Written in Darkness, Spoken in Light: Italian Partisans and the Poetics of Transition

by

David Raymond Mingolla Class of 2011

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in Italian Studies

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend deep thanks to my advisor Ellen Nerenberg, who saw me through this project. *Ancora, ancora non uscito pazz'*.

Many thanks as well to Erhard Konerding and the Olin Reference Librarians, who gave this work its foundation and polish.

Chris Ceccolini, Blair Laurie, and the rest of the Alpha Delta Phi Society deserve credit for keeping me sane in these odd, odd months.

My family has seen little of this, but they too are in these words; my pen slips when I don't have two feet on the ground.

I can never thank Lindsey Davis enough for her support and love.

Table of Contents

Part One: Betrayal from Within	
Introduction	5
Chapter I – Collapse and Foundation	16
Chapter II – A New and Separate Life	35
Part Two: History at a Distance	
Chapter III – War on All Fronts	53
Chapter IV – The End of a Beginning	71
Conclusion	80
Anthology of Additional Poems	87
Works Cited	93
Notes	94

To speak of the patience and endurance, the industry and resourcefulness of the Italian workman has become almost commonplace. But, like other commonplaces, it is true, and sometimes, in times of crisis, these qualities reach a degree that is almost heroic. Time and suffering have engraved them in the lines of the peasant-women's faces — a sorrow too deep for complaint, a patience that has something sculptural, eternal. Resigned and laborious, they and their men-folk turn back from the fresh graves and the wreckage of their homes to their accustomed daily toil. It is they who will bring the land to life again. ¹

Part One

Betrayal from Within

Introduction

The two poems found below, which circulated through Italy's artistic underground during World War II, first appeared via independent publishers who did not censor content but were forced to censor their distribution. Only after the war would the poems pass through large publishing houses; only then would they include the author's signature.

Non piangere, compagno

Non piangere, compagno, se m'hai trovato qui steso. Vedi, non ho più peso in me di sangue. Mi lagno

di quest'ombra che mi sale dal ventre pallido al cuore, inaridito fiore d'indifferenza mortale.

Portami fuori, amico, al sole che scalda la piazza, al vento celeste che spazza il mio golfo infinito.

Concedimi la pace dell'aria; fa che io bruci ostia candida, brace persa nel sonno della luce.

Lascia così che dorma: fermento piano, una mite cosa sono, un calmo e lento cielo in me si riposa.

-Giorgio Bassani

Don't cry, comrade

Don't cry, comrade, if you've found me lying here. Look, I don't have the weight of blood in me anymore. I lament

this shadow that climbs from my pale stomach up to my heart, a dried up flower of fatal indifference.

Bring me outside, friend, to the sun that warms the piazza, to the divine wind that washes away this infinite gulf within me.

Grant me the peace of open air; make me burn, spotless wafer, embers lost in a dream of light.

Leave him, let him sleep: quiet turmoil, what a small thing I am, a tranquil slow sky relaxes in me.

(trans. David Mingolla)[†]

..

[†] This and all other translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

Hanno sparato contro il sole

Non s'ode nulla ma il vento risveglia il fischio d'un treno. L'alba è già scesa sui capelli biondi dei ragazzi che avanzano in cielo.

L'erba dei prati s'è ritta, a folate la luce corre a trattenere l'aria per mostrarsi sul prato coi fanciulli ancora illesi e splendere di loro.

Hanno sparato i ciechi contro il sole e la terra li mostra per vendetta senza riparo, neri della luce che li fruga e li lascia avvinazzati nel sangue dei fanciulli.

Son leggeri
i partigiani con le stelle rosse.
Il silenzio sarà d'un altro mondo
a velarti d'un soffio, dove l'alba
corre nei mari liberi al saluto
della terra promessa ed in ogni uomo
decide la speranza che la terra
fiorita di lavoro abbia il suo canto.

-Alfonso Gatto

They shot at the sun

One hears nothing but the wind as it wakes a train's whistle.

Dawn has already fallen on the blond hair of children that step into heaven.

The field grass stands up straight, light runs in gusts to hold up the air, to show itself to the kids on the field still unharmed, to shine for them.

The blind have shot at the sun and the land prepares them for ruthless vengeance, they're black as the light that delves into them and leaves them drunk on the blood of children.

They're gentle the partisans with red stars. The silence will be otherworldly when it settles on them, where dawn runs in open seas to greet the promised land and in every man hope decides that land nourished by work should have its own song.

Both of these poems aim straight for a theme that infused antifascist writings all across Italy: the disconnect between man and the land upon which he treads. Gatto's *They shot at the sun* plays with this uncomfortable distance within the first two stanzas especially. The first two lines of stanzas one and two create a pastoral scene shot through with unnatural silence. And both quatrains end with dawn's light falling only on the blond-haired children, "still unharmed" amid the bloodbath. Gatto

also puns on his description of the ragazzi che avanzano in cielo, the "children that step into [move toward] heaven". Cielo could just as soon be translated as "the sky" here, with the implication that these children always unknowingly — are moving further away from the land their parents conquer. The five-line third stanza makes this contrast more explicit. Here the blind and the land claw at one another; they try to subdue one another. In a sick theater of mutually assured destruction, "the land prepares [the blind] for ruthless / vengeance". And the blind, whose children gather dawn's light on their innocent skin, have turned "black as the light / that delves into them". Whoever emerges as victor, that is to say, will already have done irreparable harm in the process. Gatto then changes gears entirely in the final stanza, where he introduces the partigiani (partisans; anti-fascist resistance fighters). They appear in a separate stanza, and the imagery that accompanies them suggests that they occupy another world entirely. The poem ends on a note of optimism, insisting that "land nourished / by work should have its own song". This same sort of reclamation was at the root of the partisans' struggle.

Giorgio Bassani approaches a similar issue with *Don't cry,* comrade: the disconnect between two human beings. At first the dying

man himself narrates, and he hopes to turn his death into something more than an occasion for mourning. He engages his comrade directly, for he fears that they might sink into separate roles — the dying and the observer — and thus slip away from one another at the last moment. But death gnaws at the speaker even as he tries to lift his comrade's spirits. His heart is a victim of "fatal indifference". Just as a dried flower retains its shape but lacks strength, life, and hope of rebirth, so too the dying man feels isolated in death rather than cradled by it. Exactly halfway through the four stanzas he will narrate, he requests to be carried outside to the sunny piazza and "the divine wind that washes away / this infinite gulf within [him]". As he does so, the rhyming couplet that describes the sun and air literally bisects the stanza. On a formal level, too, the middle lines fill the distance between the outdoor piazza and the speaker's internal gulf. In tune with his fear of dying alone, the speaker's last wish is to request a figurative cremation. He calls for "open air", the "spotless wafer" of the Eucharist, and a spark that will "make [him] burn" — the air, fuel and heat required to start a fire. While the dying narrator passes away in the fourth stanza, the poem's rhyme scheme transitions as well. The first three stanzas take an abba form, whereas the fourth takes abac, with all of the end-words rhyming to some degree. The final stanza, written from the comrade's perspective, completes the transition into *abab*. Thus the death in stanza four formally bridges the gap between the two friends. As requested, the narrator does not cry; in fact, he speaks with true humility. The sky finds peace in him, and he in the sky. An act of love has brought him and his now-dead companion into harmony with the land.

In certain ways, Giorgio Bassani joined the anti-fascist Resistance before it ever existed officially. He was born in Bologna on March 4th, 1916 to a wealthy Jewish family from Ferrara. He spent his childhood and adolescence in Ferrara, and at 18 he enrolled at the University of Bologna, where he would graduate five years later with a degree in literature. Bassani's university years exposed him to ever-widening intellectual circles and, simultaneously, to the realities of being Jewish under the fascist regime. In 1938 the Leggi Razziali (Racial Laws) and the Manifesto del Razzismo (Declaration of Racism) were signed into effect as part of a nationwide mandate.² One decree in particular from September 5th, 1938 made it illegal for state educational and cultural institutions to employ or enroll anyone of Jewish birth; it even outlawed the use of textbooks featuring Jewish authors.³ Bassani managed to complete his degree in the meantime, but the new laws pressured Jewish

communities — his family included — into intense isolation. Bassani began to write during these years, putting short stories and the occasional poem up for publication. He never failed to use a pseudonym. In 1940 he took an active interest in politics and soon joined the growing anti-fascist movement. The poems of his that appear here are products of, and testaments to, his dedication to resistance.

Franco Fortini, whose poems I translate and consider in this project as well, entered the world in an atmosphere that Bassani might have recognized. Born on September 10th, 1917 in Florence, Fortini was the son of a Jewish father and a Catholic mother. He was given the name Franco Lattes, but would eventually take part of his mother's surname (Fortini del Giglio) in an effort to escape racism.⁴ Fortini studied in Florence for a time, moving between art history, aesthetics, and the law. His family was not nearly as wealthy as Bassani's, though, and the Race Laws of 1938 put them in a financial stranglehold. Fortini began to write his first poems that same year, but his involvement in World War II would limit his ability to write professionally. He was called up to the national military and served in the Italian army until September 8th, 1943.5 On that very day he escaped the barracks and began his flight to Switzerland.⁶ Fortini slowly worked his way back into northern Italy and

collaborated with like-minded socialists in resistance efforts. In the latter years of World War II he wrote for the socialist newspaper *Avanti!*, immersing himself in politics and poetry. He emerged into the public consciousness after the war, but his name — already half pseudonym — did not make waves before late 1944. Even if his poems cannot paint a complete picture of Fortini the partisan, they form a frame available nowhere else.

Despite the thematic overlap between Don't cry, comrade and They shot at the sun, Alfonso Gatto came to the Resistance along a road all his own. He was born in Salerno (southeast of Naples) on July 17th, 1909, seven years before Fortini and Bassani. As far as is known, he spent a turbulent childhood amid a family of fisherman and ship makers. He studied at the University of Naples beginning in 1926, only to leave a few years later due to lack of funds. Soon his ambition and restless spirit took him far to the north, where he planned to begin a career in letters in Milan.⁸ He jumped between jobs frequently, trying his hand at salesmanship and editing. Gatto was not shy about his anti-fascist leanings, to the point that he spent half of 1936 in Milan's San Vittore prison.9 In the late 1930s he collaborated on various magazines and critical reviews, most of which mirrored the radically left-wing politics evident in Gatto's poetry. He co-founded the anti-fascist fortnightly *Campo di Marte* (Field of Mars) in 1938 with the novelist Vasco Pratolini, but its openness to new voices led to its closing in less than a year. Of the three poets examined here, Gatto most actively avoided the spotlight. A strand of asceticism runs through his poems, and the little information that exists on his whereabouts during the war reflects the degree to which he shunned attention. He joined a Resistance that expanded on his guiding philosophy, in which resistance is nothing less than a way of life:

To "resist" means to oppose a force that works against us, threatens to overpower us and that invites us to withdraw. To "resist" means to hold out to the limit of our endurance and our physical patience. It's a test that we choose in the act of being, an interior persuasion for an ulterior reason....The Resistance...is not an exceptional moment of being; it is the opposite — a period that endures in time and in history, to form a common conscience. 11

* *

As a genre, poetry provided these three writers with unique ways to manifest their resistance. On the most fundamental level, it imposed no restrictions on style or content. Total freedom on the page was especially uncommon in a period of fascist censorship, but poetry left matters of grammar and syntax, among others, completely up to the writer. The genre also afforded poets a measure of immunity from the currents of history swirling around them. Each self-contained work stood alone,

uncontaminated by whatever wartime development had sunk its teeth into the headlines of the day. The poem was — and continues to be — a deeply personal form: nothing exists on the page besides the speaker, the words, and the audience. These works did not risk assimilation into another narrative, least of which one that the poets themselves did not support. This in turn gave poets like Bassani, Fortini, and Gatto the unusual freedom to write their own experience. If ever a gulf separated their resistance and their writing, poetry worked as a bridge.

My experience with these poems led me far from my point of departure, a collection of poetry entitled "Con la violenza la pietà": poesia e resistenza ("With violence, piety": poetry and resistance). It first introduced me to Fortini, Bassani, and Gatto by way of their most explicitly partisan poems. From there I began to focus on each poet's selected works. Fortini's Versi scelti: 1939 – 1989 (Selected poems: 1939 – 1989) featured his first major publication, Foglio di via (Deportation notice), which spanned just the period I sought to research: 1942 – 1945. I read from Bassani's L'alba ai vetri (Dawn at the windows) until its poems made reference to post-war events. Neither anthology gave dates of composition or publication, and I soon came to learn that such dates rarely survived. When the collections did list dates, as with Gatto's II

capo sulla neve (The head on the snow), they noted nothing beyond the year of a given poem's first publication. And this could hardly reflect when the work first hit Italy's underground. I have thus omitted dates from my translations so as to avoid misleading the reader. I returned to "Con la violenza" to select my final poems, and it quickly proved impossible to stitch them into a history of the Resistance. Thus, I chose for my analysis poems that highlighted one or all of the following: Resistance politics and history; accounts of daily life; and detached reflection on the war. For not all of these poems concern partisans — nor should they. Each poem sheds a unique light. Taken together, they can illuminate stories far beyond those of their own creation.

The process of translation brought me even further into this narrative web. In reality, I read each poem no less than three ways: in the original Italian; in my first translation; and in the final English. In a limited way, I embodied both the historian who sets the war down in ink, as well as the nostalgic survivor who recreates it in memory. It is my hope that the bilingual poems featured here can map out another step along this road to rediscovering the Resistance.

