '68 affect can be identified in the challenges it poses to our conventional understanding of the separation between the subjective and collective dimensions, blurring them into one single structure of feeling. Individuals felt that their participation in the movement allowed them to simultaneously liberate themselves from social constraints, as well as freeing the world from oppression; the loss of the '68 dimension is mourned both as a private tragedy and as a national defeat; the memory of the past invades our understanding of the present. Passerini's investigation of '68 intersubjectivity — of those personal beliefs and feelings about the past that prove valid to a plurality of subjects — takes these considerations to their logical consequences: the book itself becomes a pastiche of intermingled stories, where the destiny of the individual (the historian herself) seems yoked to the fate of the movement as a whole. While interviewing others about '68 pushes her to embark on a self-reflective journey, Passerini's journal entries unveil in turn the commonalities between her individual path and the course of a whole generation. In a telling passage, Passerini describes '68 as an endless effort to use a collective voice, albeit in a tone that is steeped in subjectivity:

> '68 is the actualization of something we experienced and obscurely prefigured […] in the previous era; it is the passage from the few to the many — if not yet to a majority — from the single to the collective, from the private to the public. And also because ['68 is] difficult to pin down. To re-examine it is a way of continuing it and of glimpsing its next moves.
>
> [I]l '68 è l'inveramento di qualcosa di vissuto e prefigurato oscuramente da noi […] nel periodo precedente; è il passaggio dai pochi ai molti, se non ancora a una maggioranza, dal singolo al collettivo, dal privato al pubblico. E anche perché [il '68 è] difficile da cogliere. Ricostruirlo è un modo di continuarlo e di spiare le prossime mosse.[24]

Passerini's endeavor proves very frustrating at first. The interviews of the former activists are initially disappointing because they fail to achieve that comprehensive tone that can express at once the voice of the individual and that of the multitude. As such, the interviews appear to her like waste material, "unable as they are to reproduce what I feel when I see myself in the mirror, nor the other's emotion when telling his or her own experience as part of a whole. This kind of memory needs to be gathered against its own protagonists."[25] At that point, she realizes that, in

[24] Ibid., 98.

[25] "non riproducono la mia emozione nel vedermi allo specchio né quella dell'altro di narrare per la prima volta la propria esperienza come un tutto. [Q]uesta memoria bisogna raccoglierla contro i suoi stessi protagonisti." Ibid., 10.

order to achieve any kind of truth, she needs to abandon the project of an oral history focused exclusively on the lives of others. The new project invests instead in her own experience and her own feelings of loss towards her youth in 1968, looking at the ways her emotions reverberate with the narratives of her contemporaries, as painful as the process may turn out to be. Thus, Passerini's narrative method turns the uncomfortable "mirrors" offered by her interviewees' stories into an occasion for a collective introspection in light of the past. She strategically shifts the focus from the macro-history of the "movement" to a series of subjective experiences, and from the past to the present. This process is necessary because, she argues,

> [m]emory speaks from today, from the point of view of an identity that has built itself, shared identity, participation in the making of one's own life and invention of a culture. It is this identity that is trying to found a memory for itself and that must reinterpret the past. [It is] memory's claim to make its own history, which is much less and maybe something more than a social history.
>
> [l]a memoria parla da oggi, dal punto di vista di un'identità che si è costruita, identità condivisa, partecipazione al farsi della propria vita e invenzione di una cultura. È questa identità che tenta di fondarsi una memoria e che deve reinterpretare il passato. [È] la pretesa della memoria di fare la storia di se stessa, che è molto di meno e forse qualcosa di più di una storia sociale.[26]

At the heart of dozens and dozens of interviews, Passerini identifies several common threads that have contributed to the development of the '68 generation's structure of feeling. Amidst the many traits that distinguished this generation from its predecessors, she identifies their choice of a symbolic "orphanhood" as a key to interpret the whole history of that era: "Rooted in our memory, […] I find a rift. Our identity was built out of contradictions."[27] Throughout the narratives of the '68ers, she finds a fundamental commonality in their self-determined estrangement from the traditional values instilled by the previous generations, their need to affirm the unique historicity of '68 by denying the authenticity of previous experiences. In essence, Passerini finds out that '68 was built on a destructive principle: in order to give birth to itself, the movement had to imagine that they were starting from zero. This dominant belief transcended the familial dimension, extending to all kinds of authority figures or institutions: all roots had to be eradicated in order for the seeds of tomorrow to find a fertile ground in which they could grow. This *leitmotif* emerges in a vast number of Passerini's interviews, from her conversation with Guido Viale ("I never had any teachers") to Mario Dalmaviva's radical statements ("Me? I have no father"), from Franco Aprà's intentional conflation of the concepts of father (*padre*) and fatherland (*patrìa*) — "I do not have a real fatherland, I have mixed blood" — to Roberto Dionigi's radical denial of origins: "I have nothing in my home, no memory

[26] Ibid., 41.

[27] "Alle radici della nostra memoria, […] trovo una frattura. La nostra identità si costruisce a partire da contraddizioni." Ibid., 40. On this foundational trope of the memory of 1968, see also Guido Viale: "I never felt like an orphan of an ideal or of a movement, maybe because I had been an orphan, in the real sense, a long time before; and almost by vocation. From the biographical point of view I was in step with, if not anticipating, an era in which everyone felt that they were orphans for some reason or another." ("Non mi ero mai sentito orfano di un ideale o di un movimento, perché ero già stato orfano, in senso reale, molto tempo prima; e quasi per vocazione. Dal punto di vista anagrafico ero perfettamente al passo, se non in anticipo, rispetto a un'epoca in cui tutti si sentivano oramai orfani di qualcosa.") Viale, *A casa*, 106.

baggage, I got nothing from my family."[28] On the other hand, such stories of radical ruptures elicited a stronger sense of connection with '68 temporality itself, the belief that *those* new roots can never be cut off. As other interviews — such as Federico De Luca Comandini's — highlight, '68 ghosts can be seen as figurations of a stubborn sense of loyalty to one's own youth: "I never lost touch with the experiences I had in '68. We are talking about an epochal change that is still taking place and will involve several generations. A psychological structure cannot change in two months or even in two years."[29]

Reflecting on a series of issues emerging from the commonalities displayed in the interviews, Passerini connects the symbolic rejection of the mother figure — often seen as weak, disempowered — to the ambiguous relationship the movement always had with the role of fathers and the ideologies associated with fatherhood. Enamoured with the concept of a new, rebellious masculinity that had rejected fathers altogether, the '68 movement initially pushed women aside, thus unconsciously reproducing the same patriarchal structures they claimed to reject.[30] These considerations lead Passerini to question her own relationship with her roots and to the genealogy of women in her family. She writes in her journal about her remote recollections of her mother, who died when she was six years old, noting how the only memories she has preserved evoke the image of a harsh, punitive woman: "I have no roots, no memories of origins that look like me. My mother is an absence."[31] And while discussing her lack of positive memories associated with her mother, she tells her psychotherapist that those memories are "like dry roots. There has been a mutilation," to which the therapist replies "Not a mutilation; an atrophy."[32] This early conversation sets the tone for the introduction of a symbolic subtext representing Passerini's struggle with overcoming a dual trauma: the lost female genealogy in her family and the decline of the '68 movement, which represented to her (and many others) a newfound "home."[33] The therapist's response foreshadows the healing process that will gradually take place in the book: he offers her an alternative reading of trauma by describing the "mutilated roots" that prevent her from remembering her mother as, in fact, just atrophied feelings that could potentially become whole again.

The orphanhood/rebirth symbology emerges repeatedly throughout Passerini's journal entries, forming a subtext that marks the development of her own reparative reading of the memory of '68. Thanks to the insights she gets by seeing herself "in the mirrors" offered by her fellow '68ers, the severed roots she envisions at the beginning of her journey are gradually transformed into opportunities for self-care. When seen from this perspective, the interviews to

[28] "Io non ho mai avuto maestri" (Guido Viale); "Non ho padre, io" (Mario Dalmaviva); "Non ho una vera patria, ho sangue misto" (Franco Aprà); "Non ho niente in casa, nessun bagaglio di memoria, dalla famiglia non mi viene nulla." (Roberto Dionigi). Ibid. 51-2.

[29] "non ho mai perso il contatto con l'esperienza che ho fatto nel '68. Stiamo parlando di un cambiamento di epoca che è in corso e prenderà più generazioni. Non cambia in due mesi o in due anni una struttura psicologica." Ibid., 104.

[30] On the conflicts between the'68 movement and feminism, see Anna Bravo, *A colpi di cuore*, in particular the chapters "Politiche del femminismo," 111-58, and "Stregate," 221-7.

[31] Ibid., 13.

[32] "Non ho radici, non ho memoria d'origini che mi somiglino. Mia madre è un'assenza. […] – Sono come radici disseccate. – C'è stata una mutilazione – mi lamento io. – No, un'atrofia." Ibid.

[33] The analytical approach that Passerini applies to her relationship with her mother as well as with the entire female genealogy in her family is indebted to the feminist philosophy of the Diotima group, which privileges the notion of matrilinearity and the idea that the original relationship with one's mother must be investigated and recuperated in order to gain a sense of self. See Luisa Muraro, *L'ordine simbolico della madre* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2006). See also Diotima, *L'ombra della madre* (Naples: Liguori, 2007).

the *sessantottini* reenact the dynamics of a consciousness-raising group, whereby one's individual story finds an echo into everyone else's experience, thus contributing to the formation of a shared awareness of past traumas, or of the past joys that determined their identity as a group. Yet, Passerini never openly engages her interlocutors directly in this consciousness-raising activity. We see her reparative reading at work only through her eyes, or in her personal healing process recorded in the journal. Soon after she starts working on the interview recordings, Passerini's psychic landscape begins to change. At first, the sense of being paralyzed, frozen in time — an image we have seen recurring so frequently in '68 memoirs — pervades every aspect of her existence. It is reflected particularly in her relationship with a married man, who demands that their affair remain non-committal, "without future, without projects, suspended in the void." Once she begins to meditate on the lessons offered by the '68 stories, noticing the way they are similar to her own experience, Passerini's dreams begin to hint at a reconciliation with her broken self. For instance, she notices how her oneiric visions often display symbols of "irresponsible innocence, […] that way of presenting myself as a *puella*, an intellectual with no familial or emotional ties, without the ties of a homemaker."[34] She labels these images "one of the stratagems of the I.": her subconscious, but also her *infans* side, the rebellious side of her personality that refuses adulthood and wants to remain forever young, uncompromised by the burdens of the mature age. By following her journal, we see her constantly shifting from a desire to be engaged with her world, her work, her relationships, and an opposite drive to drift away so as not to be caught in the mechanisms of passing time. At one point, she realizes that her post-'68 life has been characterized by a series of attempts at finding again that same sense of belonging she could only reach in '68. From her travels to her meditation practices, from her love affairs to her adherence to a strict Steiner diet, she yearned all along to replicate the conditions of complete "regeneration" she had experienced through living collectively with the youth movement. Under her renewed scrutiny, even the Steiner diet she followed for a long time — which banned her from drinking wine or coffee, both essential components of a traditional Italian lifestyle — is seen as yet another way of adopting a number of countercultural habits that allowed her to deny her own heritage.

Passerini often insists at labeling these experiments as failed forms of "regeneration." When seen in the larger context of the birthing symbology present throughout the text, all of her experimental attempts at "regenerating" herself can perhaps be read as misguided ways of "*re*-generating" herself, of giving birth to a new self and abandon the "atrophied" past, just as she did in 1968. And as the visions in her dreams reveal to us, this is eventually what happens, but only after a careful negotiation with the past. As her work on the '68 interviews turns into a more and more profound opportunity for introspection, she records: "Now everything […] has taken a back seat after the announcement — given by dreams — of a possible new woman, pregnant with things and with herself."[35] The image of a self-generating woman, free at last from all origin myths, is replicated in multiple iterations in Passerini's journal. Later still, she muses: "I bought two silk slips. […] I wake up thinking: fille de soie, fille de soi, another calembour of the I. Daughter of myself, mother of myself."[36] Now the maker of her own identity, Passerini can

[34] "Un'altra delle trovate dell'i. […] L'innocenza irresponsabile, il presentarsi come *puella*, intellettuale senza impegni emotivi o familiari, senza i legami della donna di casa." Ibid., 31.

[35] "serate come piacciono a lui, senza futuro, senza progettualità, sospese nel vuoto," ibid., 90. "Ora tutto […] è passato in seconda linea, di fronte all'annuncio, fatto dai sogni, di una possibile donna nuova, gravida di cose e di se stessa." Ibid., 12.

[36] "Mi sono comprata due sottovesti di seta. […] Mi sveglio pensando: fille de soie, fille de soi, un altro calembour dell'i. Figlia di me stessa, madre di me stessa." Ibid., 80.

perhaps leave behind the haunting images of an unresolved genealogical knot and set the present in motion again.

As the interview process is concluded, Passerini keeps writing down notes from her dreams, which no longer involve images of pregnancy, motherhood, or severed roots. Her last reported dream is instead one of melting snow, perhaps symbolizing her dream of "purity" — of a frozen, mournful isolation — finally giving way to a renewed sense of the self's potentiality, no more completely dependent on the ghostly images of the past.

It is only by coming to terms individually with the failures and achievements of the movement that Passerini attains her much-desired re-generation, albeit "not a final one: I had in fact understood that the path of life is shaped like a ring, not linear."[37] By observing her own life "as if in front of a mirror" in the narratives of her comrades, she gains fresh insights into her past, while at the same time illuminating the others' stories through the details of her own involvement with the movement. As if during a group therapy session, it is the voices of the others who are mourning '68 as much as she does that reawaken her to the present:

> Only now I see clearly the complementarity of my two endeavors. Had I not listened to the stories of the '68ers, I could not have written about myself; those stories have nourished mine, giving it the strength to stand up and talk.[38]
>
> Solo ora è lampante la complementarità delle mie due imprese. Se non avessi ascoltato le storie di vita dei sessantottini non avrei potuto narrare di me; quei racconti hanno nutrito il mio, dandogli la forza di alzarsi in piedi e di parlare.[39]

Autoritratto di gruppo ultimately represents a fruitful attempt at reverting the experience of haunting into a narrative of survival. It is precisely by establishing a close connection with the ghostly, "atrophied" memories of 1968 that Passerini succeeds not only at reactivating a broken temporality in her own personal life, but also at producing an affective portrait of her own generation. "It is hard," she remarks, "to hold together this kind of doubled memory; it seems to me that no one wanted to take responsibility for it, sometimes not even those who narrate it."[40] As we will see in the next section, a wave of recent books — written by the children of leading figures of the history of that time — did accept that responsibility, establishing clarity where there was darkness, reconnecting broken ties, and repairing the injustices of history.

Section 2. A Circle is Closed: The Memories of Children

With *Anni Settanta* (2007), Giovanni Moro devotes a short, but particularly incisive essay to the trouble with the memory of the "long year." He prefaces his work by explicitly admitting that all attempts at instituting a shared memory of the 1970s must necessarily begin as a confrontation with ghosts since, "as Martin Heidegger said, no one can jump beyond their own shadow": there can be no progress — both personal and collective — without a confrontation with the dark

[37] Ibid., 194.
[38] Ibid., 197.
[39] Ibid.
[40] "E' difficile reggere la memoria così raddoppiata; mi sembra che nessuno abbia voluto farsene carico, a volte neanche quelli che raccontano." Ibid., 9.

matter of our persistent feelings about the past.[41] Giovanni Moro is a political sociologist and the son of Aldo Moro, a Christian Democratic politician and Prime Minister of Italy between 1963 and 1968, and then again between 1974 and 1976. Aldo Moro became the most eminent victim of the Years of Lead when the Red Brigades — a Marxist-Leninist terrorist organization — kidnapped him in Rome in March 1978, murdering him on May 9th of the same year, after two months of captivity. Aldo Moro's brutal death is often considered the symbolic ending of a revolutionary decade started with 1968, the time when the "springtime" hopes of the youth movement were turned once and for all into a bloody nightmare.[42] Despite opening his chapter "Fantasmi" ("Ghosts") with a reflection on his father's haunting presence in contemporary public life in Italy, Giovanni Moro centers his analysis on the problem with ghostly memories as a sociological category, an affective illness that infects the whole nation. Avoiding any private remarks on his father's figure, Moro insists on the task that appears most important to him: transcending all personal accounts to focus instead the discussion on the collective dimension of ghostly experience as a deviant form of memory. As he argues later in the book, the foundation of a national archive of memories cannot rest upon personal recollections alone. In fact, he labels the current state of affairs a sort of "condominium memory": an expression that conjures the image of a collection of individual properties, whose owners often have diverging agendas and struggle to find amicable ways to reconcile their private interests. Moro discusses at length the role of ghosts in the emotional makeup of the Italian "condominium." In his opinion, current Italian political debates are still founded on archaic ideological divides between Left and Right. Because of this situation, claiming to possess the "truth" about a particularly meaningful era of Italian history — such as the Unification, or World War Two, or the Years of Lead — may be a useful tool for pursuing particular goals that have more to do with today's politics than with the realities of the past. The contended terrain of memory thus constitutes a fertile ground for the spawning of ghosts, as they represent the product of a contemporary desire to keep the past alive in order to justify today's vested interests in political or intellectual arenas. However — Moro contends — there is always a certain degree of disavowal that justifies the production and reproduction of these contentious narratives at the national level: "You can set yourself free from a ghost only if you (re-)cognize it for the reason why it is so; but it is precisely the difficulty of such a recognition that makes it a ghost."[43] Recognition, the ability to identify the traces of loss and trauma for what they are, is the first step toward which the nation should strive in order to overcome the reiteration of these haunting dynamics. However, these cyclical debates only exasperate a vicious circle of national amnesia, reasserting Italy's "unease when it comes to learning to remember a past that is largely (and mostly negatively) still present, precisely because we cannot seem to be able to remember it."[44] As in De Luca's letters, the ghost is not for Moro "a purely metaphorical image," an evocative way of describing the national trouble with memory. It also retains a material substance when it prevents discussions from happening as a concrete "stumbling block," or when it emerges in the public debate "like a forgotten voice that

[41] "[c]ome diceva Martin Heidegger, nessuno può saltare oltre la propria ombra." Giovanni Moro, *Anni Settanta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2007).

[42] Even if — as we will see in Chapter 3, especially in the case of Benedetta Tobagi's work — a number of extreme left-wing terrorist organizations *de facto* continued their violent activities throughout the beginning of the '80s; the Red Brigades themselves resurfaced again with a series of terrorist acts between 1999 and 2006.

[43] "Ci si può liberare di un fantasma solo se si (ri-)conosce la sua ragione di essere tale; ma è proprio la difficoltà del riconoscimento che fa di esso un fantasma." Ibid., 4.

[44] "la difficoltà di imparare a ricordare un passato che è largamente (e per lo più negativamente) ancora presente, proprio perché non lo sappiamo ricordare." Ibid.

demands attention and wants to be heard."[45] The book is centered around the current problems that Italy faces and that are stemming from the nation's refusal to come to terms with the memory of the Seventies, a decade marked by a constant state of crisis because, according to Moro,

> the country could move neither forward nor backward: this means that the crisis consisted in the fact that a deep change was at the same time necessary and impossible. What's old dies and what's new cannot be born.
>
> il Paese non poteva andare né indietro né avanti: la crisi, cioè, consisteva nel fatto che un profondo cambiamento era nello stesso tempo necessario e impossibile. Il vecchio muore e il nuovo non può nascere.[46]

Moro is here referring to the fact that Italy, during the '70s, was under unbearable pressure because two contrasting forces — the revolutionary, forward-moving impulses of the radical Left and the centrist, compromise-prone (yet harshly policing) Christian Democrat governments — were pushing the silent majority to a breaking point. And once again, this conceptualization of the crisis reflects a perceived problem with a temporality that has fallen out of its hinges, breaking the natural cycle between consecutive generations: between fading traditions and unborn new revolutions, this dramatic decade was therefore only capable of producing ghosts, creatures suspended between life and death, stuck in a place where there can be no real progress.