But what exactly is missing from the partisans' story if these poems are set aside? First, there are the realities of life on the ground during the hottest years of a military inferno. Italian governmental reshuffling began in 1943, but most partisans never climbed far enough up the political ladder to affect large-scale reform. They had more immediate concerns by definition, and these almost always went unrecorded. Second, partisans were, in part, victims of their own cause. They took a rare opportunity to resist appropriation into the fascist war effort, and this cost them a recognized identity. Their decision to stand apart placed them outside any account of a smooth transition to postfascism. In essence, they fought themselves and their stories out of Italy's timeline. Third, while the Resistance may not draw the concerted and public attention that it used to, the movement and its aftereffects linger in Italy. For some it is still too painful to trace back a mere two generations of family. The legacy of the Resistance thus *still* exists disproportionately in its own moment. The poems reproduced here work as products of that moment, deliberate entries into stories that were told but never written. They force attention onto a time, a group, and a cause that might otherwise be swallowed up.

Chapter I — Collapse and Foundation

Italia 1942

Ora m'accorgo d'amarti Italia, di salutarti Necessaria prigione.

Non per le vie dolenti, per le città Rigate come visi umani Non per la cenere di passione Delle chiese, non per la voce Dei tuoi libri lontani

Ma per queste parole Tessute di plebi, che battono A martello nella mente, Per questa pena presente Che in te m'avvolge straniero.

Per questa mia lingua che dico A gravi uomini ardenti avvenire Liberi in fermo dolore compagni. Ora non basta nemmeno morire Per quel tuo vano nome antico.

-Franco Fortini

Italy 1942

Now I realize I love you Italy, I greet you Necessary prison.

Not for all the sorry streets, the cities Lined like human faces Not for the churches' passion, now Ashes, not for the voice Of your distant books

But for these words Woven by the masses, which drive Their way into your mind, For this current pain That seems foreign to you.

For this language that I speak
To grave men in great pain
Burning to become free.
Now it's not even enough to die
For your ancient useless name.

In 1942 Franco Fortini was 25 years old, serving in the still-fascist national military, and beginning to participate in the Resistance. This poem goes straight to the paradox that Italy signified for its young citizens. The country's celebrated beauty has been overexposed; the cities have become "lined like human faces" and cannot help but show their

age. Whatever passion the churches possessed and on which they thrived has been reduced to ashes. The streets, cities, and books, in fact, all have human qualities that have decayed and thus cannot resonate with the speaker. What he loves about his country is not timeless or materially permanent. Rather, he loves its living body — its people that weave words that "drive / their way into your mind". He loves them because of, not in spite of, the pain they bring to Italy; they do not simply walk its streets and leave them unchanged. These people compel the speaker to spread his peculiar love, to encourage others that Italy is worth saving. But who would die for an "ancient useless name" that promises nothing in return? The poem begs a worthy cause, some other outlet for the masses that can offer them an opportunity to make their words reality. Then the pain they bring to Italy would be a sign of growth; they could attempt to reshape the country and bring pride back to its name. Like Fortini, they could fight for a cause that has earned their devotion.

Citizens who craved the chance to push back against fascism, however, found it difficult to gain traction. They could not display open dissent, and whatever personal resolve they harbored meant little without organizational backing. Many were stuck in a perennial waiting game with its own bizarre contradictions. Those who waited for the anti-fascist

movement to gain momentum were kept out of touch, in the meantime, by fascist news censorship. Even if the Resistance were swelling, townspeople might remain in the dark until partisans mistook them for enemies. If, on the other hand, the Resistance swung close to collapse and needed urgent support, they would have missed their chance to join. The tension of the moment, such as it was, forced a number of Italians into quick and polarizing decisions.

Thus a pressure to do justice, to do right by a country they were prepared to die for, hung heavily on the earliest partisans' shoulders.¹ Joining the Resistance might endanger the lives of their friends or relatives, but there were few options available. Conscription in the fascist army meant almost certain death, likely by Allied hands, not to mention a further betrayal of their ideals. Workers who lingered too long in northern Italian factories risked deportation to Germany, where they usually found their end at Mauthausen, a concentration camp in northern Austria.² And as other innocents had been forced to discover, partisans' mere presence in a city or combat zone was enough to make them candidates for an unceremonious and brutal death. So the lucky and the quick lifted themselves out of the cities, out of their old lives — and into a host of new dangers.

Committed *partigiani* were often forced to fight in skirmishes and pitched battles sooner than expected. Those who joined the small but growing movement made tightrope walkers out of themselves; a moment's weakness, a glance backwards instead of straight ahead, could always have been their last. Partisans caught in action, in fact, would almost surely face a fascist firing squad.³ Thus partisan foot soldiers lived and died by the Resistance. Few looked back because few could afford to do so.

Born of his unique situation, the partisan soldier was a unique breed, one that consistently ran counter to both German and Allied expectations. For one thing, partisan bands stood a world apart from the Italian national army. Mussolini's generals commanded "an ill-equipped soldiery, spurred on by promises of a short and glorious campaign" that would turn out to be anything but.⁴ The majority of those forces were fighting under forced conscription, over-eager and seriously underarmed. "It would have been possible", noted German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, "to turn [the Italian soldier] into a tough and excellent fighter". Kesselring's own Wehrmacht, however, this was not. Soldiers suffered from little combat training and inadequate supplies. When the Allies landed in Sicily on July 10th, 1943 prepared for total war, they

marched on forces that practically encouraged their demands for unconditional surrender.

The following poem by Bassani enters into the mind of a soldier in the Italian national army. He is overwhelmed and isolated, fighting for nothing:

Retrovia

Non li vedi, tu, gli angeli tutelari che compitano la tua croce. Hanno come te gli occhi chiari, quasi puerile la voce.

Li vedessi, forse sorrideresti. Non portan clamidi stole o tocchi; polverosi, sono, rotti di fatica: hanno tute celesti.

Parlano. Li senti bisbigliare di non sai che pace, che speranza: in un paese di là dal mare questa è sera di vacanza.

Nella sera il monte odora oleandri da una tomba di sassi. La vita non è più, ora, per te che un dileguare di passi.

-Giorgio Bassani

Behind the front line

You can't see them, the guardian angels that spell out your cross. They have bright eyes just like you, almost childish voices.

If you saw them, you might smile. They don't wear tunics, stoles or caps; they're dusty, dead tired: they have sky blue uniforms.

They speak. You hear them murmur about peace, about hope you can't know: in a city beyond the sea this is a night off.

At night the mountain smells of oleander taken from a rocky tomb. Life is nothing more to you, now, than a dispersal of steps.

Here the soldier has been thrust into an incomprehensible situation. Each four-line stanza reflects his confusion with a pair of couplets that work against one another. The poem begins with an image of the soldier's out-of-sight guardian angels — his fascist officers — that bring death in their

wake. But the stanza closes by giving them human qualities, cutting against the soldier's expectation. The second stanza pushes the guardian angels into the realm of the absurd. They, too, are run-down humans, "dead / tired" and wearing "sky blue uniforms". Here Bassani plays on the double meaning of *celeste* (sky blue), which in other contexts can mean "holy" or "sacred", tending toward the heavenly. Here the tragic irony is that these guardian angels, no more or less human than the foot soldier behind the front lines, are free to discuss peace and hope. They need not fight for a night off, they need not earn their hope; they simply return to their homes. The final stanza, which returns to the *abab* model with a pair of sentence-length couplets, distills the emptiness inside the soldier. He has been removed from the scene and the battle — what little agency he seemed to have has vanished. He can control his "dispersal of steps", but the future promises him nothing more. It is this, the prospect of a meaningless life and a swift death, which drew the earliest rebels and partisans to one another. The alternative was an invisible existence, fighting alongside fascist enemies yet against German enemies.

* *

Eager as they were to step into their new lives as soldiers and freedom fighters, newly minted partisans could barely keep pace with

their own enthusiasm. The vast majority of recruits were between the ages of 18 and 30. Their ranks overflowed with young communists, most of whom had been children or as yet unborn during Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922. Fascism was all they had known; it was their government, their infrastructure, their way of life. The prospect of shaping their own future was intriguing for some and intoxicating for others. It was also dangerous beyond measure for all involved.

Communists in particular took initiative in gathering support for the movement, still more of a brotherhood than a Resistance. They had been waiting longer than most for such an opportunity, and they had suffered more than most under the regime. As such, they suffused the movement with pent-up urgency. Members of the PCI (Partito comunista italiano, or Italian Communist Party) were among the first to take up arms. Many of them had actively resisted the regime even during its reign. Thus they found common ground based, if nothing else, on their common land and shared suffering. And among those who pledged allegiance to the Resistance early on, communists accounted for seven out of every ten partisans. This numerical majority, though, did not guarantee unity or mutual trust between members of the first bands. Each had his own opinion as to how the movement should proceed, both

politically and militarily. Furthermore, they wrestled with the paradox of fascism. It had always emphasized nationalism and Italian solidarity, the two things they wished to claim as their own — the two things that would allow them to move forward with purpose. If there were a banner under which they could rally, a cause they could champion in good faith, it would have to be uniquely theirs.

The sense that the time was ripe for a renaissance spread through the small but growing ranks. Questions of politics were endlessly discussed, but they proved more divisive than helpful. By and large, they were set aside for even more pressing concerns: Who was there to fight for? What other cause, party or army could be trusted with safeguarding civilian interests? At the moment, two occupying armies and two Italian governments vied for one peninsula.⁸ Each threatened, directly or indirectly, to subdue the efforts of the Resistance. Its foundation, then, rested on an urgent need that did not discriminate: survival. Partisans knew that they could not surrender faith in their cause, even if it meant accepting the loss of innocent Italian lives as collateral. Should they yield to the sort of repression they now raged against, they would be risking far more than their own lives; they would imperil countless more and violate what national pride they had left. Preserving the movement at

all costs became the partisans' creed before they could articulate or codify one of their own.

Life as a resistance fighter brought with it a host of new and conflicting priorities. Recruits, especially those who operated close to home, could not simply abandon the life they had left. For one, such lives were already full-time jobs; they could not substitute farming for soldiery in one fell swoop. Instead, they added their new responsibilities on top of local jobs, working out of home when the situation called for it. Those who took to the mountains to join roving bands turned their lives completely upside down. Here is one all too typical account:

The first time I noticed I had fleas was a bit tough, I remember I cried...

I remember once I lived on bread and water for 10-11 days, or rather bread and snow because we were up in the mountains. ...

We chose where to sleep at the last minute because that kept us safe....there were [normally] four walls without any windows and a concrete floor.¹¹

Such bands were continually covering their tracks, lest anyone give them away or stumble upon evidence that might compromise them. They were a phantom force, isolating themselves even as they tried to stay current. This may have played to their advantage militarily, but only at great cost. They left old friends, family, and their past selves behind.

Partisans knew that no amount of theorizing or political posturing could compensate for *living* the society they dreamed of. Paolino Ranieri,

captain of a small band of northern Italian partigiani in the Apennine mountains, internalized this message. He also encouraged his fellow soldiers, and anyone they interacted with or relied on, to do the same. To protect friends, family, and each other from unnecessary harm, all partisans took a nom de guerre — a wartime alias. Ranieri, known only as "Andrea", harped on "the need for everyone to cooperate without reservations in making the group's life and activity a model of free and democratic cooperation". 12 While he only spoke of his own band of soldiers, others echoed the call to action. Partisans were not just in the business of war — they were in education, in ethics, in protogovernment. Around the campfire, they taught one another what they had learned in school; they swapped stories of the atrocities they had witnessed; they sang of a better future and discussed politics to no end. But with so much of what they knew broken down, their next step was to put what pieces they had back together.

Fortunately, informal networks of locals helped the early partisans ground themselves in the midst of chaos and destruction. City dwellers had become refugees; families had dissolved into so many nomads. The bands that they formed often came together spontaneously and usually depended on the support of local sharecroppers and peasants. While

fleeing from their hometowns or cities, partisans found little shelter except what they could request from strangers. Even the most organized bands of soldiers had to restrict their size. For it was hard enough to find food in unfamiliar territory, and harder still to do so in conspicuously large groups. Peasants and partisans alike were painfully aware of the substantial rewards available to anyone who turned in anti-fascists in hiding.¹³ Thus it was an especially courageous move for peasants to make the offers they did. For while partisans had little choice in the matter, peasants could still save themselves. In time, though, a trust developed between soldiers and suppliers, and they became part of a co-dependent network. Refugees would go on to become members of organized partisan bands, and they gave back to the townspeople in turn for their support.

Isolated country farmers were especially vulnerable to fascist exploitation. Even if they seemed to profit from their paid duties, they likely did harm to other peasants and to resistance efforts in the process, as evidenced in this poem by Fortini:

Rivolta agraria

Dove sono i castelli di lapislazzuli Delle Ricche Ore del Duca di Berry E i paesani tristi nei seminati. Dove i neri impiccati della guerra dei contadini. Farmer's revolt

Where there are castles of lapis lazuli
Of the Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry
And sad villagers in the fields.
Where the blacks hanged by the
farmers' war.

Sopra i morti meschini
Essa guida la trattrice
Ventre allegro di capezzoli
Con le mani con i piedi con le cosce
Con la bocca ride e sgocciola
Sudore d'aglio e latte
Caglio di sangue e baci.

She drives the tractor
Over the wretched dead
Stomach full to the brim
With hands with feet with thighs
With her mouth she laughs and drips
Garlic sweat and milk
Curds of blood and kisses.