In order to explain the polarized nature of time in the 1970s, Moro devotes several pages to its point of origin — 1968 — characterizing it as the very start of the nation's stunted relationship with youth movements and with their proper historical classification. As we have seen with other '68 storytellers, one of the main problem with the foundation of a shared narrative about that time is that all the elements of the story possess at the very least a double — if not a multiple — meaning. Moro is no exception in presenting the terms of the debate: '68 emerges as a kaleidoscopic object, at once bright and obscure. Moro is unsure whether to portray it as a "Big Brother" ("Grande Fratello," with a reference to George Orwell's dystopian masterpiece) or "great brother" ("fratello grande") of the following decade. Was 1968 "the beginning of the end" of all radical thinking, or should we consider it a self-conclusive episode that encapsulated the best of its youth's political achievements, only to be betrayed and ridiculed by the misdeeds of its lesser kin, the 1970s, a decade of political extremism? Moro is unsure, partly because he declares that many of the stories that could matter, those that would change our perception of that time, remain untold simply because their protagonists were everyday people, active citizens who were not operating under a spotlight:

> '68, obviously, is not the same thing as the Seventies, but the way in which that movement of ideas, people, more or less organized forces and invested energies is treated in relation to its effects for the Seventies […], in a way, renders '68 the "big brother" of all the worse things we went through in the Seventies. […] Personally, I believe that there was a radical gap between […] a surface current and a subterranean, but much larger part of the movement.

[45] "[A]nche per me non è facile liberarmi di quell'epoca e, per quanto mi sforzi di ignorarla, finisco per ritrovarmela davanti come una pietra d'inciampo o come una voce dimenticata che reclama ascolto e attenzione." Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 50.

> Il ’68, ovviamente, non è la stessa cosa degli anni Settanta, ma il modo in cui quel movimento di idee, persone, forze più o meno organizzate ed energie investite viene tematizzato quanto ai suoi effetti negli anni Settanta […] fa, in un certo senso, del ’68 il “grande fratello” di quanto di peggio gli anni Settanta ci hanno dato. […] Personalmente, ritengo che ci sia stata una radicale divaricazione tra una parte […] di superficie e una parte sottostante e molto più ampia del movimento.[47]

Moro bases his understanding of ’68 on the story of a betrayal, albeit one of a different nature than the tragedy lamented by many *ex-sessantottini* (such as De Luca): according to him, the fundamental trouble with the way we remember ’68 today is based on a “cloven interpretation”: history books and the media still privilege the perspective of the movement leaders or highlight the stories of those who later become terrorists. By doing so, they draw generalizations that do not apply to many everyday people who “probably never took part in a protest in the public square, but had a fundamental ‘political’ role in the development of democracy.”[48] This part of Italy’s civil society — the young who spurred a sense of hope and civil engagement throughout the nation, seeing “new dawns, not just sunsets” — is also ghostly in nature today, as it cannot recognize itself in the available, polarized narratives advanced by politicians, former leaders, repented terrorists, and the media as a whole. As focused on the dramatic shades of the political struggle as the public debate is today, it fails to acknowledge the role of myriad citizens that were changed by the climate in which they lived and brought about positive change within society in turn. Never attaining the status of protagonists, these common citizens were not crushed or silenced by State or police repression, yet they represent today the authentic ghosts of 1968, victimized by imperfect narratives and obscured by collective silences as they are.

Believing that ghosts need to be seen for what they are before we can disperse them, Moro proposes a conceptual system by which they can be identified in the first place. This melancholic structure of feeling is governed by three forms of “pathologies of remembrance”: silence, shame, and nostalgia. Together, these three states of being make up a peculiarly Italian problem with memory: their coexistence is paradoxical — how can shame and nostalgia simultaneously animate one’s recollections? — yet their joint effect on national memory is a deeply pervasive one, the symptomatology of a deep and severe dysfunction. By reading Moro, we could infer that these pathologies can be attributed to a complex set of circumstances: some historical, others purely affective. The reality of 1968 was very complex, simultaneously marked by the impact of worldwide events and by myriad local forms of activism, which in turn generated their own narratives. The world was portrayed as a place full of hope and yet on the brink of self-destruction; institutional politics were scorned, and yet they mattered like never before to young people; kinship was reviled, yet the search for a “chosen family” within the youth movement represented a perennial quest. The destabilizing influence of these excess emotions — the silenced, shameful, nostalgic feelings about the past that have survived beyond all national attempts at overcoming the end of the ’68 era — have, in time, produced a repository of recollections in search of a memory. These forms of “remembrances without a memory” are impressionistic feelings coalesced around past experiences that never found a proper outlet. If a

[47] Ibid., 144.

[48] “probabilmente, non ha mai partecipato a una manifestazione di piazza, eppure il loro ruolo ‘politico’ è di fondamentale importanza per lo sviluppo della democrazia.” Ibid., 145.

proper work of mourning at the national level had been prioritized, these narratives could have converged with other memories with the purpose of constituting a national archive of feelings. Instead, these emotions remain bottled up inside partial, individual stories that reiterate the experience of grief, rather than aiding the process of mourning. According to Moro, remembrance is in fact only "the footprint that past events and experiences leave on our consciousness; memory is the ability to give a place to remembrance and, by doing so, to make it become part of identity itself."[49] What is missing in order for memory to perform its healing function and to be of service to the Italian country as a whole is thus a common denominating factor, "a syntax of the decade," a language that may weave together the disparate remembrances that call for national attention, yet remain prey to emotions. And while it may seem that Moro's position is nothing but a replica of the criticisms advanced by many other historians about the "excessive subjectivity" and "possessive memories" of the *sessantottini*, the difference in his case lies in advocating for the primacy of emotions. He argues:

> It seems to me, then, that for all of us the task consists in construing a shared memory, utilizing that past and making it "react," becoming an acknowledged part of our current identity: that is to say, not because of its absence, but because of its meaningful presence. […] This is, I think, the only way not to be a victim of the weight of remembrances, while at the same time not reducing them to mere *souvenirs*, picked up here and there among the stalls of the past.
>
> Il compito di tutti noi, quindi, mi sembra soprattutto quello di costruire una memoria comune, attualizzando il passato e facendo sì che esso "reagisca" diventando parte riconosciuta della nostra identità attuale: non per la sua assenza, cioè, ma per la sua presenza significativa. […] Questo è, mi pare, l'unico modo per non subire il peso dei ricordi e nello stesso tempo per non ridurli a meri *souvenir* pescati qua e là nelle bancarelle del passato.[50]

Affective attachments must be reconciled with facts, not ignored, in order for objectivity to triumph, "since memory is not a collection of remembrances, just like truth is not a collection of facts, because both involve explanations, interpretations and admissions of responsibility."[51] With facts alone, we would be left with a glacial representation of the past that serves no purpose in exorcising the ghostly experience. And if we were to rely entirely on remembrances, our stories would remain only our own, never transcending the personal dimension to teach a lesson to all.

Where, then, could the nation seek a more truthful collective memory of '68, one that takes affect into account while striving to transcend partial, individualistic recollections? How could the temporality of the "long year" be set in motion once again after having been stalled for so long by the broken mechanisms of national memory? Opposing the many calls for an amnesty in favor of the political terrorists incarcerated because of their activities during the Years of

[49] "ricordo è un'impronta di vicende ed esperienze del passato sulla coscienza, la memoria è la capacità di riprodurre queste vicende ed esperienze nella mente, riconoscendole come tali e localizzandole nello spazio e nel tempo. La memoria, cioè, è la capacità di dare un posto al ricordo e in questo modo di farlo diventare parte dell'identità." Ibid., 21.

[50] Ibid., 149-50.

[51] "giacché la memoria non è una collezione di ricordi così come la verità non è una collezione di fatti, perché entrambe comportano spiegazioni, interpretazioni e assunzioni di responsabilità." Ibid., 110.

Lead, Moro advocates for a different model: the example of the Committee for Truth and Reconciliation that was instituted in South Africa at the end of *apartheid*. But he does so knowing that he is striving for an impossible ideal, while the only proposed solution in the Italian case — an amnesty — would represent a problematic way of "forgiving and forgetting" in a still traumatized social context that has showed no desire to overcome its grief. On one hand, an amnesty would constitute another form of silencing, a devious way of blocking any opportunity for national progress, since progress can only be achieved via a sorrowful, thorough confrontation with reality. On the other hand, the South African model would also be unfit for the Italian case, as the temporal distance between the events of the 1970s and the radically-changed political and social reality of the country today would make a process of reconciliation through truth-telling appear too out of place, obsolete, almost surreal. Nevertheless, in Moro's view the example of South Africa represents a courageous way of addressing national traumas, as it "is extremely valuable to remind us that there cannot be any reconciliation without a truthful foundation, [which] is the most we can aspire to and the least we need to rebuild the wounded fabric of our civil coexistence."[52] Nevertheless, his aspiration to replicate the South African solution with the Italian "long year" appears idealistic at best, since — as we are witnessing throughout this journey across the narrative constellation that makes up the memory of the Italian '68 — the interests, interpreters and microhistories at play within this debate appear far too many and too dissonant to ever be reconciled.

Interestingly, Moro takes one final stance against memorialization and official rhetorics within Italian public discourse by attacking the forms of "survival" through which obsolete, invalid forms of political thinking that belong to the 1970s still claim a space in contemporary debates. Running counter to the position of many storytellers of the "long year," the concept of survival does not hold a positive connotation in Moro's mind, as — far from constituting a form of melancholic resistance or hopeful resilience, as we have seen in the case of other writers — survival is to him "a range of material or immaterial elements of a culture that continues to exist despite the fact that the reason why they were produced is no longer valid."[53] These obsolescent, yet still powerful forms of thinking tend to view reality as through a distorted lens, "as if it was still yesterday." One of these forms of survival is the tendency toward fabricating conspiracy theories about every old or new event, a flawed intellectual attitude that plagues the contemporary political landscape in Italy. Another is the tendency — exemplified, in this dissertation, by my reading of Erri De Luca — to interpret the whole history of the 20th-century as the continuation of a "low-intensity" civil war that followed the end of World War Two, an underground struggle for the left-wing utopias to re-emerge victorious after the first defeat of the Communist Party in the political elections of 1946. This attitude represents for Moro "a curious run-up of the past toward the future." In fact, this *forma mentis* privileges a one-sided narrative that aims at ennobling the history of the 1900s in light of the myth of the heroic partisan Resistance. Yet, in order to achieve its purpose, it needs to selectively remember only the continuities that ran along different historical episodes during salient moments of the past century, thus also obscuring all responsibilities for the ideological blindspots and political mistakes that each new decade and each new generation engendered on its own. The traumas that

[52] "esso è di estremo valore per sottolineare che non ci può essere riconciliazione se non su una base di verità, [che] è il massimo a cui si possa aspirare e il minimo che serve per ricostruire un tessuto di convivenza civile vulnerato." Ibid., 111.

[53] "quegli elementi materiali e immateriali di una cultura che continuano a esistere malgrado sia venuta meno la ragione per cui sono stati prodotti." Ibid., 115.

the Italian nation suffered as a consequence of the Years of Lead or of the fall of the '68 movement represent an extremely complex phenomenon that cannot be boiled down to a simplistic narrative of "generational loyalty" or reduced to an idealized testimony of the endurance of the partisan Resistance. Calling upon his authority as an "authentic orphan" of the Cold War period, Moro accuses those who deploy such narratives for their own purposes of trying to "bend reality to the shape of their nightmares."[54] A victim of these pathological forms of survival, the ghost of his father Aldo Moro looms large in the Italian political consciousness because — when attempting to construe a national narrative based on his figure — no one has yet found a way out of the tangle of facts and myths, partial truths and ill-fabricated lies that circulate around his life and death. Aldo Moro's ghost is thus chained to the Italian political subconscious because of the existence of a set of conflicting and invalidating theories around his kidnapping and death. Plagued by conspiracy theories — which come down to nothing more than a "science-fictional paradigm" — and revisionist narratives — which have the complexity of a "single cell organism" — the memory of Aldo Moro is prey to all sorts of invalidating emotions and archaic forms of ideological thinking that try to seal down history, rather than opening it up for national discussion. Moro's notes on his father's ghost show that he has internalized the principle he is advocating — the notion of an "affective truth" for the whole country sought by remembering, yet transcending, one's personal traumas. Nevertheless, while theorizing on the importance of a national discussion on the wounds of the past, he deliberately shies away from relating the details of his own personal experience as the orphan of the most symbolic victim of the Years of Lead. Determined to keep the intimate dimension of memory to himself, Moro believes that sharing his own sorrowful remembrance of those times would inevitably contribute to the excessive reliance on subjectivity that has come to identify the debate over those years, polluting all attempts at creating a national archive of memories. In essence, Moro is reacting against the pervasive trope of orphanhood on which the debate on '68 was built, as I have shown, since the inception of the movement itself. In his last chapter, "A conclusion that is not an ending" ("Una conclusione che non è una fine"), Moro remarks on the open-endedness of the memory process. In order for ghosts to vanish and set the living free from the burdens they put on them, the nation should move against its own melancholic impulse to remain still. Paradoxically, it might be only when the discussion on the "long year" is open to all — rather than sealed within a number of private recollections — that this story of haunting may reach a conclusion. And it may only be when the ghost stories begin to circulate more widely throughout the nation — but this time as stories of a collective possession, not as a series of fragments gone adrift — that the ghosts will be finally put to rest.

Only a few years after the publication of *Anni Settanta*, a number of memoirs — written by the daughters of three very different symbolic figures of those times — confronted the memory of the "long '68" in ways that respond to Moro's call for a wider reflection on national memory. On the other hand, the stories of these three women deploy contemporary Italian history to address and ultimately overcome their own intimate, melancholic forms of haunting. Such is the case with *Come mi batte forte il tuo cuore* (*How Your Heart Pounds Inside Me*, 2009) by Benedetta Tobagi, *Con un piede impigliato nella storia* (*With One Foot Caught in History*, 2009) by Anna Negri, and *Il suono di una sola mano* (*The Sound of One Hand*, 2011) by Maddalena Rostagno. Inserting new voices into the long-lasting controversy over the ghostly nature of '68 affect, these new memoirs return to the inescapable theme of orphanhood,

[54] "Da autentico orfano della guerra fredda, mi sento quindi di raccomandare a quelli che lo sono — per loro fortuna — solo metaforicamente, di non piegare la realtà ai loro incubi." Ibid., 121-2.

stemming as they do from a frustrated desire to be in dialogue with the dead, or to initiate a fruitful conversation with those who survived those times, yet refuse to share their knowledge. Whether children of victims or perpetrators of terrorist crimes, these authors share a common trait: having turned to national history to resolve very intimate forms of trauma, while simultaneously taking on the task of questioning the history of ’68 from the point of view of their generation. In their cases, the process of reconciliation that stems from their act of witnessing offers a reading of how the intense season of political struggle that was born out of ’68 left a mark on the future generations, who decades later — far from being aided in their efforts by public discourse, or by the many living witnesses of that time — turn to the eloquence of national archives, of the plethora of documents that remain unexplored from the “long ’68,” to encounter the ghostly figures of their fathers in the uneasy, enigmatic time of their youth.

By comparing and contrasting a series of brief snapshots taken from these three memoirs, we are guided through an affective account of what the loss of a collective political dream meant to those who were born and raised within that utopian vision, yet — being children — never had the opportunity to choose it voluntarily. Was the legacy of their fathers a gift, a curse, or perhaps a condition infinitely more complex and layered than what could be defined by one final judgement? Like the history of ’68 itself, the stories these authors recount cannot be summarized by a simplistic, polarized assessment. First and foremost, it seems that the complexity of that era and their fathers’ roles in it defy an easy encapsulation within such terms as “gift” or “curse.” Rather, all three of them paint the picture of a very torn country where there was room both for terrorist horrors and fierce idealism, for perverse criminal delusions as well as for a committed participation in the struggles of civil society. More than simply looking at history as a repository of events to turn to when in need of understanding the past, it seems that — in order to fully overcome their traumas and become adults in turn — these three “children of the long ’68” had to dwell in their fathers’ past for so long, with such a fierce desire for reconciliation, that national history itself became a lens through which they could understand their own grief, their own way of being in the present.

Maddalena Rostagno introduces the irreverent, stubbornly optimistic figure of her father Mauro — one of the founders of the ’68 movement at the University of Trento — as someone who believed that being “in and of the movement” consisted not in remaining trapped within a web of dogmatic political projects, but rather continuing to transform oneself as an oppositional voice, becoming a permanently rebellious presence throughout subsequent historical periods. Using both archival research and her personal recollections of conversations with her parents, who were both active, charismatic figures within the movement, Maddalena describes her father’s fierce belief in activism as a philosophical principle that transcended material circumstances. For instance, she describes how — at the end of 1976, after a conference in Rimini had shown the limits of Lotta Continua’s political achievements as well as its failures — Mauro’s life-affirming politics defied the mournful depression in which the activists had collectively fallen:

> Everything is dispersed, many comrades believe that they can reinvent themselves, others try to confront their grief: the world to which they dedicated ten years of their life has disappeared. Mauro Rostagno is one of the first to get out of it. He is convinced that people need to be reborn, to explore the possibilities of the world. He makes up slogans such as “After Marx, April” and “Disaggregation is beautiful”.