-Franco Fortini

The first stanza sets up a rural atmosphere laden with vestiges of feudalism. The repetition of the possessive pronoun di in the first two lines (di, delle, del, di) mocks the idea that these country mansions truly belong to the Duke or his ilk. Yet the Duke owns a structure and a title, whereas the villagers have but a locale and a state of mind. The second stanza introduces a peasant-woman protagonist who remains nameless throughout. She has been fed well, but a clever line break betrays her: she drives "stomach full to the brim / with hands with feet with thighs". A farmer herself, she has been hired out to process heaps of wartime casualties and return them to the earth. She unknowingly makes fertilizer out of her own people. Worse still, she may have knowingly saved herself so as to escape their fate. The poem's lone stanza break thus mirrors how two different worlds can exist on one tract of land. The first controls and dictates at a distance; the second destroys itself over and over again. The poem's title, then, runs thick with irony. A "farmer's

revolt" cannot occur because farmers do not have the numbers nor the organization to affect one. They formed hidden alliances with partisans out of necessity. Without the other's help, neither of these groups stood any significant chance of survival. Together they formed a dynamic, if tenuous, body whose muscles were just beginning to flex.

* * *

What had caused such widespread chaos on the ground? Much of it can be traced back to a signature and a radio broadcast. On September 3rd, 1943, Marshal Pietro Badoglio signed into effect a secret armistice between Italy and the Allies.¹⁴ The next five days brought little in the way of productive negotiations between the former enemy countries. Under pressure from all sides, Badoglio was forced into announcing the armistice via national radio broadcast.¹⁵ Fascist authorities, who had been clutching at smoke in the meantime, lost their hold on prisoners and detainees. Nazi military commanders prepared to loose their regiments on northern Italy. As Dante Puzzo so eloquently puts it, "Italy was like a body whose skeletal frame had suddenly liquefied", crumbling under its own weight.¹⁶

The chaos that gripped Italy after its defection to the Allied cause left little room for hesitation — and even less for productive action. With

nearly all state services having ceased to function, the situation was particularly dire in the cities. Local Italians who had endured, if not tolerated, fascist occupation may have already heard whispers of a formal Resistance. Most northern Italian cities, though, had become war zones in themselves. Even the Allies, marching gradually through Calabria and into Lazio, encouraged others to stay put. American and British officers issued formal commands to the partigiani to engage only in sabotage. In line with conventional military wisdom, any overt attempt to combat German forces in the North would have jeopardized what progress, however modest, the Allies had already made. ¹⁷ In an ironic take on their own command, British aircraft occasionally made daring runs behind the German front to airdrop arms and supplies. These materials, as many desperately hungry peasants and soldiers soon found out, had often been sabotaged in turn. Fearing a full-scale communist insurrection, British officers wanted to ensure that they kept Italians — and partisans in particular — on a tight leash. 18

With the partisans' enemies and allies still in flux, they could not risk complacency. Constant vigilance was imperative for a cohesive Resistance, since the subtle horrors of fascism had not yet left Italy. Fortini knew this well:

Quel giovane tedesco

Quel giovane tedesco ferito sul Lungosenna ai piedi d'una casa durante l'insurrezione che moriva solo mentre Parigi era urla intorno all'Hotel de Ville e moriva senza lamenti la fronte sul marciapiede.

Quel fascista a Torino che sparò per due ore e poi scese per strada con la camicia candida con i modi distinti e disse andiamo pure asciugando il sudore con un foulard di seta

La poesia non vale l'incanto non ha forza quando tornerà il tempo uccidetemi allora.

Ho letto Lenin e Marx non temo la rivoluzione ma è troppo tardi per me; almeno queste parole servissero dopo di me alla gioia di chi viva senza più il nostro orgoglio.

-Franco Fortini

That German youth

That German youth wounded on the Lungosenna on the steps of a house during the insurrection who died alone while Paris was wailing around the Hotel de Ville and he died without a sound his head on the sidewalk

That fascist in Turin who shot for two hours and then rose up to the street with his spotless shirt with his high fashion and said let's go already drying his sweat with a silk scarf.

Poetry isn't worth it its spell has no strength when the time comes so kill me now.

I've read Lenin and Marx I don't fear revolution but it's too late for me; at least these words could serve after me for the joy of the living with none of our pride.

Fortini's poem is a remarkable *tour de forme*. The first stanza, for instance, pivots around its fifth and middle line: "who died alone". Each of the first four lines adds another piece to the young German's character sketch. Yet in the grand scope of the war (II. 6 - 9), one death hardly

matters; he flits away, unnoticed while "Paris was wailing / around the Hotel the Ville". The second stanza shows the flip side of such anonymity with an almost frightening formal symmetry:

The member of the fascist firing squad reveals only his "spotless shirt", "high fashion", and "silk scarf". He subtly conceals and disposes of the horror he inflicts. He turns the German youth's death back on countless victims, victims who go unmentioned throughout the stanza. And the speaker, for his part, can leave behind nothing but words, the reported history of such moments after they have passed. The implication is clear: the only thing worse than the national tragedy of fascism would be to forget the harm it brought to bear.

Those who already held political sway in Italy and sympathized with the Resistance were quick to react to this danger, adding shape to the movement's momentum. Palmiro Togliatti, a leader of the PCI at the time, would later recall how he had laid out his plan in quite explicit

terms: "joining the government was the first step toward realizing the overriding objective of that period — national unity in the face of the Nazis and the Fascists". 19 He also situated the communists' eventual goal, and by extension that of the Resistance, in the political sphere. For Togliatti, social revolution had to take a back seat to the process of freeing Italy from foreign and fascist occupation.²⁰ Older partigiani followed his lead and spread this caution through the ranks. They, too, saw some of the romance in a complete overhaul of the Italian state. But a Resistance too concerned with immediate gain actually threatened its own long-term objectives. A revolt in the Nazi strongholds of northern Italy would most likely have divided the country beyond repair. And the Allies, for their part, would waste no time suppressing an apparent communist uprising, armistice notwithstanding. Worse, such action would have handicapped Italy's bid for national independence after the war.²¹ Throughout this formational period, from mid-1943 into the winter, communists insisted on national unity above all else. Without this forced cohesion, the movement may have undone itself even before its most important work had been accomplished.

In March 1943, the Italian Communist and Socialist parties met with members of the *Partito d'azione* (Action Party) in Lyons, France.

Their vague but timely "pact of unity of action" sought to clarify the terms on which partisans should proceed. Their fundamental differences, as political parties and forces of social change, were openly recognized. But none of the parties lingered on them, for none could afford to; any effort that did not point forward was wasted motion. The parties were particularly anxious about their ability to both overthrow the regime and catalyze social reform. Giorgio Amendola, a signatory for the PCI, went straight to the crux of it: "unity had to be created in the course of struggles — from the most basic to more advanced — including strikes, sabotage and armed action by partisans". ²² In other words, the Resistance was born of struggle and it would have to find strength, inspiration even, in struggle. If it were to thrive, it would have to organize around this principle.

When the time came, Resistance leaders wasted none. After announcement of the armistice on September 8th, the first anti-fascist political organ sprung up in less than a day. In contrast, Italy's two major parties, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats, had had no choice but to await executive action throughout the summer. But Resistance leaders filled the vacuum immediately, if not decisively. Members from across the political spectrum, including Socialist, Communist, and Action Party

representatives, convened in Rome. There they founded the *Comitato nazionale di liberazione* (National Liberation Committee, or CLN), which called to all Italians for help in resistance.²³ It concluded its public statement with a charge, by turns desperate and forceful:

The Italian people will make a judgment on the responsibilities for the current tragedy once the enemy has retreated over the Brenner pass [in the Alps]. Today, for the sons of Italy, there is only one position: that of defending peace against the Germans and fascist fifth columnists. To arms!²⁴

Chapter II — A New and Separate Life

The charge issued by the first CLN (National Liberation Committee) set off a flurry of action in anti-fascist circles. During the autumn of 1943, satellite CLNs dug their roots into most towns under German occupation. These small-scale committees then began to respond to the particular needs of their region. On the one hand, some rural towns knew nothing more about the Resistance than what drifting rumors had told them. Others were home to a complicated middle ground; they still relied materially on what fascism had brought them, yet they welcomed the partisans' presence. On top of that, the Italian countryside was more populated than ever because Allied bombings tended to target cities.² With Italians from all across the country mixing with one another, often for the first time, the committees only barely managed. In time, what Tom Behan has termed "a new if rudimentary kind of civil society" came into being.³ It was the CLNs' duty to manage this growth and to direct it toward productive ends. The stark ideological differences between members made immediate action nearly impossible and surely unwise. In the meantime, they began to debate policy and self-organize.

Partisans who set off to join such communities could not acknowledge the life they had left, and this furnished them with certain advantages. By erasing their past, they gained complete responsibility over their own future. Their lives began anew and without the constant backdrop of fascism. The CLNs allowed their members direct input into how they structured the day, who they consented to follow, etc. The task had an overwhelming totality about it. But the alternative was to remain one step behind a powerful and centralized government. Since partisans planned, executed and experienced the changes they agreed upon, the CLNs were nimble beyond compare. Informality and argument were encouraged, rather than stifled, to the extent that they proved productive. Motions for an improvement had the distinct ring of a test; they stood on nothing but their own value and invited comparison to the fascist alternative. In a certain sense, the CLNs — and partisan communities more generally — made constant preparations for the war at hand. If a battle should arrive, they could not have a more committed soldiery. If the government should show cracks in its armor, they would have ideas on reserve. In other words, these communities built their foundation by

stages and took nothing on faith. This granted them a unique stability as the winds of war gathered speed.

What these regional committees created essentially *ex novo* was thus liberating in its own way. They were free from the burdens of tradition, congestion, and bureaucracy that plagued Italy's major urban centers. They also stood a healthy distance away from the destruction that regularly visited said cites. Here is Giorgio Bassani on how the war starved the city of all cities down to its skeleton:

Saluto a Roma

Addio, arena di calce, addio diamante, il tuo cielo su me è un chiuso volto; lascia ch'io torni al mio paese sepolto nell'erba come in un mare caldo e pesante.

Porte roventi nel cielo distante, nero è il tuo sole, nera è la tua luna. Carne senza rimpianti, riso senza nessuna memoria: addio città senza speranza.

Perché io so le tue vie, diritte spade, i suoni delle tue piazze celesti; ma so il vento che ti affila, il lamento delle tue nascoste stazioni.

No, la tua fronte non splende di grazia. Chi ti accoglierà, grido di giubilo? L'iride che ti specchia è senza nubi. Sei sola, dentro le tue mura di spazio.

-Giorgio Bassani

Farewell to Rome

Goodbye, lime arena, goodbye diamond, your sky is closed off above me; let me return to my homeland buried in the grass as if in a hot and heavy sea.

Red-hot gates in the distant sky, your sun is black, your moon is black. Meat without regrets, rice without a single memory: goodbye, city without hope.

Because I know your streets, straight swords, the sounds of your sacred squares; I know the wind that hones you, the cry of your hidden train stations.

No, your façade doesn't shine with grace. Who will welcome you, a cry of joy? The eye that watches you is clear. You're alone, inside your walls of space.

Just as Rome ends up alone and unwanted, the rigid structure that underlies these four stanzas breaks down over the course of the poem. For the first three stanzas the poem hardly wavers from its *abba* rhyme scheme and consistent line length. Like a well-cut diamond, Rome is beautiful but lifeless, dazzling but impenetrable. The speaker shares this sense of claustrophobia when he looks upward and the "sky is closed off". It does not invite his gaze or give him a sense of openness and freedom; instead, the sky works as another wall that boxes him in. Rome suffers from such an industrial sameness that it can rob even the sun and moon of their character. It smothers the regular cycle between day and night, slotting the two celestial bodies into a single, formulaic line. At the end of stanza two the speaker loses faith, breaks from his hard rhymes, and declares Rome a "city without hope". For there are only two natural images that Rome cannot distort: the speaker's homeland, far out of reach; and the wind that slips by unnoticed. All else is either trapped in or locked out. The final stanza mirrors this fragmentation — it falls apart into four separate, unrhymed sentences. By casting out the people that give it life, the city manages to isolate *itself*.

By necessity, many city dwellers bled out into the plains and countryside that surrounded their haggard cities. Rural Italy was more

populous than ever, and as a result it had also become unusually chaotic.

The local CLNs did not have the resources to provide structure and organization for everyone who sympathized with the Resistance. And it

had become all too easy to fall through the cracks:

Coro di deportati

Quando il ghiaccio striderà Dentro le rive verdi e romperanno Dai celesti d'aria amara Nelle pozze delle carraie Globi barbari di primavera

Noi saremo lontani.

Vorremmo tornare e guardare Carezzare il trifoglio dei prati Gli stipiti della casa nuova Piangere di pietà Dove passò nostra madre

Invece saremo lontani.

Invece noi prigionieri Rideremo senza requie E odieremo fin dove le lame Dei coltelli s'impugnano. Maledetto che ci conduce

Lontano sempre lontano.

E quando saremo tornati L'erba pazza sarà nei cortili E il fiato dei morti nell'aria. Le rughe sopra le mani La ruggine sopra i badili

E ancora saremo lontani.

Saremo ancora lontani Dal viso che in sogno ci accoglie Qui stanchi d'odio e d'amore. Chorus of deportees

When the ice groans
In the green banks and they break
From the bitter air above
In the carts' muddy tracks
Savage worlds of spring

We'll be far away.

We'd want to return and watch To caress the field clovers The door frames of a new home To cry in pity Where our mother passed

Instead we'll be far away.

Instead we prisoners
Will laugh restlessly
And we'll hate until
Knife blades are drawn.
That bastard that leads us

Far away always far away.

*

And when we have returned Crazy weeds will grow in the courts And the stench of death in the air. The wrinkles on the hands The rust on the shovels

And still we'll be far away.

We'll still be far away From the face that welcomes us here In dreams weary of hate and love. Ma verranno nuove le mani Come vengono nuove le foglie

Ora ai nostri campi lontani.

Ma la gemma s'aprirà E la fonte parlerà come una volta. Spenderai pietra sepolta Nostro antico cuore umano Scheggia cruda legge nuda

All'occhio del cielo lontano.

-Franco Fortini

But hands will come anew As leaves will come anew

Now to our distant camps.

But the bud will flower And the fountain will talk like long ago. You'll shine buried stone Our ancient human heart Crude splinter naked law

At the eye of the distant heavens.

The poem's title makes explicit reference to the thousands of Italians who were transported to German camps after their capture. The deportees quickly fall out of touch with their country, and soon all that remains of them is a distant existence. The poem repeats a variation on saremo lontani ("we'll be far away") after each of its five-line stanzas, and this prevents them from forming any sort of cohesive narrative. In fact, the second stanza is the only one to present a hopeful future. Whereas the rest of the poem thrives on strict, fateful future-tense verbs, the second stanza alone employs the conditional. It reflects the joy with which the deportees would reclaim their past lives, were they able. It is also packed with activity and verbs of transition — if freed, these prisoners would not delay "to caress the field clovers" and "the door frames of a new house". They would reestablish a home in their homeland. The poem, however,

does not linger on such pipe dreams. For if the deportees do return, they will *still* be at a distance. Even if "leaves will come anew" and "the fountain will talk like long ago", the deportees disappear from the end of their own poem. The experience of exile from their own country has laid a barrier between them and what they once knew, who they one were.

To help each other avoid this sort of isolation, partisans formed bona fide communities in the country. There was no time to waste, since the war effort was already sapping the partisans' spirit on an immediate level: intense hunger had arrived and was settling in for good. In 1943 alone, an official report noted that the cost of living in Turin had risen by almost 60 per cent. For those still trapped in city life, workers' rations averaged less than 1,000 calories per day. Priced by weight, bread cost five times what it had five years ago, in 1938. Over the same period the price of cooking oil had risen 800 per cent. Thus the partigiani did their best to set up stable, self-sufficient camps that could protect them from capture and also sustain their armed resistance. Given that most male partisans had joined the roving bands, these support networks laid their foundation on women. While their work was not as visible as that of the soldiers, it is not an exaggeration to say that they made the partisans' military victories possible. In addition, these partigiane became part of the movement in a distinctly different way. They did not face the same all-or-nothing choice as men; they did not need to decide quickly and finally between forced conscription in the national army or the life of a refugee. But this meant that every woman who joined the movement did so voluntarily. While almost one in ten fighting partisans were women, the majority of them went into support services: sewing and mending clothing, moving and preparing food, nursing and healing the wounded, etc. Arrigo Boldrini, a partisan commander, spoke of their essential role:

If in an ordinary army the ratio between fighters and support services is one to seven, in partisan warfare it is one to fifteen. Behind every fighting partisan there were fifteen people, the great majority of whom were women.⁶

These women had to keep their work as silent and invisible as possible. Since they did not face forced conscription, they also never declared their allegiance publicly. This meant that they had to tread carefully among those they suspected could be working against them. Still, their situation provided them with intriguing opportunities to escape notice. They could play the role of *staffetta*, for instance, and circulate messages between different partisan outposts; for who would dare to interrogate a lady riding her bike through town? They could infiltrate fascist gatherings and collect confidential information. In short, they could help shape the bedrock of the Resistance in exchange for a double

life. At great risk to themselves and others, droves of women did just that.

* *

Even though partisans created new lives and new identities for themselves, their communities remained isolated from one another. A constant, almost tribal suspicion of outsiders kept them safe; but it was also what prevented the first camps from uniting into a larger network. Worse still, the reckless destruction of the war threatened to overwhelm the partisans' efforts. Alfonso Gatto immortalized this tension in a poem that serves as a sort of mid-war retrospective:

Anniversario

Io ricordo quei giorni: dell'ignoto mattino ove a svegliarci era il terrore d'esser rimasti soli, udivo il cielo come una voce morta. E già la luce abbandonata dai morenti ai vetri mi toccava la fronte, sui capelli lasciava l'orma del suo sonno eterno.

Un grido umano che s'udisse, nulla - solo la neve - e tutti erano vivi dietro quel muro a piangere, il silenzio beveva a fiumi il pianto della terra.

Oh, l'Europa gelata nel suo cuore mai più scalderà; sola, coi morti che l'amano in eterno, sarà bianca senza confini, unita dalla neve.

-Alfonso Gatto

Anniversary

I remember those days: in the unknown morning where the terror of being left alone woke us up, I heard the sky like a dead voice. And the light already abandoned by the dying touched my face through the windows, left a trace of its eternal sleep on my hair.

One heard nothing but a human yell - just the snow - and all were alive behind that wall to cry, the silence drank rivers of the earth's tears.

Oh, this Europe frozen to the core will never thaw: alone, with the dead that will always love it, it will be white to infinity, one with the snow.

With its inverted natural imagery, the poem sets up a living environment where nothing can be taken for granted. Instead of waking to the sunrise, "the terror of being left / alone" jolts the subjects into consciousness. To all appearances, they are alone with the land around them, yet they still cannot find peace or stability in nature. The sky sounds like "a dead voice"; the light that streams through the windows comes "abandoned by the dying" rather than from the sun. The world of the dead encroaches on that of the living. And the living seem powerless to stop such a threat. They have no real agency in the first stanza: they do not wake themselves, but are awoken; they listen to a mute sky; they are touched by a light that does not warm or illuminate but instead leaves "a trace of its eternal sleep" in their world. Wherever one would expect nature to act as a generative presence, it instead displays a lack. This absence of life manifests itself in the silence that pervades the poem. It smothers "a human yell" with ease and starts to eat away at nature itself, drinking "rivers of the earth's tears". Most frightening of all is that this instability knows no limits — it afflicts all of Europe. Only one barrier stands between the status quo and permanent paralysis: a human will to survive.

Partigiani did not lack will by any means, but they did struggle with problems of fragmentation. While modern media and

telecommunications technology had reached Italy, it remained especially sparse in the countryside where partisans laid low. Regional CLNs and partisan hamlets were so autonomous that it was tough to mobilize mass support when necessary. And although the partisans themselves were not aware of this development, a major Allied shift in forces had put even more pressure on them. A 1943 assault on southern France spread Allied forces thin and meant that they needed partisan support nearly as much as partisans needed them.⁷ Soon even the most radical wings of the satellite CLNs recognized the need for central authority. There was too much at stake to let pride stand in the way of cohesion. Despite the city's condition, local CLNs initially turned to Rome as the leading committee and looked there for guidance and authority.8 The Eternal City was the site of the original CLN, geographically central, and it boasted an inherent prestige. It seemed the logical choice to move the Resistance forward.

Rome would not remain the primary authority for long, however. As the Allied front tracked up the peninsula, the city found itself in friendly territory. While this freed Roman officials from excess interruption, it also distanced them from the realities of a war that was very much still evolving. Central as Rome was in nearly all senses of the

word, the Resistance would settle in Milan, Turin, and the surrounding mountains. After fielding a barrage of pleas from the north, the Roman CLN sent welcome news to Lombardy amidst an otherwise brutal winter. In January 1944 it threw the bulk of its power behind Milan's committee, which would thereafter become the key organ of the Resistance. The new head committee took a new name as well, dubbing itself the *Comitato di liberazione nazionale per l'alta Italia* (National Liberation Committee for Upper Italy, or CLNAI). The heart of the Resistance now had a body to accompany it.

But the chaos that racked Italy throughout 1943 did not discriminate, and it spread into the national government as well. Like the partisans, but on a much larger scale, the state lacked executive authority when the war most demanded it. Much of this inaction can be traced back to the September 8th armistice. Yet even those roots go deeper. Not surprisingly, the high drama that played out over the summer of 1943 started and ended with the *Duce* himself, Benito Mussolini.

* * *

Mussolini may be the one political leader to have received glowing compliments from both Adolf Hitler and Winston Churchill. Even as he concentrated on consolidating his rule in Italy, he had admirers to the north and west. From his cell in a Munich prison, Hitler wrote in the early 1920s: "In this period — I openly admit — I conceived the profoundest admiration for the great man south of the Alps...his determination not to share Italy with the Marxists, but to destroy internationalism and save the fatherland from it". During those same years, Churchill gave this assessment of Mussolini's progress: "he had raised the Italian people from the Bolshevism into which they were sinking in 1919 to a position in Europe such as Italy never held before". To both Churchill and Hitler, progress through Mussolini was progress for Italy. They viewed Mussolini as Italy's cornerstone and representative of large constituencies. From their perspective, Italy had only two viable routes to the end of the war: fascism or utter defeat.

But when Allied troops arrived on Italian soil in July of 1943, they found a country whose social and political climate baffled them. Not only was it far different than war bulletins had indicated, but it also continued to be defined by flux. Working Italians had begun to voice their discontent in public. The gulf between authorities and the citizens they claimed to represent was growing dangerously wide. Worse still, these trends showed no signs of relenting. Giorgio Bassani took this condition to its extreme in a short, fable-esque poem:

Emilia

Per dove scende sereno il Po tra l'erba rovente, vien sul carro del fieno un vecchio re indolente.

Sta con tristi parole ebbre il regale ortolano, il mento nella mano, nel sole delle trebbie.

"Uomini", mormora, "rosse bandiere della fame, la mia corona è di sonno, il nulla è il mio reame". Emilia

Where the calm Po winds through fiery grass, a hay cart comes bearing an old and indolent king.

With sad drunk words he is the royal farmer, chin in his hand, in the sun of the fields.

"Men," he murmurs, "red flags of hunger, my crown is a dream, nothingness is my realm."

-Giorgio Bassani

This king could not be more at odds with his environment. The first two lines establish a calm and lively natural scene, while the third forecasts a modest entrance, at best. Then again, the king does not exercise control over his situation; he rides in on a hay cart, and in the Italian he is smothered by negative adjectives (*vecchio – re* [king] *– indolente*). The king's authority extends no farther than his title, and the second stanza reinforces this notion. Each successive line zooms farther out from the king on his cart, and at each turn he appears more pathetic. He cannot control his "sad drunk words"; fallen from grace, "he is the royal farmer", a contradiction in terms; he slumps down, "chin in his hand"; and he finds no audience, alone "in the sun of the fields". He has lost his people, his support, and thus his power. Nameless "men" and the

communist-inspired "red / flags of hunger" that they carry are all that he knows. Neither the king nor the distant men have a counterweight at the other end of a hierarchy that once kept them stable. The title *Emilia* implies an even more hazardous parallel: the average Emilian citizen now resembles an old king marooned in the countryside, talking to no one but himself. He no longer holds the reigns to his *own* fate, least of all to his country's. And with the Italian government falling apart around Mussolini, there was no worse time to be powerless.

On the other hand, king Vittorio Emmanuele III had yet to lay down his hand. After authorizing Mussolini's ascent in the first place, the Italian monarch finally made an intervention. On July 24th, 1943, the Fascist Grand Council was called to order in response to the Allied invasion of Sicily.¹² The nightly fare? A motion to reinstate the king in all of his previous power — in other words, a motion to evict Mussolini from his seat in government. Mussolini, of course, took issue with the idea that he could be forced to do so, insisting that the Grand Council "was a purely advisory body and therefore that its actions were non-binding".¹³ By his own account, Mussolini was untouchable.

By the end of the next day Mussolini had been dismissed. During their weekly interview, the king took it upon himself to demand resignation, and even "told [Mussolini] that he had already taken steps for Marshal Badoglio to replace him". ¹⁴ Mussolini had barely left the building when he was stuffed into an ambulance and, not long after, placed under arrest. ¹⁵ He would later appear at the head of a German puppet government, the Republic of Salò, just north of Lake Como. But his political influence — and all that he represented — had been compromised. The strength and solidarity of the *fascio* threatened a total and spontaneous collapse. Meanwhile, the Allies continued to make slow but consistent progress through south-central Italy. Anti-fascist demonstrations pulled energy from the arrest and grew more public by the day. The king, mired in indecision, held his breath.

Vittorio Emmanuele's so-called "pre-emptive strike" left two holes at the very peak of the Italian state, which now lacked both a monarch and an executive official. The king himself fled as soon as he could. He was whisked via private corvette to an ostensibly safe location off the coast of Brindisi. The entire trip took little more than a day, with the king and his tiny entourage — Marshal Badoglio the only other of note — arriving just before the evening of September 10th. And with the *Duce* in confinement, the already shaky national government lacked a guiding authority. Near-anarchy swept into the cities in a dizzying rush. German

High Command did not receive word of the *coup* — they witnessed it. Popular demonstrations sprang up in the cities, and "rank-and-file soldiers streamed out of their barracks before the Germans could stop them". At the time of Mussolini's arrest, 100,000 German soldiers remained stationed in Italy. But throughout the hectic summer of 1943, German troops flooded down through the Alps almost nonstop. While the peninsula's central command unraveled, each of the forces occupying Italy would make its bid for conquest. Social chaos was close at hand.