> Tutto si disgrega, molti compagni credono ci si possa reinventare, altri cercano di elaborare il lutto: è sparito il mondo a cui hanno dedicato dieci anni della loro vita. Mauro Rostagno è uno dei primi a uscirne. È convinto che si debba rinascere, esplorare le possibilità del mondo. Inventa slogan come "Dopo Marx, Aprile" e "Disgregazione è bello".[55]

Unafraid of the movement's disintegration, Mauro Rostagno welcomed the end of the collective *ethos* that had dominated the life of Italian youths for a decade. He embodied the principle he ironically summarized in the slogan "After Marx, April." This pun between the words Marx / Marzo (March) hints at how, in his opinion, the failure of Marxist ideologies could only lead to a "springtime" exit from the cruel, deceptive season of the Years of Lead, thus leading to a rebirth of the individual out of the constraints of ideological norms. In the late Seventies, Rostagno marked his symbolic distancing from a much-abused utopia by organizing a "public auction" to celebrate the end of '68 ("Grande svendita per il fallimento del '68"), a movement "gone bankrupt" that had failed to achieve its goals, with the iconoclastic sale of portraits of Mao Zedong, Che Guevara and Vladimir Lenin, but also of local and controversial leading figures of those same years in Italy, such as Roberto Curcio — founder of the Red Brigades — and Mario Capanna, who was at the head of the Milan student movement. Twenty years later, in 1988, he would remember '68 as an unspeakable miracle tinged with a sacred aura. In a speech transcribed verbatim by Maddalena and inserted in her book as an effective illustration of her father's ironic personality and optimistic political vision, Rostagno declares:

> Luckily, we did not succeed in creating a language. In the same moment when we gave a name to the revolution, we expired. Luckily, we lost. […] The only ones who could tell the story [of '68] are those who lived through it. Precisely those who, not coincidentally, do not tell those stories. Because we do not have the word for it. The word is not there. It was a miracle. A collective, terrifying falling in love. Terrifying in every way. We were all one body. Let's not misrepresent it, let's not draw conclusions. […] Let's leave it like that, this slightly shameful object, the unbearable lightness of the student movement.
>
> Non siamo riusciti a costruire una lingua, per fortuna. Nel momento in cui abbiamo dato una parola alla rivoluzione, siamo scaduti. Abbiamo perso per fortuna. […] Gli unici che potrebbero raccontare [il '68] sono quelli che l'hanno vissuto. E che, guarda caso, non lo raccontano. Perché ci manca la parola. La parola non c'è. È stato un miracolo. Un innamoramento collettivo, terrificante, terrificante in tutti i sensi. Eravamo un corpo unico. Non falsiamo, non facciamo bilanci. […] Lasciamolo così, quest'oggetto un poco vergognoso, l'insostenibile leggerezza del movimento studentesco.[56]

For Rostagno, thus, 1968 was a beautiful but fleeting set of circumstances that, "luckily," ended soon, preserving its own aura by losing its cause. Had the movement really spurred a

[55] Maddalena Rostagno, *Il suono di una sola mano: Storia di mio padre Mauro Rostagno* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2011), 33.
[56] Mauro Rostagno, quoted in ibid., 127-8.

revolution of the radical Left in Italy, those who participated in it would have become part of the system, assigning institutional roles and a program to what was first and foremost a state of being, a structure of feeling that promoted a perpetual, collective fusion of the individual with an all-embracing collective. Maddalena's book is a testament to Mauro's positive attitude toward constant change. During his life, he took on multiple embodiments: from '68 political activist to hippy in search of enlightenment in India, and from founder of Saman, a meditation center and later a shelter for recovering drug addicts in the province of Trapani, Sicily, to embattled reporter openly denouncing the crimes of the Sicilian mafia in his television programs. Because of his courageous journalism, he was killed by the mafia in September 1988, yet the guilt of his murderers was not determined until a trial ended in 2014, after twenty-five years of false leads and media distortions that initially — and for a long time — attributed his murder to his partner Chicca Roveri and his former comrades at Lotta Continua and at the Saman meditation center. Written before the end of the trial, Maddalena's book is thus a way to commemorate the memory of her father in light of his righteous actions and his belief in pacifism and non-violence, but it is also a plea for historical justice. The book dwells in detail on the investigations and distorted media representations that followed Mauro's death, yet it does so by putting her experience as a daughter in the first place. In order to intimately come to terms with her father's death, Maddalena had to "leaf through pages and pages" of judicial proceedings, thus questioning the official narratives that define national history, "reading, rereading" what the institutions defined as the "truth" about her father, a judgement on his actions and thoughts that went beyond his own persona, investing the legacy of the '68 movement as a whole. Instead of putting the memory of her father to rest, she had to initiate a reversed process, whereby moving beyond grief meant "continuing to examine, to unearth from the grave, to eviscerate" the dark layers that lie at the core of Italian history.[57] Several of the chapters in Maddalena's book read like a repetition of the phrase "I remember that…" ("Ricordo che…"), followed by a list of public and private elements that, together, form the story of her father as a protagonist of his time. These litanies of remembering seem all the more convincing as they combine the scrupulousness of historical research and judicial truth with a daughter's emotional investment. The book illlustrates her father's lifetime commitment to his '68 ideals. In fact, as Maddalena reveals, Mauro Rostagno saw no discontinuities between his dedication to the revolution as a young man and his adult belief in fighting criminal institutions such as the mafia at the local level, seeing the latter as a practical application of the former. As such, *Il suono di una sola mano* is an attempt at closing a circle, pleading for a long-awaited truth that would once and for all acknowledge the truth behind Mauro's murder; yet, it also stands as an intimate attempt to connect the present with the faded beliefs of the '68 generations, showing how the life lessons left by activists such as Mauro Rostagno can open up spaces for a productive confrontation with the dramas that plague the nation today.

Far from the playful idealism that animated Mauro Rostagno's unique approach to the rise and fall of the '68 movement and the overall trajectory of contemporary Italian society, the story of Antonio "Toni" Negri, still constitutes today one of the most opaque and controversial enigmas of the post-'68 era. On one hand — as a political philosopher, the founder of the extra-parliamentary group Potere Operaio (Workers' Power) in 1969 and a prominent member of Autonomia Operaia Organizzata (Organized Workers' Autonomy) during the 1970s — he is hailed as a prophet and a teacher for a whole generation of activists who sought to build a

[57] "Ho continuato a sfogliare ; a leggere, a rileggere. Ho continuato a esaminare, disseppellire, sviscerare." Ibid., 215.

common front between factory workers and the intellectual segment of the movement. On the other hand, Negri is today often characterized as a "cattivo maestro" (a "bad teacher") for the post-'68 generation because of his political writings penned during that era, which sanctioned the use of violence and theorized the notion that leftist organizations should abandon their petty fights with Neo-Fascist organizations and focus instead on the struggle against State institutions. His ideas were considered to have laid the groundwork for the intensification of the armed struggle on the part of leftist organizations, ultimately leading to the widespread diffusion of political terrorism. After the death of Aldo Moro, Negri was arrested along other intellectuals with the charge of "armed insurrection against the State" and personally accused of being the mastermind behind the actions of the Red Brigades. A year later, the charge was dropped, but Negri was nevertheless condemned to a 30-year sentence for his implication in other crimes committed by the "autonomist" fringe of the movement. In 1983, while temporarily released after being elected as a member of the Italian Parliament with the Radical Party, Negri escaped to Paris. He eventually returned to Italy in 1997 and spent a few years in prison. He then went on to publish two influential critiques of globalization and neo-liberalism, *Empire* (2002) and *Multitudes* (2004), both co-written with Michael Hardt. In 2009, his daughter Anna Negri wrote *Con un piede impigliato nella storia*, an autobiography in which she describes the burden of being born and raised in a family of revolutionary intellectuals, torn between the lights and shadows of the movement's actions and personally doomed by the devastating impact that national events had on the life of her family.

Anna Negri's memoir focuses on the way her own life was "caught" ("impigliata") in the tight fabric of events in which Toni Negri played a crucial part as either a victim or an instigator of historical change. As such, her account reflects the ambiguity of her father's personal and political story. Her writing is dominated by an overwhelming, ubiquitous feeling of shame for having inherited such a burdensome family, one whose destiny was so tightly yoked to the downfall of the youth movement in the 1970s. Anna's shame pervades every chapter of her story, coupled with an impossible desire for a mediocre life, a longing that she describes as "the lucid dream of normalcy" that accompanied her childhood. As humble as it seemed, her lucid dream was shattered by the intensity of everyday life with her parents, who were "just the opposite of that dream, living in a state of constant excitement, full of fervor, of emotions, but also slightly embarrassing, whereas I did all I could to go unnoticed."[58] Within this context, her father's arrest is remembered as the moment she feared the whole country would find out she was the "daughter of a leftist" and thus realize she had "fooled everyone" by pretending to be just like everyone else.[59] Anna's embittered sense of shame, her rage for having been involved in a series of events that were greater than herself, returns later in life to haunt her relationship with her father. However, the most interesting episodes recounted in her book are those that eloquently conjure the disappointed affect of the new generation, that of the children of '68 protesters. Throughout her memoir, Anna transcends her own individual story to paint a portrait of a disillusioned youth — the other side of the coin of the inspired civil commitment personified by Maddalena Rostagno, fighting with pride in her father's name — that grew up deprived of

[58] "I miei erano tutto il contrario di quel sogno, vivevano in uno stato di continua eccitazione ed erano pieni di fervore, di emozione, ma anche un po' imbarazzanti, mentre io facevo di tutto per non farmi notare." Anna Negri, *Con un piede impigliato nella storia*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2009), 18.

[59] "Era la prima volta che mio padre appariva sulla stampa, e ho pensato: ecco, alla fine sono stata scoperta. Non sarei più potuta andare al mare coi miei nonni: lo avevo tenuto nascosto per dodici anni, e ora tutti avrebbero saputo che ero la figlia di uno di sinistra. Tanta fatica per mimetizzarmi e adesso mi sentivo morire di vergogna perché avevo imbrogliato tutti: avevo fatto finta di essere come loro." Ibid., 14.

role models, since the "long '68" generation had severed all ties with what came before, but had simultaneously caused traumas of its own making, leaving behind a trail of new issues and questions for their children to confront alone. Anna described how, like many other teenagers in the late 1970s, she tried to mimic her father's activism, but found herself going through the motions, along with everyone around her:

> No one confessed that the time of politics was over and everyone behaved like before: so there were still pickets and demonstrations, but they were like a theater performance of something that was no longer.
>
> Nessuno ammetteva che la politica fosse finita e tutti si comportavano come prima: così c'erano ancora i picchetti, le manifestazioni, ma erano come la rappresentazione teatrale di qualcosa che non c'era più.[60]

The sense of inner void conjured by the image of this collective theater performance implicitly constitutes a formal accusation of the previous generation, guilty of having handed down to their children a sense of political duty celebrated through formulaic rituals, but not having been able to inspire in their children the passions and moral principles that spurred the birth of those rituals in the first place. Extending her disappointed gaze to her whole generation, Anna describes the diffusion of heroin addiction among Italian youth in the early 1980s as "a powerful social anesthetic," the tragic, yet logical consequence of a pervasive sense of despair that fell upon society after the '70s, a way to silence grief and suppress rage. Nevertheless, a different form of rage dominated underground youth culture after "the end of politics." Anna describes her days spent observing the transmutations of the social landscape in Milan during the early '80s, when the sense of loyalty to a collective political project was replaced by the utter rejection of all politics represented by punk counterculture. Born in the USA and United Kingdom, the nihilist philosophy of punk found a different application and a fertile ground in the post-'68 climate: one that still rebelled against society as a whole, while specifically rejecting the way their fathers' generation conceived of dissent.

> With their NO FUTURE slogan, they were telling the story of the end of politics. For years we had put up with the rhetorics of a better tomorrow, when, after the revolution, everything would change. Punks, instead, were saying: "None of that has ever come to pass, the future does not exist, there is only the present and we have to confront all the shit that is in front of us." And through the body, each one of them was an instrument of protest. There were no parties to vote for, no intellects to follow, everything was sheer dissent.
>
> Con il loro NO FUTURE raccontavano la fine della politica. Per anni ci eravamo sorbiti tutta la retorica di un domani migliore, quando, dopo la rivoluzione, tutto sarebbe cambiato, invece i punk dicevano: "Tutto questo non c'è stato, il futuro non esiste, c'è solo il presente e dobbiamo confrontarci con tutta la merda che c'è." E ognuno con il proprio corpo era strumento di protesta, non c'erano partiti da votare, intelletti da seguire, era tutto dissenso.[61]

[60] Ibid., 145.
[61] Ibid., 216.

The desolate landscape conjured here by Anna hides a fundamental irony. She describes punk music drastically taking over spaces and forms of protest within the pre-existing youth culture by sweeping away all the fundamental beliefs of its forefathers. Similarly, the '68 generation had thought of itself as an exception by denying everything that came before. As a consequence, the '68 generation felt betrayed by the lack of commitment shown by its successors, while their punk children — like Anna — opposed themselves to a way of life they saw too laden with tragedies and burdensome commitments to live beyond the failure of its political vision. Looking back at the history of the 20th century, it seems that, since the inception of youth culture in the Sixties, each generation founded its own origin myth on the belief that, through a violent rupture with their predecessors, they could invent the world anew. Yet, as Anna's conclusions suggest, even her generation could not escape the cyclical demands of memory:

> And then you realize that, when children are involved, there are no victims or perpetrators. We have all been children traumatized by a History that did not belong to us and that we did not choose. And I have made a cruel discovery: that children carry on their shoulders the burdens of their parents' faults, and sooner or later they have to confront them.
>
> E allora ti accorgi che quando si tratta di figli non ci sono vittime o carnefici, siamo stati tutti bambini traumatizzati da una Storia che non ci apparteneva e che non abbiamo scelto. E ho scoperto una cosa crudele: che i figli portano sulle spalle le colpe dei genitori, e prima o poi con queste colpe devono confrontarsi.[62]

In Anna Negri's memoir, the need to establish a shared memory of the past is an impulse just as strong as the one that compelled her generation to grow distant from "those who were there" in '68. In her case, remembering proves painful as it involves the sharing of a burden that predates her own birth, is identified with her father's actions and binds her to a history she felt oppressed by and could not escape. At the same time, by rewriting her own version of the history of the 1970s, she appropriates it, inserting herself as an active part of a narrative she passively suffered before. By recognizing that, as a consequence of those years, the whole nation is today riddled with contradictions, mistakes and injustices, she is drawn closer to the story of her father, ultimately understanding that the inner sense of confusion and hopelessness she experienced her whole life was as much a sign of the times as an intimate, familial inheritance. In the end, her "lucid dream of normalcy" may just have been a fantasy in the Italian context of those times, an imaginary ideal that was nowhere to be found in a country so deeply wounded by the trauma of a sudden and unexpected wave of violence and terrorism.

The traumatic experience of terrorism lies at the heart of Benedetta Tobagi's memoir *Come mi batte forte il tuo cuore*. The title of the book, borrowed from a line in a poem by Wislawa Szymborska, eloquently captures the essence of the melancholic dilemma of '68 memory: the feeling that one's relentless loyalty to a beloved dead person or ideal is the force that motivates the living's actions in the present, a way to imaginatively protract the life of the dead.[63] Benedetta was only three years old in May 1980, when her father — the famous socialist

[62] Ibid., 267.

[63] The line "Listen, how your heart pounds inside me" closes the poem "Could Have," in Wislava Szymborska, *View With a Grain of Sand*, trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1996), 18.

journalist Walter Tobagi, who wrote for *Il Corriere della Sera*, Italy's most popular newspaper — was killed by a squad of the Brigate XXVIII Marzo (28th March Brigades), an extreme left-wing terrorist organization. Given her young age, Benedetta grew up with no first-hand memory of him, knowing only "'poor Walter' […], the famous special correspondent for the *Corriere della Sera*, a victim of 'terrorist barbarism.'"[64] In the opening chapters of her book, Benedetta describes herself growing up "assailed" by the public image of the "Socialist martyr" and "good reporter" Walter Tobagi, two shallow characterizations of her father's personality that proved useless to her in forming an image of who he really was. Moved by a desire to fill the void left by the empty commemorative rituals available in Italian public discourse, she began to delve deeper into the layers of "incomplete, unbalanced, false, reductive" representations of Walter Tobagi's public persona, searching for a kernel of authenticity.[65] This process proved essential to her not only in forming an image of her father she would be able to mourn, but also as a way to turn the experience of being haunted she had known all her life into an occasion for healing and self-growth:

> Before I was myself, I was long torn between being "Benedetta" and "the daughter of Tobagi", the hero and martyr. Allowing for these two worlds to coexist was neither obvious nor easy. All the more because each day I experienced, even in the tiniest things, that I was not a daughter, but an orphan. An excoriation over which skin never grows back. Paradoxical: not being able to forget a father who is not there and will never be close to you, not even for a moment. A ubiquitous name and an abysmal void.
>
> Prima di essere me, mi sono dibattuta a lungo tra "Benedetta" e "la figlia di Tobagi", eroe e martire. Far coesistere i due mondi non è stato ovvio né facile. Tanto più che ogni giorno sperimentavo, fin nelle piccole cose, di non essere figlia, ma orfana. Una scorticatura su cui non ricresce mai la pelle. Paradossale: non poter dimenticare neanche un momento un padre che non c'è e non potrai mai avere vicino. Un nome onnipresente e un vuoto abissale.[66]

In this passage, the trope of orphanhood — an image so pervasive and ubiquitous in '68 writing, usually standing as a victorious declaration of independence against the burdens of genealogical inheritance — is turned back on its head to emphasize a crucial aspect of growing up deprived of one's origins: to be an orphan is to inevitably miss a part of oneself, to be incomplete. The key aspect of the melancholic paradox described here is in fact not so much represented by the impossibility of mourning a father one never knew, but to be stuck in a discursive place where one is primarily defined precisely by what has always been missing, a dead "heroic" father. In fact, during her youth Walter's ghostly presence was so pervasive it defined everything around it. In Benedetta's experience, moving past the melancholic stage corresponds not only to reconnecting to the memory of her father; it also means overcoming the

[64] "Sono sempre stata la figlia del 'povero Walter' (un'espressione che detesto), famoso inviato speciale del *Corriere della Sera*, vittima della 'barbarie terroristica'." Benedetta Tobagi, *Come mi batte forte il tuo cuore* (Turin: Einaudi, 2009), 7.
[65] "Immagini incomplete, sbilanciate, falsate, riduttive. Tanti miti da smontare per ricomporre un'immagine più fedele del giornalista — e dell'uomo — che mio padre è stato." Ibid., 23.
[66] Ibid., 8.

psychic split induced by melancholia to fully become herself. The sense of frozen temporal suspension she describes as the atmosphere that reigned in her home while growing up is one that reveals the depths of intimate sorrow, but could be just as well used as a metaphorical representation of a traumatized Italian nation that closed off all access to a debate on the memory of the 1970s, afraid of the ugly and violent emotions it would still stir. While used to describe a very private kind of repressed domestic grief, the metaphor of the "explosive substance" here symbolically evokes the image of the violent Years of Lead and of a country held hostage by the memories of such irrational and brutal forms of violence:

> Sorrow is a dangerous substance, one that is difficult to manage, like a very unstable explosive. I picture myself and my family sitting on these boxes full of TNT: we need to be very careful not to cause them to explode with a sudden movement, inappropriate words or tears. This is how, layer upon layer, a block of frozen emotions gets sedimented.
>
> Il dolore è una sostanza pericolosa, difficile da gestire, come un esplosivo molto instabile. Vedo me e la mia famiglia seduti sopra queste casse di tritolo: bisogna stare molto attenti a non farle saltare in aria con gesti bruschi, parole inappropriate o lacrime. Così, strato su strato si sedimenta un blocco di emozioni congelate.[67]

In Benedetta's case, it took an act of courage, spurred by the love for an absent father, to connect her with his memory in spite of the layers of fear and lies that separated her from the true story of his life. Growing up in a house she compares to a "cenotaph," where the commemoration of the saintly dead was formally ever-present, yet simultaneously repressed, she lacked "tangible handholds" that would allow her to reach an understanding of his life and work. Amidst the solemn, yet deceptive lies that had been chosen to celebrate his life, Benedetta found that her father "was hiding a bit everywhere, but in one room there was much more of him than elsewhere."[68] The room was Walter's office, the place where he spent most of his time when at home, reading and writing his articles. The appeal of Walter's office frightened her, seeming "still, as if waiting, intimidating me" with the promise of a fateful encounter.[69] And finally, once she dared to open the door to that room, her first contact with her father's writings is described at once as a healing encounter with the ghost that reigned over her childhood, but also as the moment when her own story was defined: in becoming the curator of her father's work, she placed her faith in the work of memory and in its healing power. Spilling out of the pages left unread in the office, Benedetta could finally establish a "living" connection with her father. The writings he left behind, in fact,

> were not "things among other things," but rather words and thoughts coming back to life, regaining their substance and their scent. […] Words have a rupturing power, they are what makes us human. They win over time, distance, and death.

[67] Ibid., 26.
[68] "Avevo bisogno di appigli tangibili. È stato meno difficile del previsto: il cenotafio nascondeva un tesoro. Papà era annidato un po' dappertutto, ma in una stanza ce n'era molto più che altrove." Ibid., 28.
[69] "Lo studio sembrava fermo, come in attesa, e mi intimidiva." Ibid., 35.