Part Two

History at a Distance

Chapter III — War on All Fronts

In August 1944 a squad of partisans planted a bomb in a German lorry on its way through Milan.¹ Although they escaped capture, the strike was far from successful: they killed none and wounded one soldier. But in response the SS sent local Italian authorities to round up fifteen random prisoners for a fascist firing squad. The militia then left the dead bodies in plain view at Milan's Piazzale Loreto for a full 24 hours.² This display further polarized conflict in the cities, as Alfonso Gatto wrote soon thereafter:

Ai martiri di Piazzale Loreto

Ed era l'alba, poi tutto fu fermo la città, il cielo, il fiato del giorno. Rimasero i carnefici soltanto vivi davanti ai morti.

Era silenzio l'urlo del mattino, silenzio il cielo ferito:
Un silenzio di case, di Milano.
Restarono bruttati anche di sole, sporchi di luce e l'uno e l'altro odiosi, gli assassini venduti alla paura.

Ed era l'alba e dove fu lavoro ove il piazzale era la gioia accesa della città migrante alle sue luci da sera a sera, ove lo stesso strido dei tram era saluto al giorno, al fresco viso dei vivi, vollero il massacro For the martyrs of Loreto Square

And it was dawn, then all was still the city, the sky, the breath of day. Only the executioners remained alive in front of the dead.

The cry of morning was silence, silence the wounded sky: a silence of houses, of Milan. They stayed dirty even in the sun, dirty in the light and hateful one and all, assassins sold over to fear.

And it was dawn and where was work where was the square, the joy lit by the migrant city's lights from night to night, where the same screech of trams greeted the day, the fresh faces of the living, they wanted a slaughter perché Milano avesse alla sua soglia confusi tutti in uno stesso sangue i suoi figli promessi e il vecchio cuore forte e ridesto, stretto come un pugno.

Ebbi il mio cuore ed anche il vostro cuore il cuore di mia madre e dei miei figli di tutti i vivi uccisi in un istante per quei morti mostrati lungo il giorno alla luce d'estate, a un temporale di nuvole roventi. Attesi il male come un fuoco fulmineo, come l'acqua scrosciante di vittoria, udii il tuono d'un popolo ridesto dalle tombe.

lo vidi il nuovo giorno che a Loreto sovra la rossa barricata i morti saliranno per primi, ancora in tuta e col petto discinto, ancora vivi di sangue e di ragione. Ed ogni giorno, ogni ora eterna brucia a questo fuoco, ogni alba ha il petto offeso da quel piombo degli innocenti fulminati al muro.

-Alfonso Gatto

because Milan had at its doorstep everyone mixed up in the same blood its promised children and its old heart strong and revived, tight like a fist.

You had my heart and yours as well, the heart of my mother and my children of all the living slain in an instant for the dead displayed throughout the day in the summer light, in a thunderstorm of burning clouds. I awaited evil like a flash fire, like water teeming with force, I heard the rumble of a people reawakened in their tombs.

I saw the next day that at Loreto
the dead would be the first to climb
over the red barricade, still in work
clothes
with their chests bare, still alive
with blood and reason. And every day,
every eternal hour adds to this fire,
every dawn is violated by the weight
of those innocents shot against the wall.

Dawn rises on the new day and "only the executioners remained", as if witnesses to the massacre abetted the crime with their silence. This silence, which invades the second stanza just as it invaded Milan, overwhelms the city and robs it of life. It stops the day in its tracks and spreads outside the walls of the square. Silence interrupts the day's rhythms, for "it was dawn and where was work"; why had the rest of the day vanished? The sun, too, is incomplete, for it shines on the "assassins sold over to fear" but cannot illuminate them. The filth that surrounds

them, the dirtiness of their deeds, spreads beneath their skin. By the fourth stanza, the aftershock has pierced the hearts of those still living. They are the only ones left who can resist, but they are poisoned with pessimism; even the speaker "awaited evil / like a flash fire", living in perpetual fear of another strike. Oddly enough, the dead preserve part of themselves by not suffering through this paralysis. They die "still in work clothes /...still alive / with blood and reason" while the city around them forces its citizens to take sides in a conflict already beyond rationality. It will be up to these citizens, silent witnesses to a senseless killing, to coax the dawn back to life.

Energized by such events but still short on organization, the Resistance saw more and more public support as the winter of 1943 – 44 gave way to spring. Italy's monarch and its ruling elites had made little attempt to help their ravaged country, safeguarding their own interests when the situation demanded patriotism.³ Soldiers in the national army found themselves without an opponent or an objective. They could not flee, for fear of dying, nor could they serve without risking death. This dilemma would slow their arrival to the Resistance. Citizens felt abandoned from all sides, and open signs of discontent became the norm more than the exception. Women would occasionally help with hostile

takeovers organized by the Gruppi di difesa delle donne (Women's Defense Groups).⁴ Even sharecroppers and peasant farmers were beginning to take their concerns into the public sphere. One particularly evocative example comes from the town of Castel Maggiore in Emilia. Groups of local women and peasants held a demonstration outside the town hall, requesting — demanding — the right to trade their goods freely.⁵ The alternative was to ship their harvest off to state warehouses and be forced into the black market, where prices were literally incredible. Farther south, Neapolitan scugnizzi — street-smart poor who survived on what they could steal — resisted German occupation with the beginnings of urban guerilla warfare. These sorts of demonstrations. atypical in fascist Italy, pointed to the depth of support for the Resistance. But they also underscored its central problem: how and where to mobilize and consolidate this support.

In the industrial triangle of Genoa, Turin and Milan, tensions multiplied in the factories. These plants, which had sustained the cities' economies for so long, were home to strife that soon became impossible to ignore. Bosses who had grown fat off fascism's boom years employed many workers who saw their jobs as the safer of two evils: employees could either serve a man and a cause to which they were opposed, or they

could tempt death by trying to flee. But even workers who weighed the options and could not stand to support a discredited regime faced consequences beyond their own lives. Organized strikes, whether violent or not, carried the threat — by no means empty, as Piazzale Loreto evidenced — of retaliation by local Nazi authorities.7 An assault on German-occupied Via Rasella in Rome, for instance, led to the immediate execution of any Italians, partigiani or not, seen or suspected to have been involved. This was standard practice and the assailants must have known the protocol. More chilling by far, though, was the Nazi firing squad that gathered up uninvolved civilians as part of a demonstration to warn future offenders. Going beyond their standard rate of reciprocation for Nazi deaths, the squads killed 335 Italians at the Ardeatine Caves just outside of Rome.⁸ The urban Resistance, which was finally beginning to take hold in the cities, suffered from blows like these. For how could any group fighting for Italy's future also jeopardize its present in the process? For a time, the workers' resistance was forced to return underground. It had to form its own body, in secret, before it could exercise what strength it seemed to possess.

In the face of such harsh conditions, workers formed clandestine brotherhoods that could thrive only on the condition of mutual faith. As

with the partisans roving outside city boundaries, trust and silence were their most useful tools for survival. Having remained in the factories so long, although rarely by choice, their odds of outright escape were slim. With each new day came the risk of deportation or sudden death. There was nowhere else to go; factories in Turin, Milan and elsewhere turned into the major organizing centers for insurrectionary activity. Workers convened in secret and distributed leaflets to organize strikes. Always at the risk of betrayal, they challenged company overseers to undercut the foundations of their business. As far north as the cities were, they received outside help only sporadically and could not afford to rely on an Allied push. By mid-1944, factories stayed almost empty throughout the day, their workers on near-constant strike. 10 They were loyal to none but each other.

* * *

It seemed that the partisans' enemies were closing in on all sides. Beyond the inhuman conditions that most *partigiani* endured, few of them were aware how volatile a battleground northern Italy was becoming. On April 14th, 1944, Hitler reiterated his orders to all German military units stationed there "not to retreat, not to surrender an inch of North Italian territory". The goals that partisans had previously set for

themselves were obscured in the fog of war and close to slipping out of reach. As of April 1944, their primary objectives were threefold. First, they fretted over the reckless destruction of city infrastructure and priceless art; second, they aimed to neutralize the Republic of Salò; third, and most importantly, they were determined to harass German forces back through the Alps. None of these was possible *in toto*, but of the three, partisans proved most successful in resisting German invasion. It was hardly in their power to save cities from whatever explosives, mechanical or moral, might detonate inside them. And on a day-to-day level, partisans struggled to keep faith in a country that they had not yet won back. They fought to preserve their identity as Italians in step with a push toward liberation.

When all else seemed under assault, Alfonso Gatto turned inward. Gatto's personal brand of resistance hinged on the inviolability of his poetic voice. But he feared that free speech was in danger as well, and that the Resistance would be lost without it:

Ascolta il passo

La sera può morire ancora amando la luce che le manca, il soffio estremo dell'aria che le muove già la notte. Per noi l'agguato del celeste inganno in silenzio si compie: ci decide l'atto per l'atto, l'istinto supremo di non dirci mai nulla che nel tempo

Listen to the step

The evening can die still loving the light it lacks, the last breath of air that brings on the night. For us the trap, the heavenly trickery takes place in silence: it settles on us act by act, the supreme instinct not to say anything so that in time lasci sospeso un desiderio o il lume d'una speranza.

Non udire i treni, non guardare nel cielo altro che il freddo sepolcro della luna, ascolta il passo delle guardie di ferro. È loro il mondo che non dice più nulla, che non lascia indugi alla pietà, tregua più all'ira. Un passo essi l'udrebbero sparando sull'ombra della luna o sul silenzio della città che gliene specchia l'eco. Lascia che soli restino avanzando nella risata gelida di Dio.

-Alfonso Gatto

you leave a desire or a glowing hope unfinished

Don't hear the trains, don't look at anything in the sky except the moon's cold grave, listen to the step of the iron guards. It's theirs, the world that says nothing anymore, that never lingers on pity, makes a truce with rage. They would hear a step and shoot at the moon's shadow or at the silence of the city that echoes it back to them. Let them alone remain, moving off toward the frozen laughter of God.

The poem's first three lines show a world that reluctantly descends into twilight. It is a time of transition in Italy, from fascism to post-fascism, and the first stanza reflects this. The evening smacks of lost opportunity when it falls dark "still loving / the light it lacks". A parallel danger lurks in the rest of the stanza. The speaker warns that "for us", dedicated partigiani, a descent into slavery may be hardly noticeable because it "takes place in silence". It draws no attention, "it settles on us / act by act" and is thus all the more insidious. Much in the same way that Fortini's *Quel giovane tedesco* exposes the hidden atrocities of fascism, here the speaker cautions against complacency. In time, "the supreme instinct / not to say anything" in the face of evil can make resistance impossible. Just as the stanza's final line cannot reach the right margin, a hope that is not acted on will remain permanently "unfinished". To reinforce how quickly such opportunities can fade, the second stanza jumps into a world lost to oppression. It begins with a series of imperatives that set limits on behavior: "don't hear", "don't look", just "listen" to the iron guards on patrol. The world belongs to them now, and it too falls silent, it "says nothing anymore". In fact, only the momentary crack and echo of a gunshot can break the stasis. To live in such a world is thus not to live at all, but rather a slow march "toward the frozen laughter of God". Gatto pleads with the partisans to combat this trend at all costs. If they are to model Italy in their image, they must preserve their right to resistance.

Some Italians could not resist at all until forces beyond their control offered up an opportunity. A number of would-be *partigiani* had even begun the war in the fascist army. Others were swept up in the action around them and could not return to the professions they had known. Serving soldiers, as well as soldiers in training, changed hands rapidly after the summer of 1943. As soon as Marshal Badoglio took executive office, he officially dismantled the *Partito nazionale fascista* (National Fascist Party) and its most influential organizations: among others, the Blackshirt Militia and the *federali* network, a group of political boosters that kept the party humming in its prime. ¹³ Despite his

links to the party, Badoglio did not share much ideological common ground with more devoted *fascisti*. At first, his institutional shake-up seemed to free soldiers from their old duties. The groups and offices Badoglio claimed to have dissolved, however, found their way back into his new government. The Militia, for instance, had found its start as a loosely organized squad of street fighters who forcefully brought order to the Italian countryside. In exchange for favors and promotions from the government, they spread word of the party and consolidated Mussolini's rule. But Badoglio's alleged "defascistization" did little more than recast the Blackshirts as part of the national army. As this process continued, soldiers would have more and more reason to question the cause for which they fought.

The holes in Badoglio's plan for a smooth transition away from fascism came to a head with his appointment of General Mario Roatta as the national army's chief of staff. Whatever Badoglio's intentions, he underestimated the extent to which certain officials had retained their fascist bent. Roatta's record going into the position was already outrageous and a cause for alarm. Among other lowlights, he had served at the head of Mussolini's military secret service and had been convicted of war crimes after a campaign through Yugoslavia. With each such

appointment, Badoglio lost a shade of what ground-level support remained for him. Soldiers who assumed that an apparently overhauled staff would carry with it a fresh ideology were sadly mistaken. At the end of the long hierarchical ladder stood similar officers as before, albeit with new titles. More and more, soldiers struggled to justify the illusion that they were at war against their moral or political enemy.