> Non erano “cose tra altre cose” bensì parole e pensieri che riprendevano vita, consistenza e profumo. […] Le parole hanno una potenza dirompente, sono ciò che ci rende umani, vincono il tempo, la distanza, la morte.[70]

Benedetta’s symbolic entrance into her father’s office marks the moment when the melancholic spell that held her life hostage is broken, turning the paralyzing sense of oppression she felt towards the act of preservation of her father’s memory into a pact for survival she establishes with him in spite of his death. By becoming a historian and a researcher and ultimately writing the story of his life — a book that is at once an intimate portrait of him and a reflection on the history of the Years of Lead — she dedicated her life to breaking the ghostly silence that surrounds the nation’s painful past. Moving beyond the celebration of Walter Tobagi’s courage as a journalist, the book responds to Benedetta’s sense of intellectual and moral duty toward the establishment of a national narrative about the 1970s. The volume is in fact conceived as an effort to ultimately build a continuum with the past in order for it to illuminate the future. Raised in a country where contemporary history is founded on the biased principle of divided memories, she sarcastically comments on the forms of resistance to inter-generational dialogue she encountered along the way:

> Then the fateful line comes. It is pronounced in a tone of irritation and benevolent paternalism: “You cannot understand what the Seventies were”, the last bastion against all questions and against the heavy shadow of a judgement. […] I turned my disappointment into comedy. On my kitchen cupboard, between photos and the grocery list, there is […] a solitary, neon green note that greets me every morning as I drink my coffee: “YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE SEVENTIES WERE”. It sends me back at my desk laughing, among piles of books and magazines from that time, the comforting rationality of my father’s articles always at hand. The living proof that a different way of reacting and thinking is always possible: certainly, that was the case even back then.[71]

> Giunge allora la fatidica battuta, pronunciata con irritazione e benevolo paternalismo: “Non puoi capire cos’erano gli anni Settanta”, estremo baluardo contro le domande e l’ombra pesante di un giudizio. […] Ho volto il disappunto in commedia. Sulla credenza della mia cucina, tra le foto e la lista della spesa, campeggia […] un solitario bigliettino verde acido che mi saluta ogni mattina mentre bevo il caffè: “DEVI CAPIRE COS’ERANO GLI ANNI SETTANTA”. Mi rispedisce con una risata al tavolo da lavoro, tra pile di libri e giornali dell’epoca, la confortante razionalità degli articoli di mio padre sempre a portata di mano. La prova vivente che un diverso modo di reagire e di pensare è sempre possibile: di certo, lo era anche allora.[72]

In conclusion, Benedetta’s memoir stems from an act of resistance, the desire to preserve a history that may heal the victims of a cruel past, but also the country as a whole, and — if liberated through dialogue — provide the foundation for a more grounded, heartfelt sense of

[70] Ibid., 42.
[71] Ibid., 157.
[72] Ibid., 157.

connection with the dead. While acknowledging that the messy matter of divided memory may not be naively recomposed by a single act of love, she finds she has no other choice but keep working to suture and heal the country's wounds, so that the melancholic feelings that keep us tied to the past may be dispelled to make room for reconciliation:

> I have knocked on so many doors for love of my father. But every investigation, at its core, is an act born out of love. […] Maybe we will never really know how things went down. Then we need to pause and leave on the sidewalk the pieces of a mosaic that cannot be put back together. Yet, we can leave them polished and all tidied up for those who will come after us. […] I close behind me the door to the ghosts' room. I wait — holding the child I have inside of me — and I stubbornly continue to demand that new doors, new archives, new eyes and thoughts be opened up, so to disperse the stagnant air of a country that smells like confinement and like too much death.
>
> Ho bussato a così tante porte per amore di mio padre. Ma ogni ricerca, al fondo, è un atto che vive d'amore. […] Forse non arriveremo mai a sapere davvero come sono andate le cose. Allora bisogna arrestarsi, lasciando sul marciapiede i pezzi di un mosaico che non si ricompone in unità, ma lasciarli ripuliti e bene ordinati per chi verrà dopo di noi. […] Chiudo alle mie spalle la porta della stanza dei fantasmi. Aspetto — cullando la bambina che mi porto dentro — e domando con insistenza che si aprano nuove porte, nuovi archivi, tanti occhi e pensieri, per disperdere l'aria stagnante di un paese che puzza di chiuso e di troppa morte.[73]

"Farsi carico" was a common expression used in '68 and throughout the '70s in the context of radical political movements in Italy. It meant "to take charge," "to take responsibility," to accept the burden placed by important events upon collective and individual choices, statements and struggles. Today, as in the case of Benedetta Tobagi, it might mean to overcome the discomfort and ambivalence which pervade most accounts of "the long '68." But taking charge of the past does not necessarily have to coincide with a mournful goodbye to vanished hopes, to accept responsibilities for failures, distortions and betrayals. It might perhaps also mean to acknowledge the survival and continuity of those forms of life which brought significant changes in many aspects of civil society and culture, putting into practice what Giovanni Moro defines as "perhaps the one possible revolution that took place, but also the only necessary one."[74] If we think in terms of macro-political dynamics and historical processes, the contrast between the ambitions and the achievements of 1968 movements appears too stark, pressed as it is by a series of massive political and economic conjunctions that were deeply changing society on a global scale. Yet, alongside the grand, negative theories that circulate around the decline of the youth movement we can posit the existence of reparative narratives. The virtue of reading history in a reparative light consists in allowing for less reductive possibilities to emerge, an attitude that may serve the future as well. The sense of oblivion and ambivalence that surround the memory of "the years '68" cannot erase the collective achievements of a generation, as partial as they appear today and as much as they are taken for granted. Aside from the concrete achievements obtained in the domain of collective rights (such

[73] Ibid., 276-7.
[74] "[F]orse l'unica rivoluzione possibile, ma anche l'unica necessaria." Moro, *Anni Settanta*, 67.

as divorce, abortion, reproductive rights, workers' contractual power, if we look only at the Italian case), I believe that there is a form of power to be found precisely in the resilience of the ideals and hopes of the '68 generation, even when those hopes are taken to be no longer justifiable or valid. On one hand, the fact that "the counterculture had valued being over doing, expressing over accomplishing" may be considered its most limiting factor.[75] On the other hand, it was the predominance of this particular mode of being — as open-ended, fleeting and ambiguous as it appears to be — rather than that of a practical political agenda, that constitutes the most pervasive remnant of a time long gone by.

As we have seen, many narrators of '68 claim that their hopes never died and still enliven the struggles of today, or should serve as ethical *exempla* to reignite a desire for change in the new generations. Although their hopes and dreams may appear debatable today, it is their endurance that constitutes the most dynamic element of the *sessantottini*'s melancholic desire for livelihood and political relevance today. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick once noted: "Hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively-positioned reader tries to organize the fragments [...] she encounters or creates."[76] Attempting to introduce less punitive and self-punitive readings of the history of 1968 may bring us to rethink cross-generational continuities in social activism and civil participation in politics in Italy, bridging the distance between "those who were there" and their contemporary interlocutors. After all, rethinking "the long '68" as a temporal figure that is somehow still in motion provides for a deeper understanding of what a movement ultimately is. In his account of the 1977 protests, historian and activist Marco Grispigni aptly describes their movement as a form of rejection of the State, not just in the sense of the institution of power it represents, but in its literal meaning: state, *stasis*, immobility.[77] As Giorgio Agamben recently defined it, drawing from Carl Schmidt and Aristotle, a movement comes to embody the dynamic part of political life, as opposed to the stasis of the State.[78] A movement is a potentiality that has not reached its end; in fact, a movement is not meant to reach an end, it is an indeterminate process in constant relation with its imperfection. Today, confronting the memory of 1968 may also mean searching for more than a reconciliation with the past, asking for more than a faithful account, or positing unreconciled memories as a sign of a radical resilience that can overcome failure, oblivion, perhaps even death.

[75] Ibid., 430.
[76] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 146.
[77] Grispigni, *1977*, 9.
[78] Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è un movimento?*, online audio resource, www.archive.org/details/GiorgioAgamben-CheCosUnMovimento (last access: 12/01/2015). Transcript available at http://www.egs.edu/faculty/giorgio-agamben/articles/movement (last access: 12/01/2015).

Chapter 4

Before and After *Controinchieste*: Memory, Trauma, and Collective Subjects

Section 1. Introduction

"After 43 years, there is still no justice for the massacre of Piazza Fontana": this sombre slogan appears at the end of the teaser trailer for *Romanzo di una strage* (*Novel of a Massacre*, by Marco Tullio Giordana, 2012), the first fiction film to provide a critical commentary on the infamous bombing that took place in December 1969 at the Bank of Agriculture in Milan — an act that was ascribed by the Government to terrorist groups from the extreme Left — as well as on the dramatic events that followed it. As a fictional rewriting of actual events, *Romanzo di una strage* situates itself along a trajectory of recent films by young Italian directors — such as Paolo Sorrentino, Matteo Garrone, Daniele Vicari — who have reintroduced the stream of *impegno*, (collective political engagement) into the history of Italian cinema.[1] Their work — labelled by some film critics and scholars as Neo-Neorealism for a commitment to realist aesthetics and for the collective dimension of the stories they narrate — is largely invested with the confrontation of traumatic national memories.[2] As such, the label of Neo-Neorealism lends itself in these instances to a different *ethos* than the one that characterized the Postwar Neorealist aesthetics: rather than being preoccupied with an effort to rebuild and celebrate the unity of the Italian nation after a traumatic event, Neo-Neorealist films are moved by a desire to unravel the knots of contradictory narratives, conspiracy theories and conflicting versions of the "truth" that solidified around the historical episodes they choose to revisit in light of today. While, in fact, the fashionable label of Neo-Neorealism seeks to trace a direct continuity with the cinematic aesthetics of the Postwar era, both its subject matter — disputed histories and disavowed collective traumas — and its forms of representation seem to veer away from the nation-affirming poetics of the Neorealist tradition. Neo-Neorealists portray instead an internally-divided, paranoid country where the multiplicity of available narratives around the past fosters a sense of suspicion about any attempt to establish a coherent, unitary archive of national memories. Not coincidentally, this resurgent wave of *cinema impegno* is now looking back at collective tragedies that took place during the 1960s and 1970s as paradigmatic examples of the nation's reluctance to confront the ghosts of the past and as remnants of a time when — as former '68 leader Guido Viale put it — "politics was everything, and everything was politics."[3]

Indeed, the commitment to factual authenticity and the strategies of reinvention of national identity that lie at the heart of these recent films may in some ways be reminiscent of the

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[1] See, for example, Paolo Sorrentino, *Il Divo*, Lucky Red, 2008; Matteo Garrone, *Gomorra*, Fandango, 2008; Daniele Vicari, *Diaz*, Fandango, 2012.

[2] For an analysis of Neo-Neorealism, see Carmela Bernardetta Scala, Antonio Rossini (eds.), *New Trends in Italian Cinema: "New" Neorealism* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013); See also Matteo Garrone's interview with Richard Porton, "Inside 'The System': An interview with Matteo Garrone," *Cineaste* XXXIV, no. 2 (2009). http://www.cineaste.com/articles/inside-the-system-an-interview-with-matteo-garrone (last access: 12/01/2015); Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Age of Afterness:* Il Divo, Gomorra *and the Poetics of Post-Realism*, Maria Ringrose Keynote Lecture, University California – Berkeley, 11/01/2010. See also Tiziana Ferrero-Regis, *Recent Italian Cinema: Spaces, Contexts, Experiences* (Leicester: Troubadour Publishing, 2009).

[3] "Tutto era politica, e la politica era tutto." Guido Viale, *Il '68: Tra rivoluzione e restaurazione*, 30.

Postwar era of Neorealism: like those films, the new productions seek ways to engage their audiences in a debate about a controversial past that shaped the nation's political course for decades to come. Yet, some features — strikingly overlooked by critics — bring these films closer to an undercurrent of independent documentaries that held the life of the *polis* and of collective participation in politics as its primary object of investigation in the post-'68 era in Italy. Through its insistence on the "correct" representation and commemoration of traumas, the new politically-engaged Italian cinema betrays an uncanny familiarity with the "underground" practices of the *controinchieste*, a documentary genre born out of the political tensions of the 1968-1978 decade, between the first student uprisings at the universities of Rome and Trento and the shocking kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, the leader of the Christian Democrats, by the terrorist organization Red Brigades. The *controinchieste* represented the first form of independent documentation that sought to question official versions of contested historical events, reaffirming controversial "truths" that were silenced by official media and giving voice to the nation's moral rage in the face of collective tragedies. Nevertheless, their influence on contemporary filmmakers is still largely ignored today.

Departing from concerns about contemporary forms of fictional *cinema impegno*, I trace the historical roots of such cultural tendencies in Italian film, arguing that the desire to construe collective subjects through the confrontation of historical traumas was first and most eminently represented in the parallel, largely ignored tradition of documentary film. Developing along less popular avenues of production and distribution, documentary film has often been the aesthetic form through which political anxieties have been expressed in Italian cinema. Therefore, documentaries have frequently been used as a channel for the expression of counterhegemonic voices in complex political disputes. Here, I track the inception of such collective voices in the documentary form. Following the ways these voices were transformed across the decades, I question how the need to ethically address the nation's traumatic memories through the construction of an imagined community of like-minded left-wing activists travelled from the Postwar era to the 21st century in documentary film, identifying a crucial turning point in the *controinchieste* of the early Seventies. A study of the little-known tradition of political documentaries in Italy shows in fact a map of formal and ideological continuities that connect the Postwar era to today's independent productions, yet reveals a marked shift in the post-'68 period, when a set of dramatic historical circumstances caused a drastic change in the way the Left, as a collective subject, perceived of itself and represented itself on screen. Indeed, the early *controinchieste* devised strategies to preserve a sense of collective participation in politics while adapting it to the changed, more somber climate of the post-'68 era. In essence, the *controinchieste* recorded the precise moment when the mood of the country shifted in relation to the political activities of the radical Left. It was at that point that the search for a unified resistant voice in documentaries reached its apex, contributing to the consolidation of the myth of the militant "collectivity" within the radical culture of the Left.

Once solely identified with the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the national Left had held on for a long time to the idea that a different course in politics could be achieved through the electoral success of the PCI and through the mobilization of cultural forces — mainly identified in cinema and literature — that would lead the nation to embrace a progressive agenda. But the '68 movement, with its spontaneous and decentralized power, had already contributed to the collapse of this traditional political vision. Yet, when the youth movement itself was thrown into a state of crisis by a number of violent political events, the idea of a progressive collective coming together to change the course of politics crumbled under the traumatic weight of reality.

Nevertheless, the idealistic notion of a resisting collective was not defeated by these events, but rather morphed into a different affective mode: that of a clandestine subject deprived of its dignity, yet desperately struggling to tell its own version of the truth.

The shift from the nationalistic rhetorics of Neorealist-influenced films to the crisis of a plural subject (ie, the *we*) in search of an elusive truth that informs the *controinchieste* is reflected in specific representation and documentation practices that characterized the later productions. With the advent of the violent Years of Lead and the radicalization of political struggle in the 1970s, the optimistic narrative of collective political engagement that had held together since the end of the war — migrating from the *ethos* of the partisan Resistance to the myth of the "endless spring" of 1968 — was suddenly tainted by association with the rhetorics of terrorist organizations such as the Red Brigades. The triumphalistic rhetorics of the Postwar "partisan call to arms" against Fascism were at that point replaced by a pessimistic conception of the collectivity as a subject under attack that desperately sought to reestablish a firm grasp on reality through the eloquence of film.

In order to reach a thorough understanding of the cultural transition that occurred in the early 1970s, shifting the mode of self-perception of such a prismatic and elusive *we* in documentary films, I will put Italian film history in dialogue with the ways in which recent scholarship has envisioned the relationship between documentary films and their audiences. In doing so, I investigate the notion of "cultural trauma" as an event that afflicts a collectivity even when the subjects are not present to witness it directly. In fact, documentary is particularly apt to process this kind of trauma. In Italian documentaries, the collective idea of resistance is often channelled through the cult of the dead, and particularly through that of political martyrs. As I will show, the cult of the martyred body has been a constant element of political documentaries despite the marked shift in tone they underwent with the *controinchieste*. Throughout the decades, collective participation in politics has been mobilized through the idea of honoring and remembering the "truth" about the vilified death of those who rebelled against a repressive hegemonic power. While the tragedies that occurred throughout the Years of Lead gradually contributed to the dismantling of a politically-committed mass movement, the romantic notion of a collective subject at war with the establishment survived in today's documentary productions, albeit in marginal, small niches of the film industry. Finally, I will discuss the case of the *controinchieste* on the death of Carlo Giuliani in 2001 as a form of spectral survival of a sense of collective engagement through film that continues to exist in Italian documentary in the present.

Section 2. A Call to Arms: Political Documentaries and their Audiences

The question of the political relationship between documentary films and their audiences is a very complex one, tied as it is to specific geopolitical contexts, logics of production, funding, circulation of films and dissemination of ideological and/or social messages. If we take the documentary film to serve as a mode of representation that stages an exemplary story, one which has some claim to authenticity and, as such, is meant to be of service to others while maintaining its specificity, we immediately become aware of the creative tension that is constituted between the two elements of this relationship: the particular and the general. In social documentary, this tension is often played out as the line that connects individual experience to collective identification, and that leads the audience to recognize the story portrayed on the screen as veritably real or realistic. Because of this mimetic quality, which draws a connection between

reality, film, exemplary stories and their recipients, the documentary has often been deployed as an instrument for social change. As film scholar Jane Gaines points out,

> the idea of sweeping social change remained attached to the documentary film both inside and outside the academy [because of] the existence of a mythology on the Left. We not only hope for social transformation in our lifetime, but we hope that independently produced documentary film and video will have something to do with this upheaval.[4]

While the myth of film as a vehicle for social change has a very long history and larger implications, connected as it is to aesthetic and political theories about the manipulation of reality that range from André Bazin to Sergej Eisenstein, there is indeed a specific legacy that pertains to collective politics and documentary film that has its zenith in the radical culture of the 1960s.[5] During that decade, the investigation of reality became the source of a totalizing engagement with the public dimension, whereby documentary film acquired a privileged status as the way through which artists, videomakers and activists could both record and have an impact on reality through the means of collective participation in the cultural practice of film. In remembering the late Sixties, the politically-engaged Italian director Elio Petri described cinema as "a great collective and contextual experience," pointing again to the fruitful interrelation of a particular cultural climate with the community that inhabited it and participated in its reinvention.[6] Thirty years later, Petri's enthusiasm was echoed nostalgically by film critic Gianni Canova, who nostalgically looked back at the collective film culture of the 1960s as if it were a coherent, frozen object in time. Canova describes Sixties cinema as a syntax that always addressed and responded to a plural subject: *we.* According to him, the ubiquity of the first-person plural was a liberating element that subverted the self-referentiality of the *I* and opened the space for other articulations of identity:

> There's a basic difference between experimental cinema, investigative cinema, and avant-garde films produced during the Sixties and those that were made *before* and *after* such a crucial decade both for the history of cinema and for that of the twentieth century. There, in the raging Sixties, each film […] referred to a collective background that granted it a surplus of meaning and reabsorbed it within a thick web of associations, interferences and alliances; outside of that context, virtually all films that were made with similar aims referred instead […] just to themselves. […] Which is like saying: during the Sixties almost every film spoke in the plural form, and it said *us.*

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[4] Jane Gaines, "Political Mimesis," in Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (eds.), *Collecting Visible Evidence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 85.

[5] An enthusiastic advocate of Neorealism, André Bazin dedicated a number of essays to the dialectics that tie "the real" to its filmic representation. See André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 21. Both in his films (*Strike!*, 1925; *Battleship Potemkin*, 1925) and in his theoretical writings, Sergej Eisenstein explored instead the "agitational" possibilities offered by montage as a technique that revealed contradictions and/or posited associations within both reality and the logics of the film. See "The Dramaturgy of Film Form (The Dialectical Approach to Film Form)," in *Writings, 1922-1934: Sergej Eisenstein Selected Works Vol. 1*, ed. Richard Taylor, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 161.

[6] Elio Petri, quoted in Vincenzo Camerino, *Il '68: cultura e cinema* (Lecce: Capone Editore, 1988), 21.

> C'è una differenza di fondo tra il cinema sperimentale, d'inchiesta e d'avanguardia prodotto negli anni sessanta e quello realizzato *prima* e *dopo* quel decennio così nevralgico tanto nella storia del cinema quanto in quella del Novecento. Lì, nei Sixties rabbiosi, ogni film […] rinviava a un *background* collettivo che gli garantiva un *surplus* di senso e che lo riassorbiva in una fitta rete di assonanze, interferenze e complicità; fuori da lì, quasi tutti i film realizzati con analoghi intenti rinviavano invece […] solo a se stessi. […] Come dire: negli anni sessanta quasi ogni film parlava al plurale e diceva *noi*.[7]

While Canova's suggestive recollection of Sixties cinema seems to resonate with many other accounts that celebrate the vibrant cultural atmosphere of that period, his rhetorical emphasis on the film poetics of the first-person plural is not followed by a further investigation into that phenomenon. His gesture appears as a hint towards a widespread rhetoric that coalesced around the memory of the Sixties as a whole — their "newness," their "collective engagement," the idea that 1968 was a watershed moment that swept away all continuities with what came before — and is therefore left lying in the realm of cultural assumptions. Yet, such an easy categorization does not account for the complexities that lie behind the nexus between film and left-wing politics since the Postwar years. There are, indeed, many ways in which we can think of the varied range of documentary films that came out of the culture of the "long '68" as different imaginative projects which brought the collective subject to the forefront of cinematic representation. Yet, these collective representations had already existed in the past, albeit in very different forms, or responding to very different political projects. When unpacked, the plural subject that critics and commentators such as Canova nostalgically reference proves to be a mythical, inconsistent fabrication. This invention feeds off the rhetorical strategies deployed across different media by the Italian Left after World War II to construct an illusory image of itself, one that was characterized by uniformity and coherence. In many ways, militant documentaries from the late Sixties and Seventies are indebted to an aestheticized political discourse tied to key concepts such as "resistance" and "dissent" that was imposed through the myth of the Liberation War (the *Resistenza*). Such concepts inspired a mode of self-perception and a set of national narratives that travelled across media and reached their most momentous expression with "the long '68," only to enter a crisis of representation — but still survive in a liminal place within the domain of documentary production, as we will see with the case of Carlo Giuliani — with the collapse of the youth movement and the advent of the ultra-individualistic Eighties. Yet, in contrast with the unitary collective subject addressed by earlier documentaries, the plural subject forged by post-'68 filmmakers was both the product of a utopian image of collective action and an enraged interlocutor who consumed underground, independent documentary films to find out the "truth" about facts that were seemingly being distorted by the official media.

The open-ended and versatile concept of the collective subject in Italian documentary film lends itself to further investigation when set against an analysis of the cultural processes that shaped its articulation. How did the political collectivity contribute to documentary filmmaking? How does the record of a particular kind of reality speak for and argue in favor of collective ideals? If we look at the case of documentaries that were produced between the late Sixties and the mid-Seventies in Italy, we can recognize that sometimes the collective was made the

[7] Gianni Canova, "Scoccò per tutti l'ora dei forni," in *1967, Tuoni prima del Maggio: Cinema e documenti degli anni che prepararono la contestazione*, ed. Italo Moscati (Venice: Marsilio, 1997), 63.

privileged object of filmic inquiry, while in other instances it was the filming subject itself, the *author*, who was represented by a multiplicity of subjects. At times documentaries attempted to show how worldwide phenomena influenced local socio-political dynamics, while at other times they staged the way the individual actions of people made up the fabric of the community and crafted new conceptions of civil society. When looking at the history of the Italian documentary and politically-committed films throughout the Sixties and Seventies, we are confronted with a large number of works that explored and expanded contemporary understandings of what the collective subject was and how it affected social reality. Independent and "engaged" documentarists such as Silvano Agosti, Giuseppe Ferrara, Alessandra Bocchetti, Alberto Grifi and the Videobase group (all active during the 1960s and 1970s) often took up the same tools and techniques deployed by dominant apparatuses of power and propaganda in order to provide alternative narratives in the name of free speech and in defense of the right of the people to know the truth about relevant social issues. In other cases, filmmakers challenged the form of the documentary as both a medium of "truth" and as a narrative genre with a supposedly intrinsic relation to reality. They used the documentary medium to devise ways to expose the contradictions and limits that lie behind the relationship between reality "as it is" and our representations of it. In this sense, the Sixties in Italy were a time during which documentaries both forged new forms of spectatorship and imagined new collective identities: while claiming to portray the actual world, they were also participating in a utopian attempt to "remake" reality according to alternative visions and ideals, attempting to bridge the gap between the reality they represented and the one that they were envisioning.

Film scholar Jonathan Kahana explains such processes by conceiving of the documentary as a metagenre, a type of filmic text that addresses its own desire for authenticity. The audience is called to participate in this process by recognizing the connections that tie reality to filmic representation. This leads to an interpellation of the audience, since the documentary is seen as the instrument that calls upon the viewers to draw such connections, to react to them and then form opinions and ideas that may lead to more actions in the real world:

> Documentary is a kind of metagenre, constantly raising the question of how the social context of cultural representation becomes its content, that is, how the outside of a work of art becomes its inside. […] This process also works in reverse. […] It evokes forms of public subjectivity and civil interaction that transport viewers beyond the immediate context of viewing. […] An audience comes to understand itself as an agent of change when it figures out how to generalize from the case on screen to other situations or cases.[8]

For Kahana, the reception and interpretation of the audience, its ability to empathize and identify with the actions portrayed on screen, play an active role in the production of documentary meaning. Looking at the public dimension as the result of "intersubjective work" which depends upon "collective thought and perception," Kahana sees documentaries as specular images of such social structure, as products of artistic labor that contribute to the shaping of a

[8] Jonathan Kahana, *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 23-4.

social "life-world."[9] This relationship leads him to analyze the ideological content of documentaries as the supplement that exceeds the correlation between documentary representation and effective reality. Kahana's argument acquires even greater depth if we read it in dialogue with Althusserian notions of ideology as the imaginary way in which people perceive their relation to their real social condition.[10] Reading Althusser's interpellation as a process that implies a certain degree of desire and complicity on the part of the subject-in-becoming with the power apparatus that "hails" him/her may reveal an important aspect of the "double structure" that, according to Kahana, ties films to their audiences. If we take documentary narratives to function as examples that establish and maintain the tension between the particular case and more general social phenomena, films "serve as lessons of general significance for others" that also often stage situations in ways that draw the audience to align itself with the film's ideology.[11]

In the context of Italian film history, the Neorealist tradition played a major part in forging the original model for the kind of "moral lessons" that films were to impart to a nation that survived war and Fascism and was then in search of an identity and of a set of communal beliefs. Neorealism celebrated a newly-invented collective subject, safely channelling the anti-fascist ideology of the PCI and the myth of the partisan Resistance well into the Postwar years. In the early Sixties, political documentaries would deploy the ethical and aesthetic repository of Neorealism — as well as its insistence on the poetics of "facts" — to lead their audiences to subscribe to a carefully manufactured reading of history and political engagement.

Section 3. Remembering the Resistance: Political Documentaries after Neorealism

Neorealism, a term first used by montage editor Mario Serandrei in relation to Luchino Visconti's film *Ossessione* in 1943, was initially deployed to designate a kind of cinema that meant to combine the direct observation of the everyday reality of common people to a heightened dramatic representation of their noble struggles through extraordinary experiences such as war, poverty, political persecution, despair and death. Films such as *Roma città aperta* (1945) and *Paisà* (1946) by Roberto Rossellini, *Ladri di biciclette* by Vittorio De Sica (1948) or *Sotto il sole di Roma* (1948) by Renato Castellani crafted a liberating new *epos* of the nation and of Everyman in the wake of post-war uncertainty. It wove together a utopian ethics of solidarity and of faith in mankind and a seemingly objective representation of the world as the war had left it. Rossellini's good priest and fearless partisans, De Sica's resilient workers, Castellani's naive and vulnerable group of *ragazzi di borgata* spoke to an audience that, like André Bazin, yearned for reparative narratives of collective redemption and humble hopes:

> [In Rossellini's *Paisà*] we share all the more fully in the feelings of the protagonists because it is easy for us to sense what they are feeling; and also because the pathetic aspect of the episode does not derive from the fact that a woman has lost

[9] Ibid., 20. Kahana builds on Hannah Arendt's analysis of the public sphere as the result of human fabrication rather than the outcome of a "quasi-natural" state of things. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
[10] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 162.
[11] Kahana, *Intelligence Work*, 8.

> the man she loves, but from the special place this drama holds among a thousand others, apart from and yet also part of the complete drama of the Liberation of Florence. [Thus] the unit of cinematic narrative in *Paisà* is not the "shot", but the "fact".[12]

In his enthusiastic essay "An Aesthetic of Reality" (1948), Bazin lists the technical and philosophical factors that made Neorealist films so incisive and well-received in Postwar years, attributing their success to their ability to convey the aesthetic possibilities of realism, creating a synthesis between facts and fiction, collective dreams and microhistories, bare documentary qualities and desire for melodramatic relief. Most importantly, it provided the nation with a perceived sense of a break with the ideals, values and modes of representations of the Fascist *ventennio*:

> In Italy the Liberator did not signify a return to the old and recent freedom; it meant political revolution. […] As a result, Italian films have an exceptional documentary quality. […] The war is felt to be not an interlude but the end of an era. In one sense Italy is only three years old. […] What is a ceaseless source of wonder […] is the significance [Italian cinema] gives to the portrayal of actuality. […] Italian cinema is certainly the only one which preserves, in the midst of the period it depicts, a revolutionary humanism.[13]

The most prolific season of Neorealist films began to fade in correspondence with the inception of the Republic, the promulgation of the Constitution and the political elections of 1948, giving way to a rather long period of "moral boycott" of the Resistance as a proper filmic theme. Cinema scholar Ivelise Perniola attributes these circumstances to a political crisis that shortly followed the advent of a new political course, which facilitated a process of *damnatio memoriae* that brought to the removal of collective memories of Fascism and of the Liberation war altogether.[14] This situation may be largely attributed to the tensions between the different factions and political parties which had taken part in the Resistance and had later dispersed in the larger political arena, leading to the victory of the Christian Democrats and to the dramatic defeat of the Fronte Democratico Popolare (representing the Communist and Socialist Parties) in the 1948 elections. The Resistance — as a problem of political and cultural heritage — later came to constitute a recurrent point of departure for contemporary articulations of Italian national identity and, at the same time, a matter of heated controversy for subsequent generations of intellectuals. Many perceived it to be a missed opportunity for the Left to take control of the country. These repressed grudges would be at the heart of the rhetorics that guided the student movement in the late Sixties and Seventies, and throughout different decades, a number of prominent intellectuals looked at the partisan struggle with very different concepts in mind. Furthermore, the problem posed by the Resistance was often treated in radically different ways in the cinematic and literary traditions, concurring to the formation of additional cultural divisions and inconsistencies within distinct periods of time. Whilst in Postwar years the neorealist cinema of Rossellini, De Sica,

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[12] André Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality", in *What is Cinema ? Vol. 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 36-7.
[13] Ibid., 21.
[14] See Ivelise Perniola, *Oltre il neorealismo: Documentari d'autore e realtà italiana del dopoguerra* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2004), 32-3.

Castellani and other directors notoriously provided a new national-popular saga for a country under re-construction that was to be reaffirmed in the following decades, the literary interpretations of the partisan struggle appear much more fragmented and unreconciled. In this sense, films were contributing to the hopeful rebirth of Italians, whereas literature often lingered on the traumatic relationship between the nation and its darker past. Yet, soon after the war the season of Neorealist cinema faded, and the Resistance, much like the Fascist *ventennio* itself, became a taboo subject for filmmakers. As cinema historian Gian Piero Brunetta explains:

> You get a strong feeling that the new Italian, born out of the war and of the Resistance, has no history or anagraphic identity whatsoever, and is struck by deep attacks of amnesia from which he/she will emerge only at the beginning of the Sixties. The conscious loss of anterior memory is facilitated by cinema, which welcomes the pact of collective repression that has been subscribed and accepted by all political forces, and it imposes the construction of an identity based only on the present. […] We witness a double loss of memory: since 1945, the memory of Fascism is erased, and since the beginning of the Cold War there is no memory of the war and of the Liberation struggle.[15]
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> La sensazione più forte è che l'italiano nuovo, nato dalla guerra e dalla lotta di Resistenza, non abbia alcun tipo di storia o identità anagrafica, sia colpito da stati amnesici profondi da cui riemergerà solo all'inizio degli anni sessanta. La perdita consapevole della memoria anteriore, che il cinema a sua volta facilita, accogliendo il patto della rimozione collettiva accettato e sottoscritto da tutte le forze politiche, impone la costruzione di un'identità basata quasi solo sul presente. […] Si assiste a un fenomeno di doppia perdita di memoria: dal 1945 viene azzerato il ricordo del fascismo e dall'inizio della guerra fredda quello della guerra e della lotta di liberazione.

With the exception of a 1953 documentary, *Lettere di condannati a morte della resistenza italiana*, by Fausto Fornari, few films celebrated the memory of the partisan movement during the 1950s. It was only with the rise of a renewed interest in the partisan struggles during the Sixties and Seventies that documentarists and filmmakers began to draw continuities between past and current episodes of political dissent. Italian cinema in the 1950s turned instead to the present, preferring not to confront the past and promoting a "conscious loss of collective memory, […] facilitated by cinema, which was accepted and subscribed by all political forces, imposing the construction of an identity based almost entirely on the present and on the ability to imagine new possible worlds in the short term."[16] Under the controlling influence of the United States — especially after the institution of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 — Italy found itself needing to mitigate its most left-leaning political forces. This situation, along with the inauguration of a decade of economic boom and a consequent collective desire for a carefree lifestyle, contributed to the moral boycott of the Resistance. In *Cinema resistente*, film

[15] Gian Piero Brunetta, *Identità italiana e identità europea*, 19.

[16] "La perdita consapevole della memoria anteriore, che il cinema a sua volta facilita, accogliendo il patto della rimozione collettiva accettato e sottoscritto da tutte le forze politiche, impone la costruzione di un'identità basata quasi solo sul presente e sulla capacità immaginativa, a corto raggio, dei nuovi mondi possibili." Perniola, *Oltre il Neorealismo*, 32.

scholar Claudio Vercelli describes a stagnant cinematic landscape where the forgetfulness that surrounded the Resistance was coherent with an intentional political strategy:

> The changes within the country's political equilibrium had inexorably taken place, moving toward a phase of directed resettling, whereby the exclusion of the Left from the centers of power also had an effect on the way in which the story of the partisans was reconceptualized and portrayed by the figurative arts and by mass media.
>
> Il mutamento degli assetti politici nel paese si era definitivamente consumato e si andava verso una fase di assestamento guidato, dove l'esclusione della sinistra dai centri del potere aveva un effetto anche sul modo in cui la vicenda del partigianato veniva rielaborata ed offerta dalle arti figurative e nelle comunicazioni di massa.[17]

As a consequence, between 1948 and 1953 the memory of the partisans, previously omnipresent in Neorealist productions, completely disappears from the Italian movie screen. Celebrated Neorealist directors such as Renato Castellani, Carlo Lizzani, and Alberto Lattuada attempted to start a number of film projects — on the Roman partisans, the 1928 March on Rome, or the murder of Socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti by the Fascist regime — that were turned down by producers. While fiction film did not return to address the issue of the partisan legacy until well into the 1960s, documentaries proved instrumental for channeling the memory of that era to the future generations. Distributed and circulated through alternative avenues, such as film festivals, private movie clubs, and local party headquarters, documentaries enjoyed a degree of freedom in terms of subject matter and political alignment that had no equal in the mainstream cinematic world. Among such documentaries, *Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza* stands as a forerunner of the genre that became so popular during the Sixties, thanks to the subtlety through which it used the stories of political martyrs to construe a militant voice for the marginaled Left. This short film — only 11:40 minutes long — is a visual adaptation of a collection of letters from partisans who died at the hands of Nazi-Fascist troops during WWII. The book, edited by Fausto Fornari and published by the prestigious Einaudi only a few months earlier, had proved an extraordinary commercial success, demonstrating that underneath an indifferent surface the country was still sentimentally attached to the Resistance saga. Invigorated by his editorial success, Fornari invested all his savings in the making of the documentary, which was produced and circulated with the aid of famous screenwriter and film critic Cesare Zavattini (one of the first proponents of Neorealism). The film was presented at the Venice Film Festival in 1954, where it was highly praised both by critics and the public. Nevertheless, it was turned down by all its potential distributors, and remained virtually unknown to Italian film viewers for decades. Fornari, who had poured into this filmic endeavor all his idealistic efforts to reconnect the young viewers of the Fifties with the memory of their recent, yet disavowed past, was greatly disappointed: "I received so many words of praise, but

[17] Claudio Vercelli, "Cinema resistente: Uno sguardo d'insieme sulla raffigurazione della Resistenza dal Dopoguerra ad oggi," *Asti contemporanea* 11 (2005): 314.

also so much pity for having wasted my talent on a film about the Resistance, the quintessentially anti-commercial topic."[18]

Anticipating more recent debates on traumatic memories of WWII, Fornari's documentary gave particular emphasis to the spatial dimension of the stories evoked in the letters that appeared in the book version. The documentary portrays a limited number of stories taken from the book, using as its settings the authentic locations where battles and murders had taken place. The opening shot presents the viewers with a sign that frames the affective tone of the film and sets the premises for the viewers' empathetic reaction: "This documentary was filmed in the same places where some tragic and heroic facts of recent Italian history took place."[19] Rather than focusing on the temporal dimension of the partisan struggle — those wartime scenes that appeared so iconic in Neorealist films, yet seemed to have become so unappealing to Italian audiences in search of distractions from the burdens of the past — the film chooses to privilege a poetics of space, drawing the viewers into an affective topography of the everyday lives of the departed heroes. The narrative is subdivided between "places of life" (houses, countryside) and "places of death" (prisons, battlefields, cemeteries), from which a number of "children, teenagers, old men, workers, wounded men" wrote letters about their upcoming end. After a quick sequence of shots presenting a number of tragic images from the battlefields — civilians being held hostage, wounded soldiers carried away by their companions, a group of partisans hanged by the German troops — the camera turns to a close-up of a hand leafing through the pages of the collection of partisans' letters from which the film is adapted. The camera zooms in on the letter of an unknown partisan, captured and later killed by the Germans in the town of Vercelli. As Ivelise Perniola argues, the expedient of the book serves the function of "making reality as compelling as fiction (the presence of the book acts in the same ways as the formula 'Once upon a time…' at the start of many fairy-tales)."[20]

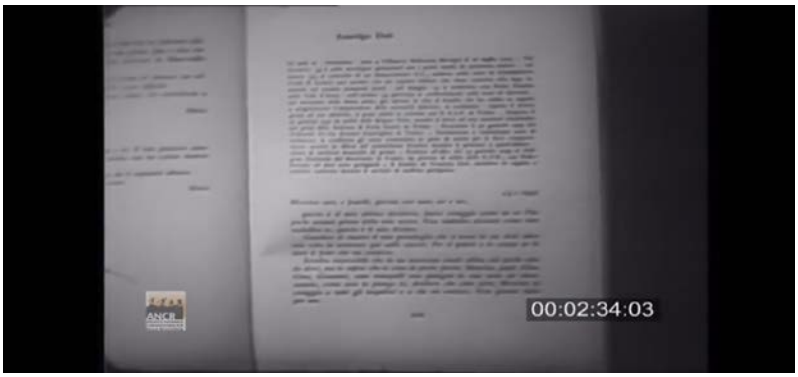


Fig. 1. *Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza*: leafing through the book of history.

By shifting from the general to the particular (from vivid, yet impersonal images of wartime to individual, intimate tragedies) and from the brutal reality captured on footage to the elegiac tone of narrative — the memories and pleas of the dying heroes — the documentary openly diverts from its traditional purpose (portraying reality in a seemingly objective light) to

[18] "Ebbi tante parole di elogio, ma anche tanta commiserazione per aver sprecato il mio talento in un film sulla Resistenza, argomento anticommerciale per eccellenza." Fausto Fornari, cit. in Carlo di Carlo, *Il cortometraggio italiano antifascista*. (Turin: Università di Torino, Istituto del Cinema, 1961), 92.

[19] "Un documentario girato sui luoghi dove si svolsero fatti dolorosi ed eroici della recente storia d'Italia."