These soldiers stood at the brink of twilight, at the transitional moment that Gatto describes in *Ascolta il passo*. They were being asked to fight the very forces that might liberate them from repression. And until they escaped service, they hurt the Resistance and their chances of joining it. Fortini, an exile himself, shed light on this odd dilemma that made outsiders out of everyone:

La città nemica

Quando ripeto le strade Che mi videro confidente, Strade e mura della città nemica

E il sole si distrugge Lungo le torri della città nemica Verso la notte d'ansia

Quando nei volti vili della città nemica Leggo la morte seconda, E tutto, anche ricordare, è invano

E "Tu chi sei?", mi dicono, "Tutto è inutile sempre"

Tutte le pietre della città nemica,

Le pietre e il popolo della città nemica

The enemy city

When I revisit the streets
That saw me confident,
Streets and walls of the enemy city

And the sun self-destructs Along the towers of the enemy city Toward a night of worry

When in the rude faces of the enemy city I read their second death, And everything, even memory, is in vain

And "Who are you?" they say to me,
"It's all useless"

All the stones of the enemy city,
The stones and people of the enemy city

Fossi allora così dentro l'arca di sasso D'una tua chiesa, in silenzio. E non soffrire questa luce dura

And I was so inside the rock arch Of your church, in silence, That I didn't suffer this harsh light

Dove cammino con un pugnale nel cuore. Where I walk with a dagger in my heart.

-Franco Fortini

In this city all are enemies. The title situates the poem in a town under Nazi-fascist occupation, where each group present — German, fascist, Allied, and partisan — is at war with the others. The city saps the human element from all that it contacts; only certain lifeless objects and buildings remain. The city has a skeleton of "streets", "walls", "towers", and "stones", respectively. There is no hint of human-to-human connection here. A vague, third person "they" engages the speaker, but then only to question who he is, to reinforce the anonymity within the city's walls. For its people live without hope and without any claim to genuine community. They are alone together, as lifeless as the stones with which they share lines. When the speaker searches for solace in the penultimate stanza, his lone reward is that he "[doesn't] suffer this harsh light" that throws the city's emptiness into relief. To fight for such a city, then, is tantamount to walking "with a dagger in [one's] heart"; it leads the soldier toward self-destruction, with no promise of future gain. In the same way, dissatisfied soldiers gravitated to the Resistance because it offered them a concrete objective and a community to defend. Just as

captives had fled *en masse* from their barracks on July 25th, 1943, former members of the national army left for a movement with popular roots.

Faced with an influx of impressionable soldiers, partisans had to be on constant guard not to overplay their communist leanings. New recruits confronted the bizarre phenomenon of a popular party that could alienate as quickly as it could welcome. While it was a point of pride to fight with a *bandiera rossa* (red flag) around the neck or pinned to a shirtsleeve, such an overt declaration endangered innocent lives. Cino Moscatelli, a communist and partisan commander who had been imprisoned for antifascist activity after his service in Russia, lamented the irony in his soldiers' behavior:

If you ask partisans what their political ideas are or what party they belong to, nearly all of them answer that they are communists. They would let their buttocks be stenciled with a hammer and sickle; Stalin is a god. You can't criticize Russia, and above all the Red Army. ¹⁶

This behavior did more harm than good in Moscatelli's eyes. Eager as they were to have a cause of their own, these partisans unwittingly turned the Church against them. The Church was of a mind that Nazism's excesses could be tolerated for the moment, when compared to the Red threat to Christian (i.e., Catholic) civilization. Ignorant *partigiani* threatened their bands' solidarity and made enemies where they needed, at the very least, a blind eye.

Moscatelli may have also sensed the danger in advertising communist ideas in the face of Allied forces. Few partigiani could have been expected to intuit the anti-communist current that flowed through Allied policy; that was a distant and literally unknowable concern. But the Allies had made clear their desire to seize control of partisan actions, lest they lead to thorny political consequences. 18 It was, in fact, official Allied policy to disarm and demobilize local partisans as soon as they reached a given city. 19 Moreover, Allied ground forces had made steady progress during the summer of 1944 and were closing in on the heart of the struggle. This put the bands in an odd double-bind: they could fight, but without pride; they could sabotage, but without help and thus at great risk; and they could assert political influence, but never too much. Thus when General Harold Alexander, supreme commander of Allied forces in Italy, made his November 13th, 1944 radio broadcast, partisans swallowed it with a hefty grain of salt: "Go home, partisans, for the winter. Sleep well, regroup, and wait for a better time to fight...We're coming", he concluded, "slowly".²⁰

* *

If partisans had ever had the luxury of time, they forfeited it to the winter of 1944 - 45. With Allied ground troops in abeyance, and the Red

Army tearing through Nazi forces to the northeast, Germany brought its full force to bear down through the Alps. Even infantry that had been enlisted by the Republic of Salò joined the offensive. *Partigiani* had no choice but to defend whatever land and sanity remained to them. Here is Franco Fortini on the bedlam that had erupted in northern Italy:

Canto degli ultimi partigiani

Sulla spalletta del ponte Le teste degli impiccati Nell'acqua della fonte La bava degli impiccati

Sul lastrico del mercato Le unghie dei fucilati Sull'erba secca del prato I denti dei fucilati.

Mordere l'aria mordere i sassi La nostra carne non è più d'uomini Mordere l'aria mordere i sassi Il nostro cuore non è più d'uomini.

Ma noi s'è letta negli occhi dei morti E sulla terra faremo libertà Ma l'hanno stretta i pugni dei morti La giustizia che si farà. Song of the last partisans

On the curve of the bridge The heads of the hanged In the fountain water The drool of the hanged.

On the market pavement The nails of those shot On the dry field grass The teeth of those shot.

To bite the air to bite the rocks Our flesh is no longer of men To bite the air to bite the rocks Our heart is no longer of men.

But we've read it in the eyes of the dead And we'll have liberty on the ground But they've clenched the fists of the dead The justice that will be done.

-Franco Fortini

Fortini may have based the poem's structure on a melody from the partisans' oral tradition. He would have known that soldiers only sang when there was no fighting to be done. As such, the poem revolves around the question of whether Nazi-fascist occupation has left the partisans anything to fight for, anything to save. Its insistent repetition of

phrases and constructions serves as an uncomfortable reminder: this sort of destruction exists nearly everywhere by early 1945. On any city surface one might find "the nails of those shot". Skirmishes have littered "the heads of the hanged" across more than just the bridges. With body parts scattered so carelessly, these images seem unnatural and artificial. Most frightening of all, though, is that they are artificial; they are products of *human* artifice, perversions of the ability to create. It is now technologically possible "to bite the air to bite the rocks", and this power damages the souls of those still living. It distorts the flesh ("no longer of men") and even burrows into the heart (also "no longer of men"). But the fourth stanza brings a glint of hope to the partisans' cause. If nothing else, they fight for a chance at "liberty on the ground". For the land can never fall victim to the madness and devastation that fill the poem. As Fortini's title suggests, these are "the last partisans"; they have one chance to save their homeland from an empty future. To fight for a voice that will otherwise go silent — that was motivation enough.

Perhaps the German and Allied militaries can be forgiven for expecting ineptitude from partisan bands, who fought with abandon but were chronically under-armed. By any modern measure, half-starved troops with little central command stood no chance. And yet they

employed guerilla warfare to great success, for "they normally outnumbered whoever they were attacking, and had the element of surprise". Their deep knowledge of local territory also helped them avoid awkward bottlenecks and traps. To be fair, partisans owed part of this effectiveness to the Germans' firm belief that a true military position could not be established in, say, the Abruzzi mountain ranges.²² This was a fair assumption — but neither were the partisans a true military. Their hope lay in forcing their opponents' hand whenever possible, in fighting on their own terms. The same Marshal Kesselring who dismissed "the Italian soldier" soon found his troops up against an entirely different challenge. The best German troops available, he would write, "were only just good enough to be used in fighting of this kind". 23 If the Germans held a strong front, the bands were a swift fog, obscuring and suffocating in turn. A quick strike in the midst of chaos — and they were gone.

But for all their heroism, partisans simply did not possess the means to drive enemy forces back on their own. Timely Allied arrivals, as well as insurrectionary surges in the cities, would spur Italy toward liberation. In the meantime, the bands took as many enemies out of commission as possible. The revolt in Genoa paints a not atypical picture of urban casualty rates: in the course of the battle, between 187 and 400

partisans died; 850 to 3,000 were wounded; yet they took 6,000 German and fascist prisoners in the city, and nearly 12,000 more in the mountains.²⁴ Even with such decisive victories, partisans could not keep pace with key tactical losses during the winter of 1944. What they had termed "republics" — sites of self-organized popular government, heirs to the CLN — were the first to fall to the onslaught from the north.²⁵ And since the sites had been constructed in the open valleys of the Po, they crumbled under German *rastrellamenti* ("round ups", literally "rakings"). In the meantime, the Allies had broken into north Italy and citizens of the industrial triangle were well past their patience. The path to liberation, it seemed, ran squarely through the cities.

Chapter IV — The End of a Beginning

E questo è il sonno

E questo è il sonno, edera nera, nostra Corona: presto saremo beati In una madre inesistente, schiuse Nel buio le labbra sfinite, sepolti.

E quel che odi poi, non sai se ascolti Da vie di neve in fuga un canto o un vento,

O è in te e dilaga e parla la sorgente Cupa tua, l'onda vaga tua del niente.

-Franco Fortini

And this is sleep

And this is sleep, black ivy, our Crown: soon we'll be blessed By a nonexistent mother, parted Worn out lips in the dark, buried.

It's what you hate, unsure if you listen To a song or a gust flying from snowy streets,

Or it's in you and your dark spring speaks and overflows, your dim wave of nothing.

This short lyric delves into the anxiety of a citizen whose fate turns on an upcoming revolt. It envisions sleep as a prelude to the eternal void of death that creeps up like "black ivy". The first stanza immediately takes issue with the notion that the sleep of death is a blessing, a conclusive experience. Taken alone, the first two lines seem to indicate a reward just around the corner: "And this is...our / crown: soon we'll be blessed", it promises. But Fortini employs enjambment to devastating effect here, mimicking the cycle of expectation and disappointment that he fears is all too common. After the Virgin Mary is christened a "nonexistent mother",

the stanza's final two lines serve as fearsome reminders of what awaits in the beyond. Mary's lips welcome the dead "parted / worn out" from overuse, and the stanza's last word is literally buried in its right-hand corner. The second and third stanzas then speculate as to how this socalled sleep appears to the dying. They begin with an informal address to no one; the poem's syntax also suffers from the confusion of imminent death. And the intricately inverted word order that prevails in the thirdto-last line only complicates the passage. With its indications that death is a profoundly lonely experience, the poem points to the need for group identity. It encourages the search for one's own Virgin Mary. Citizens and partisans who led their cities' revolts strove for a similar goal: if they could not survive the battle, at least they might save Italy's children from a lasting, unwanted sleep.

Liberation was by no means a smooth or consistent process, nor did any two cities have quite the same experience. Naples, for instance, had liberated itself from within via popular insurrection by early 1944. The sheer mass of people that flooded the city's knot of streets had enough momentum to drive out occupying armies. In fact, Allies entering the city were surprised to find that their work had essentially been done in advance. Ever the center for diplomacy, Rome had chosen to adopt an

"open city" policy. This entailed that no military, foreign or domestic, would be stationed — nor would anyone fight — as power was handed over to the Allies. While the policy was unpopular with those who thought they deserved vengeance on the German army, it did ensure a mostly bloodless takeover. In mid-1944, a similar proposal was made to the citizens of Florence. But despite how much irreplaceable art and infrastructure had already been destroyed, Florentines did not take the bait. A local communist newspaper mirrored popular feelings in the city: "with no bread, gas, electricity, water or medicines; between the explosion of mines, the rumble of mortars, the hissing of bullets — what more could frighten us?". The city dug in its heels, prepared to resist to the last.

Both Florence and Milan endured long, ruinous insurrections. The Florentine newspaper's plea for armed resistance spread through the population, but once again there were problems of mobilization. Without an organized call to action or a go-ahead from the CLNAI, the city teetered between stasis and self-destruction. The Tuscan CLN, sensing that further delay might hurt its chances even if it did get authorization, acted on its own initiative to organize a revolt.³ On August 11th, 1944 the local bell tower *La Campana del Popolo* (Bell of the People) rang

through the city as per usual. At its first peal the insurrection began. For a solid 48 hours Florentine citizens and available partisans defended their city from the inside out, harassing German forces and eventually pushing them outside of artillery range.⁴ Nearly a year later, Milan would rise to insurrection as well. But in contrast, no help had come from the mountains when Milanese citizens might have expected it. So from April 25th - 27th, 1945, citizens fought tooth and nail in a battleground much different from that in Florence.⁵ Although a larger Allied victory seemed almost inevitable by that point, the city was flirting with unprecedented devastation. Allied troops did not even arrive in Milan until April 28th, when the overthrow was effectively complete.⁶ It would seem that partisans and the citizens who fought alongside them had scored a lasting victory. A number of odd post-war developments, however, would challenge these victories and obscure the legacy of the Resistance.

* *

Benedetto Croce once predicted that fascism would be remembered as a set of parentheses in Italian history. Croce, a liberal university philosopher and renowned expert on aesthetics, distanced himself from the regime in 1924. Near the war's end he would go on to mediate between disgruntled partisans and entrenched fascists.⁷ After the

fact, Croce even likened fascism to a foreign invasion that had captivated the country by force. But if this were wholly true, why did remnants of its rule blunt the progress partisans had made and the change they had championed? For one, fascism disappeared more quickly as a political entity than did the economic overhaul it had wrought. After the war, former partisans found themselves face to face with the same factory bosses they had protested, many of whom "had collaborated with the fascists and Germans, had informed on anti-fascists, and had often made a lot of money out of the war". Their status and funds had protected them, to the extent possible, from extreme hunger and poverty.