[20] "Fornari si serve del libro per rendere la realtà avvincente come un racconto (il 'C'era una volta…' con il quale si aprono tante storie)." Perniola, *Oltre il Neorealismo*, 36.

construct a spectral collection of tales organized around real events. By abandoning the pursuit of conventional documentary objectivity, Fornari makes a statement about what constitutes "truth" in the context of a national tragedy, finding it in the authentic *pathos* of people on the verge of death, serving as representatives for a whole generation that suffered during the war. Interestingly, the rest of the film — organized around the reading of five letters by victims of the war — does not revolve around archival images, but rather combines voiceover narration (with different actors reading the letters) with footage of the locations where the stories are set as they appeared in 1953. These modest locations, mostly anonymous and unchanged by the war — such as, for example, the courtyard of a country home, where a dead partisan's mother is seen silently hanging clothes to dry out — quietly inspire a sense of continuity with the past, showing that even the most annihilating collective tragedies have not prevented common people from going on with their lives while, at the same time, being forever changed by the horrors of the war. The added emphasis on the habitual places inhabited by the authors of the letters leads the viewers to recognize the connections between those benevolently "haunted" locations and the everyday places they pass by every day. The film thus portrays a changed reality that bears no resemblance to the recent spectacle of the war, while simultaneously preserving the memory of the common people who died during a recent, yet too quickly forgotten time of conflict. This technique conjures a melancholic effect, as Perniola eloquently summarizes:

> The *places of life* continue to preserve the traces of the past, renewing it in a continuous present. […] Today's image is not used for the purpose of resuscitating the memory of yesterday; rather, it continues to experience the same yesterday as an uninterrupted presence. […] The prologue, which evoked all the martyrs of the liberation, finds a counterpoint in the epilogue, which collects the voices of all the martyrs, anonymous, because it is the suffering of an entire people to remind us that we must not forget and that we must know, and must *want to know*, no matter what.
>
> I *luoghi di vita* continuano a custodire le tracce del passato, rinnovandolo in un continuo presente. […] L'immagine di oggi non viene a resuscitare il ricordo di ieri, ma continua a vivere lo stesso ieri come ininterrotta presenza. […] Ad un prologo che evocava tutti i martiri della liberazione, fa da contrappunto un epilogo che di tutti i martiri raccoglie le voci, anonime perché è la sofferenza di un intero popolo a ricordarci che non si deve dimenticare e che si deve sempre e comunque sapere, *voler sapere*.[21]

Through the voices of a few victims and the glimpses of everyday places that were familiar to many Italians, the documentary asks the viewers to recognize the presence of the forgotten past within an oblivious present and be moved to action by the awareness of the common roots that connected them to recent times of war. The film ends on a textual frame quoting an excerpt from a partisan's letter which seems to bear an admonition to the audience: "Don't say you don't want to hear about this anymore. You must think that all of this happened precisely because you didn't want to hear about it."[22] If we read the film's ending in the context of its production history and of the political climate which dominated at the time, it seems that

[21] Ibid., 39.
[22] "Non dite di non volerne più sapere. Pensate che tutto è successo perché non ne avete più voluto sapere."

such a sombre warning was meant to denounce both a recent wave of indifference towards the immediate past and the opportunism of a new political *status quo* which refused to learn from the mistakes of the past and was therefore condemned to repeat them. With its elegiac tone and its subtle celebration of the affective continuum between the past and the present in the everyday, *Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza italiana* sets a completely new standard for the Italian political documentary, which had previously been characterized by the bombastic, magniloquent style of Fascist propaganda. Fornari's documentary represents a first attempt at construing a collective voice for the subaltern Italian Left, which had been pushed to the margins after the end of the Neorealist era.

Through the use of exemplary stories of everyday heroism, the episodes narrated in *Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza italiana* attempt a synthesis between the nationalistic appeal of Neorealist fiction and a new political use of the documentary form. In so doing, it inaugurates a new "school of anti-Fascist short film […] based on a mélange of commemoration, historical reconstruction, and narrative synthesis," as explained by the critic Carlo di Carlo.[23] Its use of original footage *in lieu* of archival materials and the superimposition of a narrative frame (however adapted from original documents, such as the partisans' letters) that primarily appealed to the viewers at an emotional level set a lasting example for political documentaries in the Sixties. Its subject matter was also greatly influential. A heightened awareness of the perils and risks of forgetfulness and oblivion characterized many political documentaries that came out in the following decades and looked back at the events of 1943-'45 and at their contested memory. However, other documentaries relied on an opposite strategy, though equally aiming at the construction of a collective, "resistant" affect based on the idea of staying faithful to the ghosts of the past: *All'armi, siam fascisti!* (1961), by Cecilia Mangini, Lino Del Frà and Lino Micciché, constitutes a valid example of such tendency, and can be easily categorized as another precursor of the militant documentary that became so prominent after '68. The film came out in Italy in the wake of the mass upheavals that followed the short-lived Tambroni Government, which was supported by monarchist and neo-Fascist organizations and brought back the fear of a resurgence of right-wing extremism in the country. *All'armi, siam fascisti!* is an assemblage of Istituto Luce footage of Fascist parades and images taken from older documentaries that pertained to the history of both the Socialist and the Communist parties.[24] The sequence of images is sewn together through the commentary provided by Franco Fortini, a famous and respected left-wing intellectual and literary critic at that time. Fortini took part in this particular film project because he greatly believed in the power of the documentary to show the connection between society's "existential tensions" and the way historical events unfold.[25] His distinctive, militant tone gives an authoritative reading to the events portrayed and is meant to illustrate the "correct" way of situating the images under the scrutiny of the workers' class ideology. Far from assigning to himself a separate, neutral position as a mediator and interpreter

[23] di Carlo, *Il cortometraggio italiano antifascista*, 16.

[24] Istituto Luce is a film institute located in Rome and founded by Benito Mussolini in 1924.

[25] "If you then ask me what is the most important reason why I feel like defending that text I improvised while remembering the past angrily, I will tell you that it lies — in some passages and also in its general layout — in its attempt to bring together an existential tension (in fact, it is also an autobiography) to a historical structure." ("Se poi mi si chiede in che cosa maggiormente io senta di difendere quel testo improvvisato ricordando con rabbia, dirò che è — in alcuni passaggi e poi nel disegno generale — nell'aver tentato di saldare una tensione esistenziale (è, infatti, anche una autobiografia) ad uno schema storico." Franco Fortini's comment appears in Piergiorgio Bellocchio, "*All'armi, siam fascisti!* di Micciché, Mangini e Del Frà (con una dichiarazione di Franco Fortini)", *Quaderni Piacentini* no. 2/3 (1962): 13.

between the common people and the higher powers that govern them, Fortini takes a clear stand as an embattled intellectual, demanding an emotional response on the part of the audience. Through the use of the first-person plural pronoun — the *we* — Fortini asks for an explicit identification not only with the people portrayed in the film, but with his own perspective as the spokesperson for an entire generation of workers who were betrayed and oppressed by the Fascist regime. For example, when commenting on the images of the crowds that gather in a square during one of Mussolini's speeches to the Italian people, the voiceover narrator says: "Among the anonymous crowd there was *our* father, too"; later, he adds : "Look at these boys. It's *us*, under the gaze of the Duce."[26] Not coincidentally, in his notes on the film's commentary, published in the leftist magazine *Quaderni Piacentini*, he wrote of the film as an "autobiography," referring to the ways in which the stream of archival images from a dark past, accompanied by his own interpretative reading of the historical trajectory of the Italian nation, was an attempt at providing cathartic relief for Italians as a whole. While being presented with a series of snapshots from Italy's controversial "twenty years" (the Fascist *Ventennio*), the film's audience is in fact also offered an opportunity for redemption through a confrontation with the past after "having been the victim of a long hibernation." Literally, the documentary enabled the viewers to *see* on screen the reality "that should have already been obvious to them."[27]



Fig. 2-3. *All'armi, siam fascisti*: the Duce and the people.

Rather than relying solely on the ideological self-evidence of the edited sequence — which juxtaposes archival material from the Fascist era to modern footage of neofascist gatherings — Fortini's commentary traces a web of connections between old and new forms of right-wing oppression and stimulates the viewers' active participation in the moral condemnation of the political mistakes of the past. Towards the end of the film, this strategy is deployed not only in the service of past events, but also in preparation for future struggles: "You need to choose. Your destiny belongs to you only. You must answer!"[28] Playing with its own ambiguous status as a revisionist essay and as a call to arms against the reemergence of old political threats, the documentary form of *All'armi siam fascisti!* relies on the power of Fortini's commentary to reinforce the bare evidence provided by the images and to construct a renewed national discourse around the visual repository of a traumatic past. The narrator's voice implicitly claims that the

[26] "Tra la folla anonima c'era anche nostro padre"; "Guardate questi ragazzi. Siamo noi, sotto lo sguardo del Duce."
[27] Ibid., 13.
[28] "Bisogna scegliere. Il vostro destino è solo vostro. Rispondete!"

images are the visual complement of a monological, "universal" voice expressing the common sense — and the common disdain — of the masses, and its heavy reliance on the emotional response of the viewers is meant to overwrite all previous possible readings of the images, as well as of the same national history. The use of the "we" implicitly enrolls the viewers in a struggle from which they cannot seem to opt out: Fortini's commentary, coupled with the shameful images of the Fascist past, leave no room for continuing to ignore the past. The collective voice is not just a way to reveal the authors' embattled mission, but also a way to engage the spectators, automatically assigning to them the role of active participants of history: because of their willingness to participate in the filmic experience, they are now deemed to be indirect witnesses of a horror that cannot be repeated, as well as activists in the effort to fight against all forms of neo-Fascism in the present. Clearly, this kind of rhetorical move raises the question of propaganda as it is expressed through the technique of self-effacement of the author that claims to be speaking in the name of the collectivity. In Fortini's case, there was an overt mediation on the part of the "public" intellectual, but the recourse to a supposedly shared repository of memories and feelings that connected the viewers to the images on screen served as a justification for his use of the plural "noi." In the case of many radical film collectives from the Sixties and Seventies, it was often taken for granted that the imagined community of the "revolutionary people" as a whole would spontaneously delegate their need to be seen and heard to the filmmakers' group. At the same time, 1960s documentarians often considered themselves merely an organic instrument of the collectivity, or better organic members of that same collectivity. This basic assumption simultaneously concealed and enabled the smooth deployment of ideological propaganda within documentary films. As I will show in the next section, with the dramatic portrayal of the youth movement's tragedies that took center stage with the *controinchieste*, only a few years later, the voice of "the people" mourning their forgotten dead morphed into the cry of a frightened collective subject whose identity was being shattered by the enforcement of hegemonic lies.

Section 4. *Controinchieste:* From Budding Collective Dreams to Cultural Traumas

The much-celebrated plural subject that entered the scope of Italian cinema in the late 1960s had, in some ways, been there before. As we have seen in the previous section, Italian documentaries carefully constructed the ideal of a committed, collective Left through the celebration of continuities between old and new generations and the cult of dead heroes. In this sense, post-'68 documentaries built on already tested ideological and aesthetic precedents. Yet, as I have discussed in previous chapters, the '68 movement also dramatically overstated its utter separation from the past, emphasizing its absolute "newness." This reality is reflected in documentary history, where the idea of the resistant Left as a united front against a new conception of Fascism — now understood as a persisting, repressive ideological mindset that survived in the modern Italian democracy — denied any continuities with the past, declaring the present as its only temporal horizon. Indeed, it is a fact that, after 1968, a much greater number of documentarists began to hold collective political engagement as their object of investigation, marking a dramatic shift from the "carefree" Fifties. Nevertheless, it did so by reconnecting Italian cinema to its previous stream of political commitment, not introducing the idea of commitment altogether. Different cultural traditions were mobilized by an idea of politics and

civil engagement that injected a sense of revolutionary *ethos* into the arts.[29] However, the cinematic language of '68 reorganized the experience and perception of reality around not only a renewed ideological and historical understanding of political and civil agendas, but also around different experimental practices of representation and forms of interaction with the audience. During the "long '68," documentary fostered a culture of cinema as a form of service to the collectivity, such as the one envisioned by Cesare Zavattini through the *Cinegiornali liberi*, group works that were assembled by different filmmakers, were committed to an aesthetic of the political "eventfulness" of the everyday and conceived of an equally engaged audience creating "entirely new [cultural] rites, antithetical to the laws of old cinema."[30] Some related cinematic ventures were even more closely connected with the radical culture of '68 and its communal practices: for instance, the experimental Filmstudio '70, the filmmaker collective Videobase or the Cooperativa Cinema Indipendente (CPI), all active in Rome in the wake of mass student uprisings. The Cooperativa Cinema Indipendente mission statement called for the complete liberation of documentary expression from the constraints of the film industry and promoted an inclusive approach: "The Cooperativa Cinema Indipendente is a working hypothesis. A group of friends, why not? Anyone who has a reel close at hand can participate."[31] As noted by film historian Marco Bertozzi, these experimental documentary practices often pursued ideals of liberation that were both aesthetic (related to the constraints of form) and "communicative" (demanding a different relationship with the viewers).[32] Despite the anti-establishment ideology of the '68 movement, documentary productions could occasionally and surprisingly thrive on the support of institutional channels. Such is the case with many films produced between 1970 and 1974 with the aid of the Settore Ricerca e Sperimentazione Programmi of RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana), which included several experimental films shot by the Videobase collective. In addition, this research institute funded and promoted the making of videorecordings of theater performances by Jerzy Grotowski and Giorgio Strehler and fiction films such as *Lotte in Italia* (1970) by Gruppo Dziga Vertov (formed by Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin).[33] Immersed in such a rich cultural climate, the director Alberto Grifi claimed that — through documentary filmmaking — he had discovered a way to deliver himself from the reified time of capitalism and had found instead "the ever-present, the continuous time of real life, which is the osmotic intercepting of all subjective temporalities."[34] And, as I have discussed throughout my dissertation, this affective attachment to time is the most long-lasting impact of '68 culture, and can be perceived throughout the multiple strands of documentary representation that contributed to the making of the expanded feeling of time we now call 1968. In this section, I discuss the ways in which the sub-genre of *controinchieste* contributed to the consolidation of the myth of

[29] See Stefania Parigi, *Filosofia dell'immagine. Il pensiero di Cesare Zavattini* (Turin: Lindau, 2006), 282.
[30] Marco Bertozzi, *Storia del documentario italiano. Immagini e culture dell'altro cinema* (Milan: Marsilio, 2008), 194.
[31] "La Cooperativa Cinema Indipendente è un'ipotesi di lavoro. Un gruppo di amici, perché no? Chiunque abbia una pizza sottobraccio può aderire." This is Alfredo Leonardi's programmatic introduction to the film forum "Cinema underground italiano," a series of films that were screened in Rome in March 1969. Quoted in Bruno di Martino, *Sguardo Inconscio Azione. Cinema sperimentale e underground a Roma* (Rome: Lithos, 1999), 24-5.
[32] See Bertozzi, *Storia del documentario italiano*, Chapters 5 and 6.
[33] The checkered history of the making of *Lotte in Italia* is representative of the contradictory political climate within RAI at that time, which often led the institution to enthusiastically support a cultural project with a political edge, only to reject and abandon it at a later stage: RAI commissioned the film to Godard, then refused to extend its support. The project could finally be completed and distributed thanks to the intervention of private producers (Cosmoseion, Rome; Anoushka Films, Paris).
[34] Alberto Grifi, *Videomateriali di Alberto Grifi*, in "Altrocinema" 12-13 (1977): 10.

the militant "collectivity" by adapting pre-existing forms of cinematic memorialization against the silencing of collective traumas to the sudden dramatic changes that occurred within the radical culture of the Left. Investigative documentaries such as *Ipotesi su Giuseppe Pinelli* (by Elio Petri, 1970) or *12 dicembre* (by the Lotta Continua group, in collaboration with Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1972) were produced in an attempt to provide alternative answers to the events that unfolded with the Piazza Fontana bombing. While claiming to be in search of the objective truth behind complicated criminal cases, these films also introduced a new conception of truth and loyalty to the needs of the audience, revealing a rupture with the nation-building fantasies that spurred the imagined formation of radical collective subjects in previous decades. These *controinchieste* thus contributed to the transformation of a budding collective voice of the *we* into a fragile subject, altering the notion of "resistance" that had held the Left together since the 1940s.

As I previously mentioned, the mysterious circumstances that determined the tragic events surrounding the Piazza Fontana bombing on December 12th, 1969, still constitute an obscure national trauma. Back then, militant documentaries played a crucial role in opposing the instrumentalization of the case by the media and the police. By forcefully inserting themselves into the cultural and political debate over Piazza Fontana, the *controinchieste* multiplied the number of "voices" that were entitled to recount the story of this national tragedy and look for the truth behind the conspiracy theories that immediately began to coalesce around it. In particular, it was through the treatment of anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli's alleged suicide that *controinchieste* became prominent in Italy. The whole enquiry on Pinelli's death was dominated by the violent clash between conflicting media coverage of the story, with the militant journal "Lotta Continua" — published by the eponymous extra-parliamentary political organization — publishing the best-selling instant book *La strage di Stato* (*The State Massacre*, 1970) to counterpoise the State-sanctioned version of the facts provided by RAI — the State television — and by mainstream, Government-funded newspapers such as the "Corriere della Sera."

Seventeen people were killed and eighty-eight wounded during the Piazza Fontana attack. The responsibility was immediately attributed to the most radical wing of the 1968 youth movement by both the media and the police. In the critical days following the bombing, the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli was arrested as a suspect and taken to the central police station in Milan, where he died on December 15th. Soon after his death, the police released a statement saying that Pinelli had committed suicide by jumping out of a window. He fell from the fourth floor of the police station during an interrogation conducted by Inspector Luigi Calabresi with the aid of three other officers. Another anarchist, Pietro Valpreda, was also accused of the bombing and incarcerated. At the end of his trial, which lasted 16 years, Valpreda was found completely innocent, and the responsibility of the massacre was then temporarily attributed to a neo-Fascist organization, Ordine Nuovo. In 2005, the trial against Ordine Nuovo ended with no convictions, leaving the case — a painful example of Italy's divided memory — still riddled with enigmas and heated controversies.

In the wake of Pinelli's death, the extra-parliamentary group Lotta Continua initiated a media campaign against Inspector Calabresi, accusing him and his officers of having murdered Pinelli by throwing him out of the window, staging his alleged suicide in order to use him — and, by extension, the Milan anarchist community — as a scapegoat for the bombing. Inspector Calabresi was subsequently murdered in May 1972, and the responsibility of his killing was placed on three leaders of Lotta Continua, who were accused of having been "morally responsible" for his death because of their harsh condemnation of his actions during the Piazza

Fontana inquiry. While the mystery behind this national trauma remains unsolved, it is still considered the symbolic and material turning point after which the "springtime" '68 movement shook under the weight of public accusations, losing faith in its effective ability to bring constructive changes to the country. A haunting trace of the conflict of narratives that surrounds these events can still be found today in Milan, outside the central police station where Pinelli died. Two commemorative plaques are placed next to one another: the first, offered by the City of Milan, remembers the death of Pinelli, "an innocent who tragically died" on those premises. The other, always surrounded by flowers, was funded by an organization of democratic students, and celebrates the memory of Pinelli as an "innocent who was tragically killed" there.



Fig. 4-5. The two commemorative plaques for Giuseppe Pinelli in Milan.

In the conflictual climate that characterized the aftermath of the Piazza Fontana events, the oppositional *we* portrayed in militant documentaries became a subject that had to be defended against the abuses of power. Thus, the cinematic *controinchieste* complemented other media operations that were put in place by radical militant groups, such as the publication of secret dossiers and independent investigations, the most controversial of which were the infamous "Robbiano di Mediglia investigations", a set of documents put together by the terrorist Red Brigades to conduct research on a series of political murders and violent attacks that took place between 1969 and 1974 in Italy. Taken altogether, this *corpus* of documents — literary, journalistic, cinematic texts — formed a complex counter-narrative aimed at construing an oppositional strategy against the silencing of extraparliamentary group activities by the hegemonic authorities. In response to the attacks of the mainstream media, the *controinchieste* spread awareness about the so-called "strategy of tension," a historiographical hypothesis that sees a single, criminal political design behind all the massacres and terrorist attacks that were perpetrated for political purposes in Italy between 1969 and 1980, with the participation of some sectors of State organs, intelligence agencies, and Government agents.[35]

Documenti su Giuseppe Pinelli came out in 1970 and was born out of a collective idea of the self-proclaimed "Committee of Film Directors Against Repression" ("Comitato Cineasti contro la Repressione"), an embattled name anticipating the militant nature of the film production they meant to put together. The original plan was to assemble together footage by five different groups of filmmakers. In the end only two of them, Elio Petri and Nelo Risi, were

[35] For an analysis of the "strategy of tension," see Franco Ferraresi, *Minacce alla democrazia. La destra radicale e la strategia della tensione in italia nel dopoguerra* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1995); Paolo Pelizzari, "La stabilità democratica italiana. Gli anni Settanta e le carte americane," in *Storia e Futuro* 20 (2009): 1-24.

able to complete their parts. The film, however, was released as a coproduction under the name of several directors, who decided to take on the legal responsibility of the work as well as the costs of its production and distribution. It circulated mostly in "underground" avenues such as local sections of the PCI party, occupied factories and radical student groups, and was the product of the spontaneous collaboration of the director with actors — including the militant movie star Gian Maria Volontè — impersonating Inspector Calabresi, Pinelli and the three police officers that were in the room at the time of the anarchist's death.

This *controinchiesta* casts an ironic, yet incriminating look at the different versions of Pinelli's alleged suicide provided by the police, reenacting the scene of his death according to the official police records, with the aim of showing that, altogether, they formed a highly incongruous account of the truth. Within a month, the Milan police released in fact three very different versions of the precise dynamics of Pinelli's "suicide." According to the first version, Pinelli suddenly jumped up from the chair where he was being interrogated, opened the window and threw himself out, while the policemen unsuccessfully tried to stop him. In the second version, the police declared that they had partially managed to stop him, thus slowing down his fall: this version was released after several newspapers pointed out the strange trajectory of Pinelli's fall. In the third version, policemen stated that one of them, Vito Panessa, had managed to grab Pinelli by one foot in an attempt to save him but ultimately failed, and he was left with one of Pinelli's shoes in his hands. However, the journalists that saw Pinelli's dead body immediately after his death stated that he was wearing both shoes. The police also released contradictory information as to the reasons behind Pinelli's "suicide." In their first version, policemen stated that they had managed to get a confession out of him. After they brought down his alibi, Pinelli, feeling hopeless, had rushed to the window crying: "It's the end of anarchy!" When his alibi was instead confirmed by investigators, the police released a second version, stating that it was clear to them that Pinelli was indeed innocent, therefore his sudden gesture had no explanations.[36] In Petri's film, Volontè reads verbatim from the police reports while the other actors re-enact the police's exact statements. The final sequence links instead Pinelli's death to a genealogy of mysterious suicides of anarchists that took place in previous decades at times of high political turmoil, uncovering a continuum of criminal political repression that haunted the history of the radical Left in Italy.



Fig. 6-7. *Documenti su Giuseppe Pinelli*, by Elio Petri.

[36] The famous, award-winning play by Nobel prize author Dario Fo, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, is based on a similar parody of these same evetns. See Dario Fo, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (London: Methuen, 2003).

Volontè introduces the film by stating that this documentary represented an attempt to use the medium of film to visually reproduce on camera the three versions of the "truth" about Pinelli's death released by the Milan police. As such, the film constituted a subversive action *per se*, one that could only be carried out through the collective labor of the director as well as the actors in it through the medium of documentary. By simply reading out loud the police statements while faithfully enacting each movement described in them — and letting the grotesque effect speak for itself — Petri and his crew of actors denounced the sheer implausibility of the official accounts. Consequently, this series of re-enactments acquires a higher status as a visual "document" that is able to provide powerful evidence against the mendacity of the spoken and written words. The film thus focuses its critique of "authenticity" and "truth" by revealing the mendacious status of legal documents — the police reports — to unmask the web of lies that surrounded Pinelli's death. Through the power of the fictional re-enactments (the "false" documents), *Documenti su Giuseppe Pinelli* reveals the play of mirrors that lies beneath the supposed transparency of the "real" evidence produced by the police. Its power lies in its ability to raise doubts, rather than fabricate a counter-truth: while it does not produce an alternative investigation or help the viewers discover the "reality" behind the facts represented, Petri's documentary illustrates what Linda Williams defines as "the ideology and consciousness that construct competing truths — the fictional master narratives by which we make sense of events."[37] Yet, its commitment to channelling collective concerns in response to a cultural trauma also reflects its "relation to the real, the 'truths' which matter in people's lives but which cannot be transparently represented."[38] As such, it visually conjures the spectacle of lies barely concealed within dominant representations of the truth to exhort its audience to take a more critical stance towards "truths" imposed by the establishment.

Pinelli's controversial case is also central to *12 Dicembre*, a collective documentary produced by Lotta Continua in collaboration with the famous public intellectual, filmmaker and writer Pier Paolo Pasolini, who had notoriously been very critical of the actions of the '68 movement. In some of his works and articles for the "Corriere della Sera" — and, in particular, in his famous poem "Il PCI ai giovani" ("The PCI to the Youth"), published by *L'Espresso* — Pasolini had defended the position of the policemen during their clashes against '68 protesters in Valle Giulia, Rome, because he believed that the policemen were the last representatives of the "true proletariat." As such, they were better — in his opinion — than the spoiled students, who were the children of the bourgeoisie.[39] Pasolini's participation to the making of *12 dicembre* in

[37] Linda Williams, "Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1993): 13.
[38] Ibid.
[39] The poem includes the famous lines that led to a long-term feud between Pasolini and the '68 movement: ("When you were at the Valle Giulia yesterday you brawled / with the police, I sympathised with the policemen! / Because policemen are sons of the poor. / […] At Valle Giulia, yesterday, occurred an instance of class war: and you, my friends (although on the right side) you were the rich, while the policemen (who were on the wrong side) they were the poor. A nice victory, then, yours! / In these cases, to the police you should give flowers, my friends." ("Quando ieri a Valle Giulia avete fatto a botte / coi poliziotti, / io simpatizzavo coi poliziotti. / Perché i poliziotti sono figli di poveri. / […] A Valle Giulia, ieri, si è così avuto un frammento / di lotta di classe: e voi, cari (benché dalla parte / della ragione) eravate i ricchi, / mentre i poliziotti (che / erano dalla parte / del torto) erano i poveri. Bella vittoria, dunque, / la vostra! In questi casi, / ai poliziotti si danno i fiori, cari.") The controversy that arose between Pasolini and the students acquired national fame at the time via the media, and is still remembered today as one of the most significant examples of a clash between two generations of left-wing intellectuals: Pasolini, a former Communist party member, still believed that the Left should follow in the path traced by the PCI, while '68ers rejected all forms

1970 thus appeared incongruous with his earlier statements, stirring additional controversies both within and outside of the Lotta Continua organization and society as a whole. As such, the case of *12 dicembre* stands as further proof of the complex, sometimes contradictory relationships and conceptions of collective militant engagement that characterized those chaotic times. Therefore, Pasolini's substantial contribution to *12 dicembre* — together with a more attentive reading of some of his polemical articles on youth culture collected in *Scritti corsari* — challenges several contemporary assumptions that dominate the representation of the Italian '68 and of the dynamics it determined, both in academic and popular discourse.[40] While a group of activists organized protests against Pasolini at the Venice Film Festival in 1968, during the presentation of his film *Teorema*, in early 1970 the director and Lotta Continua began to collaborate on the production of a documentary about "the state of the struggle" in Italy. Speaking of Pasolini, one of the former leaders of Lotta Continua, Adriano Sofri, declared that he "desperately wanted to be acknowledged by the '68 movement, but he was too proud to explicitly say it. […] So he used his usual methods, and engaged with them in a confrontation that would ultimately lead to a reconciliation."[41] On his end, Pasolini offered protection and support to Lotta Continua by lending his name to the organization so that the film would gain visibility and be screened at the 1972 Berlin Film Festival, where he went to present *The Canterbury Tales*. Starting in March 1971, Pasolini even served as director in chief of the publication *Lotta Continua*, which was under attack by the State for publishing subversive propaganda on the Piazza Fontana case. Because of his aid to the extra-parliamentary group and his participation in the Piazza Fontana controversy, Pasolini would be put on trial in 1972 (together with the group leaders), accused of "anti-national propaganda and for having attempted to organize subversive activities against the institutions of the State."[42] When *12 dicembre* first came out, Pasolini's name was formally omitted from the list of directors so as to avoid further criminal accusations. In a recently found recording from June 1972, Pasolini declared: "The lawyers who had seen the film told me it was very, very dangerous, that they would put me in jail. So we found a way by which my name would still appear (for those who wanted to understand), yet formally no one could prosecute me."[43] The film thus officially came out as directed by Lotta Continua, "from an idea by Pier Paolo Pasolini," despite the fact that he had shot several sections of the *controinchiesta*. This little known story surrounding Pasolini's political activities and the making of *12 dicembre* exemplifies the complexity of contingent alliances during the "long '68," and the ways in which documentary films could at times promote, rather than merely record, political action. It also

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of institutional authority. For a full text of *Il PCI ai giovani*, see http://temi.repubblica.it/espresso-il68/1968/06/16/il-pci-ai-giovani/?h=0 (last access: 12/01/2015)

[40] See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Scritti corsari* (Milan: Garzanti, 2001).

[41] "aveva una voglia matta di essere riconosciuto dai ragazzi del '68 ma era troppo orgoglioso per poterlo chiedere esplicitamente, non li avrebbe mai adulati. Allora usò i suoi mezzi, e ingaggiò come sempre un corpo a corpo che era foriero poi di una riconciliazione." Adriano Sofri, quoted in Bruno Esposito, *Pasolini, Lotta Continua - Di fronte al tribunale speciale... il processo*, http://videotecapasolini.blogspot.com/2015/01/pasolini-lotta-continua-di-fronte-al.html (last access: 12/01/2015).

[42] "Il 18 ottobre 1971, la corte d'assise di Torino processa Pasolini insieme agli altri esponenti di Lotta Continua per aver svolto propaganda antinazionale e per il sovvertimento degli ordinamenti economici e sociali costituiti dello Stato; e di avere, quindi, pubblicato e istigato a commettere delitti." Ibid.

[43] "Gli avvocati che l'hanno visto mi hanno detto che era pericolosissimo, che mi avrebbero messo in prigione. E allora abbiamo trovato una formula per cui il mio nome ci fosse, perché chi voleva capire capisse, ma formalmente non potessero procedere contro di me." Quoted in Roberta Cristofori, *12 dicembre di Pasolini. Incontro con Goffredo Fofi e Maurizio Ponzi*, http://festival.ilcinemaritrovato.it/12-dicembre-di-pasolini-incontro-con-goffredo-fofi-e-maurizio-ponzi (last access: 12/01/2015).

shows how national memory is often founded on simplistic assumptions: while the Pasolini Vs. '68 movement controversy represents today one of the most famous episodes to be remembered about the politics of that era, *12 dicembre* proves that reality was far more layered than it seems today. The film — forgotten and ignored for decades — has only very recently been restored on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Pasolini's death. The restored, integral copy of the film was first shown in July 2015 during the Cinema Ritrovato Festival in Bologna.



Fig. 7-8. *12 dicembre*, by Pier Paolo Pasolini and Lotta Continua.

12 Dicembre stands as an interesting case of *controinchiesta*, chaotically assembled as it is with scattered materials put together by Pasolini and by the militant filmmakers that were part of the Lotta Continua Group. The Lotta Continua members obviously displayed a very different conception of the documentary as a cultural medium than the one advocated by Pasolini, thus the sections of the film directed by the extra-parliamentary group activists are riddled with rhetorical statements. They alternate between sets of interviews of Pinelli's partner and of his friends at the anarchist Circolo della Ghisolfa with recordings of demonstrations that show masses of students and workers asking for justice in the name of Pinelli while also chanting quintessential '68 slogans, such as "Up with Marx, up with Lenin, up with Mao Tse-Tung!" and "Fearless, hard struggle!".[44] The final sequence, which shows a large gathering of the Lotta Continua members and is meant to threaten and intimidate the political opponents, displays a mass of people standing up with their fists raised, asking for a violent retribution for the murder of Pinelli. This impressive scene proves particularly telling in light of today's debates about the legacy of 1968 and its links with the armed struggle of the Seventies, and complicates many contemporary attempts to erase or alter the memory of the relationship between radical extra-parliamentary movements and violent agitators.

In contrast with such scenes, the sections of the film directed by Pasolini show a distance between the director's views on the theoretical and political mission of *controinchieste* and documentaries in general. Through a series of touching interviews of passersbys and underemployed workers on strike — who appear to be unable to utter their rage or provide any critical interpretation of the tragedy that shook the nation — Pasolini suggests a connection between the strategy of tension that led to the Piazza Fontana bombing and the miserable conditions of the oppressed "mass individuals," disoriented subjects who had lost the sense of collective cohesion that the culture of the Left and the PCI had promoted since the inception of the Republic. As Matteo Contini states, his interviews of a group of steel workers in Bagnoli — outside of the Italsider factory near Naples, thus faraway from the places where the December 12th events took place — reveals the wide reach of national traumas:

[44] "Viva Marx, viva Lenin, viva Mao Tse-Tung!"; "Lotta dura, senza paura!".

> It is here that we can find Pasolini, the well-known filmmaker and writer, the man who loved to show bodies in their most tragic, most heroic spasms. This is a refined cinema of bodies, where the gesticulations of the Southern workers morph into the desperate gesture of a deaf and dumb worker who is only able to emit a series of meaningless sounds, but who — thanks to his movements — gifts the film with the only true moment of tragic human expression of the people.
>
> Qui troviamo tutto il Pasolini cineasta e scrittore, l'uomo che amava mostrare i corpi nei loro spasmi più tragici, più erotici. E questo è un raffinato cinema di corpi, dove il gesticolare degli operai meridionali si trasforma nel gesto disperato di un operaio sordomuto che riesce solo ad emettere suoni senza alcun significato ma che, grazie ai suoi movimenti, regala alla pellicola l'unico vero respiro di una tragicità umana del popolo.[45]

With these interviews, Pasolini attempts to reach out to a wider audience than that of the militant collectivity to which the *controinchieste* were originally addressed. He seeks instead to send a plea to the public, asking to reconnect the struggle of the radical Left with the basic material needs of the disenfranchised masses. His purpose is to re-establish the contact with that plural subject constituted by the mass of common citizens who had lost faith in their institutions, but did not trust the radical movements to speak the "truth," in turn.

Documentary *controinchieste* lie at the heart of a desire to produce a form of "counter-memory" for the mourning collective. First defined by Foucault, counter-memory exists as a discursive practice in a context saturated with power struggles. It springs "from below" and is produced by antagonized and marginalized communities who feel unjustly left out of dominant representations. By remembering Pinelli and casting doubts on the police activities, these films did not merely give justice to the movement's martyr. They also served as a means of unification for a vast community that felt suddenly accused of terrorist activities. In reframing the dominant narrative of Piazza Fontana and the Pinelli "suicide," documentarists did more than expand popular understandings of those complex events: they not only criticized the "content of a memory itself, but rather the role a particular memory [was] playing in a larger construct of remembrance."[46] Within this context, I contend that *controinchieste* served a groundbreaking function in Italian film history as well as in the history of the radical Left: they solidified the self-perception of the youth movement as a coherent subject — albeit a fragile, vilified one — and allowed it to produce its own, subaltern narrative of a cultural trauma. In calling on the category of "cultural trauma" for the Piazza Fontana events, I use Jeffrey Alexander's definition of it as a psychic wound that occurs when "members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways."[47] For Alexander, the most devastating aspect of cultural trauma is the impact it acquires *after* the event itself, by way of the discourse that is produced around it in the public

[45] Matteo Contini, review of *12 dicembre*, http://www.pellicolascaduta.it/wordpress/?p=795 (last access: 12/01/2015).
[46] Jane Marie Law, "Introduction: Cultural Memory, the Past and the Static of the Present," in *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 7, no. 1-2 (2006): 8.
[47] Jeffrey Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Ron Eyerman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1.

sphere. Hence, while not all the individuals who participated in the '68 youth movement were impacted directly by the Piazza Fontana events, they suffered from the shift in public perception toward the movement as a whole that resulted from them. The collective thus suffered from a trauma that, in reality, not everyone experienced directly. As a result, in offering alternative readings of the death of Pinelli, the *controinchieste* paradoxically served a reparative function. In fact, as Hajek explains,

> trauma not only disconnects the members of a community by disrupting its continuity: […] collective traumatic experiences may at the same time create the basis for a new, different communality, be a source of "kinship." […] In other words, collective traumatic memories help a community build up a new collective identity.[48]

Through the use of new forms of documentary evidence and the interpellation of a traumatized, yet still militant audience, the *controinchieste* accompanied the '68 collective through uncertain times by giving voice to their rageful grief. Petri's and Pasolini's *controinchieste* also introduced a number of formal features that clashed with the "orthodox" forms of political documentaries Italian audiences had seen before. The "truth" that earlier films had represented through the combination of classical documentary strategies, such as the use of archival footage and voiceover narration — in the belief of representing the collective voice of the Left — was now a carefully-constructed narrative to be sought and investigated through other means, because the many discordant voices that were giving voice to cultural traumas were no longer able to hold to a single coherent version of reality.

Films such as *Documenti su Giuseppe Pinelli* and *12 Dicembre* introduced a whole new notion of truth and loyalty to the needs of the film audience. These *controinchieste* both reflected and contributed to the transformation of the confident left-wing *we* into a traumatized subject, transforming the notion of "resistance" from within. With the advent of *controinchieste*, the process of memorialization and monumentalization of the history of Italian Resistance that had continued since the Postwar years was forced to confront a changed reality and a conception of "truth" that proved much more complex and opaque than they had been before. This shift in the filmic perception of the collectivity came into being at a time when the Left had lost its confidence in the project of a unitary future and was about to experience a decade of traumatic events linked to terrorism and the armed struggle. These events would annihilate the work of the radical movements and banish them from the public arena. The plurality that spoke of a common, yet faceless enemy in the *controinchieste* was no longer the confident, budding *we* imposed by the Communist Party and shaped out of the aesthetic and ethical agenda of Neorealism, but a paranoid subject whose frantic quest for the truth revealed its own most dramatic contradictions.

Section 5. A Martyr for the New Resistance: The Case of Carlo Giuliani

Born out of a perceived need for self-defense against a growing hegemonic repression on the part of State-controlled media, the independent *controinchieste* on Piazza Fontana and on the death of Pinelli construed the voice of a collective subject whose power no longer relied on the hope to seize control of the masses — as was the case in 1968 — guiding them towards a utopian

[48] Hajek, *Negotiating Memories of Protest*, 7.

liberation. Rather, the oppositional collective voice conjured by Pasolini, the Lotta Continua group or Petri disseminated the notion that pursuing uncomfortable truths had value in itself. Their commitment to counter-memories was not a means to an end, but rather a form of stubborn refusal to give way to the monological voice of State institutions, a voice that penetrated the consciousness of the majority through the manipulation of factual evidence. The *controinchieste* championed an idea of truth that reflected Foucault's notion that countermemory was a form of moral duty. As explained by Barbara Misztal, producing counter-memories amounts precisely to a subversive act in the face of a hegemonic manipulation of historical knowledge:

> By challenging the hegemony of the political elite's construction of the past, counter-memory turns memory into a contested territory in which groups engaging in a political conflict promote competitive views of the past in order to gain control over the political center or to legitimize a separatist orientation.[49]

With the collapse of the youth movements and the end of the "long '68," political documentaries in Italy were deemed again to be a thing of the past, much like the collective ideologies that had sustained the youth movement during that time. At the beginning of the 1980s, *controinchieste* are replaced by a different form of journalism, produced and distributed by the State television. The autonomous voice of the collective seems to disappear, in favor of the diffusion of a number of video *reportages* on the plight of a new kind of youth, ravaged by heroin addiction and by a sense of hopelessness. Between the late Seventies and the beginning of the Eighties, the consumption of heavy drugs sees in fact a sudden and dramatic increase. Heroin, in particular, became increasingly popular in countercultural circles. Historians attribute the sweeping diffusion of heroin among young people to its sudden availability at very low costs, coupled with a widespread sense of defeat that took over a whole generation at the end of the Years of Lead. Youth, as a collective subject, thus loses its agency and is observed on screen as the victim of social issues rather than as an active participant in the political field.[50]

Much like the debate on the '68 era as a whole, the scholarly discussion surrounding political documentaries soon veered toward denouncing the short span of their reach and their limited artistic value.[51] Nevertheless, the practice of the *controinchieste* rememerged at critical junctures of the country's history and during times of intensified conflict between clashing worldviews, deploying the form of the documentary both as an attempt to counter hegemonic narratives and as a form of continuity with a tradition of past struggles sustained through the use of filmic evidence. Spanning from the Postwar era to today, the use of the political documentary as a form of cultural resistance highlights the continuities, rather than the breaks between a series of separate historical episodes. Contemporary *controinchieste*, in fact, deploy similar strategies and dramatize traumatic events in ways that are highly reminiscent of their filmic predecessors, with the aim of exerting specific, embattled reactions on the part of the viewers, who are called to see themselves as victims, rather than just observers, of State and police wrongdoings.