Since Italy never undertook a wholesale reshuffling of the government, let alone of business magnates, this mutual tension did not die with the war. To make matters more confusing, neither partisans nor those in post-war government could draw a clear line between those who had supported the Resistance and those who had undermined it. Often they were one and the same. During the winter of 1944 – 45, for instance, FIAT gave nearly 55 million lire to the Piedmont CLN and its subsidiaries. But who could say how much of that money had come from war profits, from worker exploitation, from blatant corruption? The web of support had become so knotted that it would never fully untangle.

The partisans, for their part, did all in their limited power to keep the second of Croce's parentheses in place.

Alfonso Gatto took great interest in these ambiguities that obscured the struggle not weeks after its end. In particular, he was struck by how the war drove a wedge between different generations. Would Italians who survived the war look to the past and lose hope? Would young Italians have any referent for a stable future?:

A mio padre

Se mi tornassi questa sera accanto lungo la via dove scende l'ombra azzurra già che sembra primavera, per dirti quanto è buio il mondo e come ai nostri sogni in libertà s'accenda di speranze di poveri di cielo io troverei un pianto da bambino e gli occhi aperti di sorriso, neri neri come le rondini del mare.

Mi basterebbe che tu fossi vivo, un uomo vivo col tuo cuore è un sogno. Ora alla terra è un'ombra la memoria della tua voce che diceva ai figli: - Com'è bella notte e com'è buona ad amarci così con l'aria in piena fin dentro al sonno - Tu vedevi il mondo nel plenilunio sporgere a quel cielo, gli uomini incamminati verso l'alba.

-Alfonso Gatto

To my father

If this night came back to me along the street where blue shadow falls so that it already feels like spring, so as to tell you how dark the world is and how our dreams of freedom light up with hopes with the poor with heaven I'd find a child in mourning his eyes open in a smile, blacker than black like the seagulls.

It would be enough if you were alive, but a live man with your heart is a dream. Now it's a shadow on the ground, the memory of your voice that told us: "How beautiful the night is and how kind of it to love us so with all its air until we're asleep." You saw the world at harvest moon leaning toward heaven, men walking toward the dawn.

Gatto structures the poem as an address to his dead father, but it narrates a story that verges on universal by the war's end. Aftereffects of the long

struggle already begin to manifest themselves in the next generation. The "child in mourning" epitomizes the half-blissful, half-empty existence of one who remains ignorant yet senses evil in his midst. Even with "his eyes open in a smile", the child stares out from a double abyss. In protest, the speaker begs for evidence that the already-dark world has not lost all its light. A man like his father would suffice, "but a live man with [his] heart is a dream". That is, such men have either been purged, or they could not stand the war and gave their lives in sacrifice. The father's voice already passes into memory, and its memory passes into shadow. How can the current generation expect to survive, isolated as they are from heroes such as the father and hopes such as the child? For at the very least, the speaker's father "saw the world", saw its workers "walking toward the dawn". The speaker worries that the present generation, children of the war, will lack faith in their past. It remained to be seen to what extent the Resistance had restored hope in the future.

By late 1945 it was clear that liberation had come at a price. As if the domestic invasion of fascism were not enough, Allied and German officers alike conspired to leave their mark on post-war Italy. The Allies had already made their anti-communist disposition quite clear; there were even clauses in the Marshall Plan that stipulated against using funds to rehabilitate the PCI (Italian Communist Party). Ironically, arriving at peace in Italy was also contingent on the help of the German SS, and in particular Karl Wolff (Obergruppenführer, or second in command).¹¹ Wolff had actually done the partisans a favor during the war, disobeying a direct order from Hitler to pursue and eliminate all enemy soldiers in flight. But if peace in Italy could not afford a truce between German and Allied powers, Wolff was at least motivated by a desire to stamp out "the communist menace".¹² And indeed, Allied forces in northern Italy segued almost seamlessly from their role as liberators to that of anti-communist crusaders in Trieste and elsewhere. Partisans returning to their home cities and towns did not find the malleable social climate they had expected.

With no real chance at a nationwide uprising, partisans were keen to bring Mussolini to justice themselves, especially when it became clear that overthrowing the regime was already bound up in Allied efforts.¹³ Mussolini was in the midst of his flight to Germany when his caravan encountered a small partisan brigade. Their leader, Pier Bellini delle Stelle, had placed what few men he commanded in threatening positions with their largest weapons visible.¹⁴ Already sold on the bluff, the Germans agreed to pass along any fascists among them, so long as they

would be allowed to pass. But their attempts to outfit Mussolini and cast him as a drunken comrade did not escape Bellini's men. ¹⁵ They personally accompanied the ex-*Duce*, in a small caravan of their own, back to Milan. Along with his mistress, Claretta Petacci, Mussolini was shot and strung up by the heels in Piazzale Loreto, where fifteen partisans had been killed just a summer before. The gathered mob took their vengeance on his lifeless corpse in a display that would shock modern sensibilities. It was their only vengeance, though, after a war that had defied all sense.

Conclusion

Their country in ruins, Italians puzzled over what was left for them to revive. For all the partisans' courage, their unseen work would compete with powerful images, reprinted worldwide, of Italian mob violence, their Allied saviors, and royal incompetence. They had made part of their own history yet could not write it. To the extent that popular revolts would be remembered, they helped remind the Allies that most Italians had been democratic and anti-fascist from the beginning.¹ The Resistance had coalesced around true self-sacrifice, and it was a cause for which thousands willingly gave their lives. By the spring of 1945, roughly 45,000 partigiani had died in action and 20,000 more were severely wounded — this from a force that numbered 300,000 at its peak.² Although they were horribly under-armed for the duration, postwar figures indicate that partisans inflicted at least this many casualties as well.³ And beyond the numbers, it would be impossible to overestimate their influence on morale and the pace of the war. When they could do no more, they defended the land that a later generation would call home.

Along with his fellow poets, Franco Fortini wrote even more prodigiously after the war to prevent a national lapse into the old ways. He edited the literary review *Politecnico* with Elio Vittorini from 1945 to 1947, and the magazine became a podium for countercultural essays.⁴ Fortini also placed more post-war faith in a communist revolution than did Gatto or Bassani. He turned his hopes to the young and the oppressed in an attempt to spread his breed of Marxism.⁵ Indeed, the word *speranza* (hope) and its associated themes pervade Fortini's poems, and he would continue to chronicle the partisans' legacy after the war. He believed, and justly, that this remembrance was more important than ever after the war had cooled. He moved to Milan, soon to become the heart of Resistance memorials, in 1945 and lived there until his death in 1994. A financially troubled, Jewish Marxist to the end, Fortini died as he lived — an exile in his own country.

The war would leave an enduring imprint on Giorgio Bassani, as well. He had moved to Florence in 1943 and would live there until late 1945, always under cover of an alias. During that same period, a number of his Jewish relatives from Ferrara were transported to Buchenwald, a concentration camp in Weimar, Germany. Bassani was understandably quick to move south after the war, and he relocated his family to Rome.

There he would begin to publish the poems that had brought him silent fame in previous years. Two such collections, augmented with new poetry, were released within two years: Storie di poveri amanti e altri versi (Histories of Poor Lovers and Other Poems) in 1945 and Te lucis ante (Before the day ends) in 1947.8 He also moved into the short story form, and would later collect a series of them into Cinque storie ferraresi (Five Stories of Ferrara) in 1956. In 1962 Bassani published his most famous novel, Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini (The garden of the Finzi-Contini's), which follows an aristocratic Jewish family through Ferrara, fascism, and the Racial Laws. The book won Italy's Viareggio prize the very same year. But despite his success, Bassani could not fully escape the scars that the war had given him. Nor did he want to. Until his death in 2000, Bassani relentlessly played the spokesman for history's underdog. He carried the Resistance with him, in his works, well after the last shot had sounded in Florence.

During his brief spell in prison in 1936, Alfonso Gatto solidified his conviction that resistance was a way of life. He compiled a body of poetry throughout the war that reflected this commitment. Only in 1947 would he emerge with *Il capo sulla neve* (The head on the snow), a collection that shot him to literary prominence in Italy.¹⁰ In 1932, when

Gatto was but 23, the poet Eugenio Montale reviewed Gatto's first book of poetry and saw a spot reserved for him in Italy's canon. 11 History would confirm Montale's prediction, as Gatto went on to win Italy's most coveted prizes. Between 1939 and 1966, he won the Saviani, San Vincenzo, Marzotto, Bagutta, and Viareggio awards. 12 Gatto operated out of northern Italy until his mother's death on November 3rd, 1958. 13 At that point he returned south, close to his hometown of Salerno. In 1976 Gatto died an untimely and unexpected death in a car crash. Since then his life has not been the focus of much scholarly attention outside of Italy. Even so, Gatto's work has succeeded him as a magnetic and undeniable testament to resistance. His poems speak to a lifelong interest in equilibrium and progress in the face of ambiguity, themes that will saturate post-war Italy. Here is a final poem of his, one that stands on the strength of its own questions:

Innamorarsi allora

Innamorarsi allora e che voleva dire? I giorni d'ora in ora per l'ora di morire.

L'amor non si nasconde passeggia per le vie, ma girano le ronde aspettano le spie,

per indicare: è lui. Un'ombra nei viali To fall in love just then

What did it mean to fall in love just then? The days hour to hour till the hour of death.

Love doesn't hide itself it goes through the streets, but the patrols are out they're looking for spies,

so they can say: it's him. A shadow in the alleys

negli angoli più bui, l'inseguono i segnali

delle pattuglie. Certo la notte è bella, odora di pascolo all'aperto della campagna, è l'ora

d'arrendersi alla piena di quel cielo stellato. Si perde nella lena di correre, sul prato

vivo si guarda intorno, ma tacciono i latrati dei cani, nasce il giorno dei giorni innamorati.

La bella morte sposa il piccolo corriere che dorme con la rosa di sangue all'origliere.

Innamorarsi allora e che voleva dire? I giorni d'ora in ora per l'ora di morire.

-Alfonso Gatto

on the darkest corners, they chase the signals

of the patrols. Of course the night is beautiful, it smells like an open field in the country, it's time

to surrender to the whole of that starry sky. It's lost in the will to run, on the live grass

you look around, but the dogs' barks fall silent, the day is born of days in love.

The pretty dead newlywed the little runner that sleeps with a bloody rose on the doorstep.

What did it mean to fall in love just then? The days hour to hour till the hour of death.

* * *

Much like the partisans themselves, the poems I have analyzed here tell a story all their own. The words, themes, and experiences at their core condemned the works to a separate existence. If partisans read them at all, they did so in secret and in silence. The poems sprang from, and were confined to, a Resistance with its own culture. As such, the poems and the partisans shared a number of overriding goals. They sought to

escape a life, whether real or literary, that was relegated to the margins. They fought to break away from the chains of repression and censorship. They resisted, that is, for the chance to speak their own words. Partisans, especially those who had grown up under fascism, were skeptical of grand narratives of history. And rightly so, since their struggle for recognition spanned a vicious three years at the least. But the partisans' endless list of duties left them neither the time nor the leisure to tell their own stories. Gatto, Bassani and Fortini were among the few to take on this task; fewer still performed it so well. Their poems resist the post-war temptation to sandwich the partisans' experiences between two bookends: Pre-War and Post-Fascist. The poems also direct attention to the stories of individual partisans. They recreate — are constantly recreating — the Resistance after the fact, by way of preserving its voices. These poems break from a linear timeline and can thus, at any moment, open a window onto the Resistance. They are partigiani lessicali, word-partisans, which bind a new people to their birth.

Anthology of Additional Poems

I translated more poems for this project than I could analyze. Some were struck from the project at the last minute; others ran too far off-topic. But even the following poems deserve attention. I like to think of them, the best of the rest, as a blissfully porous history of the war. I have suspended the two-column form when long lines required it, and the poems are arranged alphabetically by title rather than by author or date. I hope that this peculiar format lends each poem the mystery, and surprise, of a well-wrapped gift.

* * *

25 Aprile

La chiusa angoscia delle notti, il pianto delle mamme annerite sulla neve accanto ai figli uccisi. l'ululato nel vento, nelle tenebre, dei lupi assediati con la propria strage, la speranza che dentro ci svegliava oltre l'orrore le parole udite dalla bocca fermissima dei morti "liberate l'Italia, Curiel vuole essere avvolto nella sua bandiera": tutto quel giorno ruppe nella vita con la piena del sangue, nell'azzurro il rosso palpitò come una gola. E fummo vivi, insorti con il taglio ridente della bocca, pieni gli occhi piena la mano nel suo pugno: il cuore d'improvviso ci apparve in mezzo al petto.

April 25th

The closed worry of the nights, the cry of mothers blackened on the snow next to their dead children, the howling in the wind, in the darkness, of wolves besieged by their own slaughter, the hope that awoke within us beyond the horror the words heard from the stock-still mouths of the dead "Free Italy, Curiel wants to be rolled up in her flag": That whole day broke down in life with a flood of blood, in the blue the red throbbed like a throat. And we were alive, insurgent with cut mouths laughing, our eyes full our hands full to the fist: out of nowhere a heart appeared in the middle of our chest.