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[49] Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003), 66.

[50] Among the authors of social *reportages*, Giuseppe "Jo" Marrazzo stands out as an investigative journalist who first brought attention to the mass consumption of heroin among the Italian youth in the Eighties. See the RAI Storia documentary *La droga dietro l'angolo*, based on original materials collected by Marrazzo. http://www.raistoria.rai.it/articoli/la-droga-dietro-langolo/25992/default.aspx (last access: 12/01/2015)

[51] See, for example, Gualtiero De Santi, "Sotto il segno del documento," in *1967, Tuoni prima del Maggio*, 49-67.

In recent times, such a continuity is seen in especially clear terms in the treatment of the death of Carlo Giuliani on the part of both the dominant media and the countercultural channels. Carlo Giuliani was a 23-year-old protester who was shot dead by Mario Placanica, a *carabiniere*, on July 20, 2001, during the 27th Group of Eight (G8) summit in Genoa, Italy. Despite being filmed and photographed from multiple angles, Giuliani's death immediately became a matter of contention in Italian culture, initiating a "media war" between supporters of the police and advocates of the anti-globalization movement that had taken over the streets of Genoa to protest against a number of political, environmental, and social issues. Along with mainstream media, the official investigations that followed these events were quick to label Giuliani as a violent troublemaker, denying Placanica's direct responsibility in Giuliani's death. Police reports and all main Italian media channels stated that the shot was fired in self-defense against Giuliani's attack. The protester was described as being in the immediate vicinity of the *carabinieri* car, brandishing a fire extinguisher, and was in the process of attacking Placanica and his colleague, who were trapped inside their Land Rover. However, a number of separate investigations — conducted both by the Giuliani family and by sections of the no-global movement, mainly through the examination of amateur photo and video material recorded at the scene — revealed a plethora of details that openly contradicted the conclusions of the official investigation. Carlo Giuliani's death thus became symbolic of a highly polarized political war — between the State and the movement — fought entirely through the use of images. The counter-investigations conducted by the family and the movement activists obtained no material results in the judicial field: the case was closed shortly thereafter by judge Elena Daloisio, who refused to hold a trial to ascertain the truth behind Giuliani's death. However, the evidence collected against the police and the judiciary's obstinate refusal to consider the family's demands gave rise to an underground, yet widespread movement to vindicate Giuliani's memory and transform the public perception of his character into that of a revolutionary martyr. In this sense, the story of Carlo Giuliani serves today a similar function as that of Giuseppe Pinelli during the early Seventies, with the story of his death serving as the catalyst for a number of political tensions on the part of the radical Left. These tensions never really evaporated or resolved themselves, but rather persisted throughout the following decades, identifying new episodes of collective outrage that fed into the collective belief that political activism was under attack. In Giuliani's case, his "clean slate" — the fact that he was not a known activist, but rather an ordinary young man without a militant past in any leftist or anti-globalist organizations — became the reason why the images of his martyred body were deployed as a weapon by all interested factions, channelling oppositional notions of "documentary truth." Contrarily to Pinelli — who was a seasoned leader in the Milan anarchist circles — Giuliani was only 23 years old and left behind no trail of political activities. Therefore, he paradoxically personified the nature of the new no-global movement, which was still unknown to many. His death came to exemplify the tensions between narratives of villainhood, heroism and victimhood that are constantly at work in Italian political discourse. According to mainstream media and the police, he was the anonymous, dangerous face of a multitudinous subject that represented an unforeseen threat to the stability of the nation; on the other hand, he became known posthumously to the no-global movement as just an innocent idealist fighting for world justice and defending himself against police brutality. Yet, just like what happened with Pinelli in Milan, Giuliani's name became the object of a heated controversy in his native city of Genoa, when hours after his death someone used a felt tip pen to cross out the name "Gaetano Alimonda" (a Genoese cardinal) from the plaque marking the square, replacing it with "Carlo Giuliani, ragazzo" ("Carlo Giuliani, boy"). That simple,

irreverent gesture against the dominant narrative that had already been circulating around Giuliani — the idea that he had somehow "deserved" to die for being part of a group of protesters — became the source of a controversy that punctually repeated itself every year since 2001: each July 20th, on the anniversary of Giuliani's death, someone managed to alter the name on the plaque of Piazza Alimonda — temporarily dedicating it to the memory of Giuliani — only to have the writing removed by the City of Genoa hours later. Nevertheless, it was the Genoa City Council itself that years later, in 2005, voted to mount a plaque in memory of the protester — using the same, now famous inscription "Carlo Giuliani, ragazzo" — in the center of Piazza Alimonda. The plaque was repeatedly smashed and vandalized on subsequent anniversaries of the Genoa G8 events. Now a headstone with Giuliani's name has replaced the plaque and was itself vandalized.



Fig. 10-11. The plaque and headstone in memory of Carlo Giuliani. Piazza Alimonda, Genoa

Therefore, Piazza Alimonda represents still today a place imbued with conflicting emotions, and the incompatible stories that animate the square have transferred to the field of documentary film. A number of *controinchieste*, both on paper and film, have commemorated Giuliani's last hours, weaving his individual story as a victim of police brutality with the collective narrative of an antagonized protest movement.[52] One interesting example of these new *controinchieste* is *La trappola*, a film produced by the non-profit Committee for Piazza Carlo

[52] See also Francesca Comencini, *Carlo Giuliani, ragazzo* (2002); *Raccontami Genova*, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lucvUltGnSQ (last access: 12/01/2015); Marco Giusti, Roberto Torello, and Carlo Freccero, *Bella Ciao*, (2002), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDC4Pb0WBrg (last access: 12/01/2015). For a list of written *controinchieste* on the death of Carlo Giuliani, see the online archive of the Comitato Piazza Giuliani Onlus: http://www.piazzacarlogiuliani.org/pillolarossa/modules.php?name=News&new_topic=2 (last access: 12/01/2015)

Giuliani, an advocacy group trying to raise awareness about misrepresentations of the Piazza Alimonda events. The film, conceived by the group as a whole, was then directed by Bruno Laverà, a former State television journalist who won the Saint Vincent Journalism Award for his courage in documenting police violence during the G8 summit. As a testament to the collective authors' intention to keep the memory of Giuliani alive, the documentary was originally released in 2006 as a work-in-progress and has been since integrated and re-published on the Internet with new materials multiple times over the last few years, as new details and evidence on the case continue to emerge. Through its straightforward structure, *La trappola* aims to conceal the work of the authors to create a sense of transparency, a direct connection between the filmed material and the audience. Rather than accompanying the display of visual materials with a traditional voiceover narration, or through the use of commentary and interviews, *La trappola* simply offers a montage of archival materials. These materials are taken from the mainstream press (many State television programs and newscasts, but also numerous original audio and video recordings obtained from the records of the investigation) and set in contrast with independent news sources or amateur videos and photos that portrayed a very different reality from the one that reached the mainstream domain. The images and videos are at times illustrated by intertitles providing a more specific context: location, timing of the recording or photo, citation of the sources, etc. The bare presentation of the materials is justified by the silent force of the juxtaposition of the images shown on screen. The tensions that arise when comparing the mainstream media stories from the close-up angle of the independent images lead to a dramatic build-up, which culminates in the unfolding of the "trap," the *trappola* to which the title alludes. The film in fact lays out an entirely reversed reading of the Piazza Alimonda tragedy that sees the police as the perpetrators of violence and the protesters as the victims who were left with no choice but to defend themselves against their attackers. This is where the textual intertitles become more explicit in their political alignment, illustrating the theory behind the no-global movement's version of the story. In essence, the documentary aims at demonstrating that the police who committed acts of violence against the protesters were acting on the basis of a well-thought out design. The intertitles, along with the images, suggest that Giuliani and his fellow protesters were in Piazza Alimonda because of a specific tactic that meant to isolate a fringe of the demonstrators in a narrow, closed-up space so they would have fewer escape points from the attacks of the police. By looking at the plethora of materials collected by the organization that produced the film, the viewers are led to conclude that judge Aloisio's decision not to hold a trial to establish the truth behind Giuliani's death was a rushed and politically-biased one. Much like the authors of the *controinchieste* of the late Sixties and Seventies, thus, the collective group of activists who produced *La trappola* ultimately breaks a traditional dogma within documentary tradition: "the perpetuation of a distance" between the author and the materials presented.[53] And while the early *controinchieste* of the Seventies markedly presented reality through the ideological lens of the resistant Left, the new wave of documentary investigations inaugurated with the case of Giuliani addresses a dispersed, multitudinous "we" that no longer possesses a single political agenda, and whose moral duty is to remember and question the veracity of the images they are shown and of the stories they are told. In this sense, Giuliani's death is a filter through which the documentarists are showing how all Italians, as a national audience, were the victims of a media orchestration built on the seeming transparency of the images presented: Carlo Giuliani is photographed while wearing a balaclava and lifting a fire extinguisher, standing very close to the

[53] See Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 186.

police vehicle; the *carabiniere* shot a bullet in an act of self-defense; the bullet hit against a rock thrown by another protester; finally, it bounced against Giuliani's head, killing him at once. We see a policeman chasing a protester, accusing him of ostensibly having killed Giuliani by throwing the rock that diverted the bullet's trajectory. Those images were obsessively reproduced by all media channels, construing a semblance of reality that fit well with the narrative that the whole no-global movement had gathered in Genoa to vandalize the city and make trouble. As the activist writers' collective Wu Ming declared on their blog, Carlo Giuliani's iconic death was orchestrated in order to exorcise the specter of militant resistance — a specter that had its origins in the haunting memory of 1968 — imposing a "truth" that was

> fabricated since the first hour after Carlo's killing and maintained thanks to a careful media vigilance. But a vigilance against what?
> A vigilance against any attempt to — literally — *enlarge the frame* and, at the same time, insert this episode within its own temporality, in the larger concatenation of events of that horrible afternoon.
>
> confezionata già nella prima ora dopo l'uccisione di Carlo e mantenuta grazie a un'accorta vigilanza mediatica. Ma vigilanza contro cosa?
> Vigilanza contro qualunque tentativo di — letteralmente — allargare l'inquadratura e, al tempo stesso, inserire l'episodio nella sua temporalità, nella concatenazione di eventi di quell'orribile pomeriggio.[54]

Not coincidentally, Wu Ming emphasize their use of a film metaphor — "enlarge the frame" — to expose the mainstream media's unwillingness to consider Giuliani's death from a different (visual, but also political) angle. And yet, the metaphor literally fits the singular case of the mediatic (mis)representation of the movement's martyr's death, as the most shocking piece of evidence displayed in *La trappola* is that Giuliani was not, in fact, as close to the Land Rover as the image reproduced by the media would seem to suggest. An overwhelming number of other videos and photographs taken in Piazza Alimonda demonstrate that Giuliani was indeed several feet away from the vehicle, thus not constituting an immediate danger to the people inside it. The image that circulated all over the news, showing Giuliani in the immediate vicinity of the police car, holding up the fire extinguisher, ready to throw it at the car, was found to be distorted by the lens of the photographer, who was trying to get a close-up of the scene. Consequently, the counter-investigation led in *La trappola* presents the viewers with images proving that shooting Giuliani was not motivated by an act of self-defense, and that the whole media campaign built around his supposedly criminal persona — a synecdoche for the condemnation of the whole no-global movement, labeled as violent and irrational — was the product of an intentional selection of evidence. Literally, it constituted a visual distorsion of the truth. And while the State-sanctioned version of the events portrays the police vehicle as being isolated and trapped by the raging protesters, many amateur videos prove that there were several other police troops in the immediate vicinity and that there was a clear means of escape behind them. The Land Rover was free to take off immediately after the shooting of Giuliani, and did so, running over his body while fleeing the scene.

[54] Wu Ming, *Tu che straparli di Carlo Giuliani, conosci l'orrore di Piazza Alimonda?*, July 19th, 2012, http://www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/?p=9071 (last access: 12/01/2015). Emphasis mine.





Fig. 10-11. Clashing representations of Carlo Giuliani's death.

Through the use of thousands of amateur and professional images taken on that day in Genoa, *La trappola* produces a solid case against the dismissal of Giuliani's case in court. Moreover, it connects the isolated events of Piazza Alimonda to a larger web of accusations that involve the high spheres of the State police, the media, and national political leaders. It shows how Giuliani's death was not a casual accident, but the predictable result of a punitive mindset that meant to disintegrate the no-global movement, first by attacking it in the streets, then by spreading biased narratives about it in the media. The authors of the documentary subtly construe a narrative that reproduces all the tropes of the earlier *controinchieste*, portraying the body of the dead martyr — Giuliani — as the channel through which a whole movement was attacked, yet also as the instrument through which the movement could find a channel for resistance through memory. Much like in the case of Pinelli, the spectacle of Giuliani's dead body is today offered as a warning against militant activism, but it is also the memory around which a political movement still congregates and organizes itself. In Wu Ming's comments on the death of Giuliani, we find the echo of the ghostly tropes that still constitute the memory of '68: "The younger generation inherited Genoa as their 'original sin'. Every time they take to the streets, the specters of Genoa drag their chains."[55] And yet, much like the ghosts of '68, the shocking, graphic stories of injustice they reveal seem to find few interlocutors, silenced as they are by the superior power of the mainstream media machine:

> From 2001 to today, a series of thorough *controinchieste* have delved into the immense treasure trove of images — both static and moving — that emerged over the course of the years, taking apart and assembling again the entire sequence of

[55] Ibid.

> Piazza Alimonda. The extended sequence, not just the few seconds seen a thousand times, and yet never understood. The official truth crumbles down under these investigations, but… there is a *but*.
> Outside of the movement, outside of the milieu of the "Genoa experts" and of "those who were there," who the fuck knows about the *controinchieste*? […]
> No one. In fact, you hear the same two or three idiocies repeated over and over again; they reactivate the frame of the "aggressor who went looking for trouble", of the "*carabiniere* that defended himself", "if he was such a good boy, what was he doing there wearing a balaclava and with a fire extinguisher in his hands?", etc.
>
> Dal 2001 a oggi, approfondite controinchieste hanno attinto all'immenso tesoro di immagini — fisse e in movimento — emerse nel corso degli anni, smontando e rimontando l'intera sequenza di Piazza Alimonda. La sequenza estesa, non solo i pochi secondi visti mille volte eppure mai compresi. La verità ufficiale ne esce sgretolata, ma… c'è un ma.
> Fuori degli ambiti di movimento, fuori dal milieu dei "genovologi" e dei noi-che-c'eravamo, chi cazzo le conosce le controinchieste? […]
> Nessuno, e infatti si sentono ogni volta le stesse due o tre idiozie, si riattiva il frame del "violento che se l'è cercata", del "carabiniere che si è difeso", "se era un così bravo ragazzo che ci faceva col passamontagna e l'estintore?" etc.[56]

With the mass diffusion of portable video devices and the ease and speed with which amateur recordings can be disseminated via the Internet, youth movements such as the no-global activists in Genoa found a valuable tool to advocate for their causes and fight against the repression to which they were subjected. Yet, the Giuliani case is different from other controversial cases that have risen to international fame thanks to the role that video documents played in spreading alternate versions of the "truth": for example, it is different from the beating of Rodney King by the Los Angeles police in March 1991, or the recent cases of police brutality that jumpstarted the Black Lives Matter movement, such as the deaths of Eric Garner in 2014 and Freddie Gray in 2015, or the 2015 arrest of Sandra Bland.[57] As Wu Ming correctly reports, the Italian *controinchieste* only circulated within restricted audiences, despite being widely available on popular channels such as YouTube.[58] Even more strikingly, many of the materials presented in the *controinchieste* on Giuliani, including *La trappola*, are actually directly extrapolated from the proceedings of the official police investigation. Despite the visible, tangible, readily-available evidence collected by Giuliani's family and by the Comitato Piazza Giuliani, the Italian judiciary still refuses to hold a trial. The evidence produced by these documentaries continues to be dismissed as unreliable, the product of a collective conspiracy theory. Wu Ming observes that, by portraying the no-global movement as a crowd of aggressors and looters with no other aim but to destroy the city of Genoa, the media fabricated a long-

[56] Ibid.
[57] In the cases I listed, the police beatings and misconduct were all filmed by bystanders who contributed actively to the birth of the movement and considered it their moral duty to document the illicit behaviors they were witnessing. In other cases that still became prominent in recent news, the incriminating videos that emerged were rather taken from surveillance cameras. This was the case in the investigation that followed, for example, the deaths of Michael Brown and Tamir Rice in 2014.
[58] The whole version of *La Trappola* can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC-dy_gp17c (last access: 12/01/2015).

lasting “truth” that was hammered into the nation’s psyche through the presentation of literally and figuratively “distorted” images. The only evidence that came to be accepted against Giuliani consisted in the repetition of a flattened-out photographic image, rather than in the complexity of a scene observed from multiple angles.

Today’s *controinchieste* may not represent a life-affirming call to arms in the name of the restoration of the nation’s morality, as was the case for the documentaries of the early Sixties. They may not reproduce the community-building strategies of the post-’68 documentaries, which claimed that, while being dismantled, the collective subject was still fighting against oppression. Nevertheless, the existence of contemporary *controinchieste* in the interstices of political discourse, the fact that they stubbornly continue to commemorate the dead, contributes to the continuing circulation of narratives of resistance within Italian society. Throughout the 20th century and beyond, Italian historiography constituted an extremely blurry discursive field, one where multiple, divided memories were fostered, rather than discouraged, by the persistence of ideological struggles. While the *controinchieste* contribute to protracting — rather than dispelling — this *status quo*, they also continue to question the seduction of the simplistic categorizations produced by mainstream media. This subaltern, yet long-standing tradition of political documentaries shows the persistence of a cross-generational affective continuum within the destabilized radical Left, one that pre-existed 1968 and continued well beyond it, but was forever changed by the traumatic events — such as the Piazza Fontana bombing — that marked the youth movement’s crisis. Despite the ’68 generation’s efforts to deny continuities with those who preceded them or criticize the non-politicized times that followed, old and new *controinchieste* reveal in form and in content a continued desire to celebrate community, hope, and activism even in the face of trauma. Within documentary tradition, the memory of the dead is kept alive and injustices are readdressed so that the spirit and ideology of the collective can survive, preserving a storehouse of *exempla* for the future.

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FILMOGRAPHY

12 dicembre (Lotta Continua and Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1970)

All'armi, siam fascisti! (Lino Del Frà, Cecilia Mangini, and Lino Micciché, 1961)

Battleship Potemkin (Sergej Eisenstein, 1925)

Bella Ciao (Carlo Freccero, Marco Giusti, and Roberto Torello, 2002)

Carlo Giuliani, ragazzo (Francesca Comencini, 2002)

Caro Diario (Nanni Moretti, 1993)

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Documenti su Giuseppe Pinelli (Elio Petri and Nelo Risi, 1970)

Gomorra (Matteo Garrone, 2008)

Il divo (Paolo Sorrentino, 2008)

La meglio gioventù (Marco Tullio Giordana, 2003)

La trappola (Bruno Laverà, 2006)

Lettere di condannati a morte della resistenza italiana (Fausto Fornari, 1953)

Romanzo di una strage (Marco Tullio Giordana, 2012)

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