-Alfonso Gatto

Anniversario a Valeria

Tu non li udivi gli esili canti dei crisantemi, persi oltre il fuoco ed il fumo d'un domestico inferno; tu non udivi, ignara, le loro voci, i leggeri sibili delle chiome che qua e là volgeva l'inverno.

Fedeli a te sparita, muti sì, ma rimasti, essi qui ti ricordano, rammemorano la tua dolcezza. Innocente, di te, che ancora nei loro casti profumi torni, sorride in lacrime la giovinezza.

-Giorgio Bassani

Anniversary

to Valerie

You didn't hear the faint hymns of the chrysanthemums, lost beyond the fire and smoke of a domestic hell; unaware, you didn't hear their voices, the soft hiss of the foliage that winter turned to and fro.

Faithful to your disappearance, so quiet, they remained, they remember you here, they commemorate your sweetness. Innocent, of you, who return again to their pure smells, your youth smiles into tears.

Fine

The End

Quando sarà la morte il dolce vento che la sera dai prati accoglie in grembo, o lago o cielo, e l'erba di sé sola un palpito, il muro eterno bianco...

E passeranno a bracci fresche voci di donne – così a noi parrà – di luna e di soldati stanchi addormentati sulle lanterne...

E rivedremo il bianco letto d'aria, le case apparse d'un sol lume in fondo ai vicoli che il sonno sale e scende da voce a voce... When death is the sweet wind that a country night welcomes into its lap, lake or sky, and the grass trembles by itself, the endless white wall...

And suddenly cool voices will pass by, women's – it seems to us – the moon's and the soldiers', tired and sleeping on the lanterns...

And we'll see the white bed of air, houses lit by a lone light deep in the alleys where sleep rises and falls from voice to voice...

Peneremo nel profondo il braccio vigoroso dei cieli e dentro il folto nereggiare dei popoli la notte, il mare avvinto alle sue logge d'onda. Saremo i morti risonanti ai troni dei barbari promessi a questa vita che ci colse fanciulli e la paura eternamente ci fissò negli occhi.

We'll sink deep into the strong arm of the heavens and inside the slow darkening of people at night, the sea enthralled by its own waves. We'll be the dead ringing at the thrones of savages, promised to this life that took our children and the fear that always looked us straight in the eye.

-Alfonso Gatto

Foglio di via

Dunque nulla di nuovo da questa altezza Dove ancora un poco senza guardare si parla E nei capelli il vento cala la sera.

Dunque nessun cammino per discendere Se non questo del nord dove il sole non tocca E sono d'acqua i rami degli alberi.

Dunque fra poco senza parole la bocca. E questa sera saremo in fondo alle valle Dove le feste han spento tutte le lampade.

Dove una folla tace e gli amici non riconoscono.

-Franco Fortini

Deportation Notice

So nothing new from this height Where without watching one still talks a bit And the wind warms your hair at night.

So there's no way down
If not from the sun-starved north
And the tree branches are water.

So soon the mouth without words. And tonight we'll be deep in the valleys Where the parties have killed all the lights.

Where a crowd is silent and friends don't recognize one another.

Lasciando Marina di Cervia

alla memoria di Arnaldo Guerrini

Forse in un giorno della nostra vita torneremo a queste rive dove a sera scende l'oblio; a queste sabbie senza orme che il cielo annuvola, un'aria d'addio.

Affonderemo per tiepide acque, nella pace, come per erbe folte, senza pensieri, si va nelle notti d'estate lungo i sentieri verso lontane lampade sepolte.

-Giorgio Bassani

Leaving Cervia's Marina

in memory of Arnaldo Guerrini

Maybe someday in our life we'll return to these banks where oblivion descends at night; to these sands sans footprints that the sky clouds over, a hint of goodbye.

We'll sink into warm waters, into peace, as if into thick weeds, without a thought, on summer nights one goes along the paths toward distant buried lights.

Monselice

A Monselice il vento va sempre come dal mare. Gira il treno al largo, non sa forse come approdare.

Monselice, colle celeste, fronte pura e lontana, ricordo, di te, fra le meste casupole, una fontana.

A Monselice, anche di giugno, la primavera non è senza nebbie. Con foglie e foglie l'autunno.

Monselice

At Monselice the wind always comes as if from the sea. The train turns wide, maybe it doesn't know how to arrive.

Monselice, celestial hills, distant and pure front, I remember, between the sad hovels, a fountain of yours.

At Monselice, even in June, spring is not without fog. Autumn with leaves upon leaves.

L'inverno è tutto una sera.

Ma l'estate, i tigli lungo la strada di Rovigo? Al loro quieto stormire la luna m'amava, quand'ero ragazzo, in segreto.

-Giorgio Bassani

Winter is one long night.

But summer, the lime trees along the road to Rovigo? The moon loved me in their quiet rustle, when I was a boy, in secret.

Quando

Quando dalla vergogna e dall'orgoglio Avremo lavate queste nostre parole.

Quando ci fiorirà nella luce del sole Quel passo che in sonno si sogna.

-Franco Fortini

Valdossola

E il tuo fucile sopra l'erba del pascolo.

Qui siamo giunti Siamo gli ultimi noi Ouesto silenzio che cosa.

> Verranno ora Verranno.

E il tuo fucile nell'acqua della fontana.

Ottobre vento amaro La nuvola è sul monte Chi parlerà per noi.

> Verranno ora Verranno.

Inverno ultimo anno Le mani cieche la fronte E nessun grido più.

E il tuo fucile sotto la pietra di neve.

When

When we have washed shame and pride from these words of ours.

When that step that you dream in sleep Blooms for us in the sunlight.

Verranno ora Verranno.

-Franco Fortini

Valdossola

And your rifle above the pasture grass.

We've come here We're the very last ones What is this silence.

They're coming now They're coming.

And your rifle in the fountain's water.

Bitter October wind The cloud is on the mountain Who will speak for us.

They're coming now They're coming.

Winter the last year The blind hands the front And no more yelling.

And your rifle under the snow drift.

They're coming now They're coming.

Works Cited

- Bassani, Giorgio. L'alba ai vetri: poesie 1942 '50. Turin: Einaudi, 1963.
- Behan, Tom. *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerillas, and the Allies.* London: Pluto Press, 2009.
- Bettin, Christina. "Giorgio Bassani." *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 299, no. 1 (2004): 31-35. url: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=Data Type&n=10&l=d&c=2&locID=31841&secondary=false&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW&s=1&NA=Bassani
- Cicala, Roberto, ed. "Con la violenza la pietà": poesia e resistenza. Novara: Interlinea edizioni, 1995.
- Domenico, Roy Palmer. *Italian Fascists on Trial*, 1943 1948. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- Fortini, Franco. *Versi scelti:* 1939 1989. Edited by Giulio Einaudi. Turin: Einaudi, 1990.
- Gatto, Alfonso. Il capo sulla neve: liriche della resistenza. Milan: Milano-Sera, 1947.
- Gatto, Alfonso. *The wall did not answer: selected poems 1932 1976.* Translated and introduced by Philip Parisi. New York: Chelsea Editions, 2011.
- Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943 1988.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Orban, Clara. "Alfonso Gatto." *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 114, no. 1 (1992): 73 80. url: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=Data Type&n=10&l=d&c=3&locID=31841&secondary=false&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW&s=1&NA=Gatto
- Peterson, Thomas E. "Franco Fortini." *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 128, no. 2 (1993): 142 149. url: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=Data Type&n=10&l=d&c=2&locID=31841&secondary=false&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW&s=1&NA=Fortini
- Puzzo, Dante. *The Partisans and the War in Italy*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992.

Notes

Epigram

¹ Iris Origo, War in Val D'Orcia (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., 1984), 58 – 59, reprinted in Dante Puzzo, The Partisans and the War in Italy (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), 55 – 56.

Introduction

¹ Cristina Bettin, "Giorgio Bassani," Dictionary of Literary Biography: *Holocaust Novelists* 299 (2004): 31 – 35, url: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=DataType& n=10&l=d&c=2&locID=31841&secondary=false&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW &s=1&NA=Bassani

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Thomas E. Peterson, "Franco Fortini," *Dictionary of Literary Biography:* Twentieth-Century Italian Poets, Second Series 128 (1993): 142 – 149, url: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=DataType& n=10&l=d&c=2&locID=31841&secondary=false&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW &s=1&NA=Fortini

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Alfonso Gatto, *The wall did not answer: selected poems*, 1932 – 1976, trans. Philip Parisi (New York: Chelsea Editions, 2011), 13.

⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹ Alfonso Gatto, Preface, La storia delle vittime, reprinted in Gatto, Selected poems, 13.

Chapter I

- ¹ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943 1988* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 16.
- ² Tom Behan, *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerrillas and the Allies* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 87.
 - ³ Ginsborg, *Contemporary Italy*, 9.
 - ⁴ Ibid., 10.
- ⁵ Dante Puzzo, *The Partisans and the War in Italy* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), 6.
 - ⁶ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 6.
 - ⁷ Ginsborg, Contemporary Italy, 15.
 - ⁸ Ibid., 17.
 - ⁹ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 33.
 - ¹⁰ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 66 67.
- ¹¹ F. Colombara, La terra delle tre lune. Classi popolari nella prima metà del Novecento in un paese dell'alto Piemonte: Prato Sesia (Milan: Vangelista, 1989), 253, reprinted in Behan, Italian Resistance, 62.
- ¹² G. Ricci, *Storia della Brigata Garibaldina 'Ugo Muccini'* (La Spezia: Istituto Storico della Resistenza, 1978), 296, reprinted in Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 72.
 - ¹³ Ginsborg, Contemporary Italy, 22.
 - ¹⁴ Ibid., 13.
 - ¹⁵ Ibid.
 - ¹⁶ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 8.
 - ¹⁷ Ginsborg, Contemporary Italy, 41.
 - ¹⁸ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 46.

¹⁹ Ginsborg, Contemporary Italy, 43.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 46.

²² Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 44.

²³ Ginsborg, *Contemporary Italy*, 16.

²⁴ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 52.

Chapter II

¹ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943 – 1988* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 16.

² Tom Behan, *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerrillas and the Allies* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 87.

³ Ibid., 78.

⁴ Ibid., 78 – 79.

⁵ Ibid., 163.

⁶ Ibid., 162.

⁷ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 43.

⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁹ Ginsborg, Contemporary Italy, 16.

¹⁰ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 681, reprinted in Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 1.

¹¹ Ginsborg, Contemporary Italy, 40.

¹² Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 2.

¹³ Ibid.

```
<sup>14</sup> Ginsborg, Contemporary Italy, 12.
```

Chapter III

¹ Tom Behan, *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerrillas and the Allies* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 112.

³ Dante Puzzo, *The Partisans and the War in Italy* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), 41.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 3.

¹⁹ Ginsborg, *Contemporary Italy*, 13.

² Ibid.

⁴ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 167.

⁵ Ibid., 84.

⁶ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 41.

⁷ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 81.

⁸ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 31.

⁹ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 101.

¹⁰ Ibid., 87.

¹¹ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 82.

¹² Ibid., 83.

¹³ Roy Palmer Domenico, *Italian Fascists on Trial, 1943 – 1948* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 14.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Chapter IV

¹ Tom Behan, *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerrillas and the Allies* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 86.

² P. Secchia, *Aldo dice 26 x 1. Cronistoria del 25 aprile 1945* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1963), 33, reprinted in Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 90.

¹⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶ F. Colombara, La terra delle tre lune. Classi popolari nella prima metà del Novecento in un paese dell'alto Piemonte: Prato Sesia (Milan: Vangelista, 1989), 253, reprinted in Behan, Italian Resistance, 74.

¹⁷ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 74 – 75.

¹⁸ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943* – *1988* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 42.

¹⁹ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 55.

²⁰ Ibid., 60.

²¹ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 75.

²² Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 12.

²³ Ibid., 45.

²⁴ Ibid., 104 – 105.

²⁵ Ibid., 60.

³ Dante Puzzo, *The Partisans and the War in Italy* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), 53.

⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁵ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 101.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 13.

```
<sup>8</sup> Puzzo, The Partisans, 13.
```

Conclusion

¹ Tom Behan, *The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerrillas and the Allies* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 93.

³ Dante Puzzo, *The Partisans and the War in Italy* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), 86.

⁴ Thomas E. Peterson, "Franco Fortini," *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Twentieth-Century Italian Poets, Second Series* 128 (1993): 142 – 149, url: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=DataType& n=10&l=d&c=2&locID=31841&secondary=false&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW&s=1&NA=Fortini

⁶ Cristina Bettin, "Giorgio Bassani," *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Holocaust Novelists* 299 (2004): 31 – 35, url: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=DataType& n=10&l=d&c=2&locID=31841&secondary=false&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW&s=1&NA=Bassani

⁹ Behan, *Italian Resistance*, 107.

¹⁰ Ibid., 95.

¹¹ Puzzo, *The Partisans*, 76 – 77.

¹² Ibid., 79.

 $^{^{13}}$ Ibid., 90 - 91.

¹⁴ Ibid., 91.

¹⁵ Ibid.

² Ibid., 85.

⁵ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Alfonso Gatto, *The wall did not answer: selected poems, 1932 – 1976*, trans. Philip Parisi (New York: Chelsea Editions, 2011), 18.

¹³ Clara Orban, "Alfonso Gatto," *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Twentieth-Century Italian Poets, First Series* 114 (1992): 73 – 80, url: http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/hits?r=d&origSearch=true&o=DataType& n=10&l=d&c=3&locID=31841&secondary=false&u=CA&u=CLC&u=DLB&t=KW&s=1&NA=Gatto

¹¹ Ibid., 11.

¹² Ibid.