

Italian Cultures of Work

(To William van Watson, unsung laborer of our profession)

Labor, work and their changed conditions at the dawn of the twenty-first century are among the most discussed and debated questions of our times. In recognition of the topicality of this subject and in light of the historical centrality of Italy in the constitution of, but also antagonism towards, capitalist formations, this issue of *Annali d'Italianistica* 32 (2014): *From Otium and Occupatio to Work and Labor in Italian Culture*, investigates aesthetic and cultural responses to work and labor in Italian society from the Middle Ages to the present.

As the medieval organization of society in the orders of *oratores*, *bellatores*, and *laboratores* (clergy, warriors, and workers respectively) underwent profound transformations in the course of the 13th century, so did conceptions of work and labor. The early medieval promotion of activities that transformed, improved, or modified matter, such as those of peasants and artisans, gave way to more subtle understandings of different types of professions. Merchant trade, which previously had been held in contempt, came to be seen as an occupation that fulfilled important societal needs and was therefore justified in terms of its social utility or common good, as well as for the benefits it brought to ecclesiastic authorities in the form of bequeaths and donations. Even the merchants' secularized use of time ceased to be in sharp opposition to religious time. The primacy accorded to contemplative life — a legacy of the Greco-Roman notion of *otium* and, partially, of an ambivalent Judeo-Christian tradition that both condemned and praised labor (i.e., Genesis 2:15 and 3:19-23; the Pauline texts in which the apostle describes himself as a laborer; the opposing figures of Cain-the-tiller of the soil and Abel-the-tender of the flocks, Rachel and Leah, Martha and Mary) — was challenged by an idea of work no longer understood as penitential atonement for the original sin, but as a form of activity that could be meritorious and therefore a means of salvation in a world where God was increasingly seen as *summus artifex* or *opifex*.

During the late Middle Ages, the legitimacy acquired by various forms of work and labor facilitated the consolidation of corporate guild structures, networks of laborers' associations, and even demands for corporate representation in *Communal* governments. These forms of solidarity are indicative of a proto-industrial class consciousness, as the Ciompi insurrection of Florence in the 1378, among several other such social agitations, testifies.

The late medieval re-conceptualization of work, which continued into the Renaissance, profoundly altered the material conditions of work and class structure for centuries to come. Italian city-states, well positioned in trade routes between Europe and the Near East, emerged as pioneers in the creation of early forms of capitalist accumulation, wage-labor relations, and novel means of

production. Not only were innovations such as double-entry accounting and bills of exchange introduced along with early models of banking systems, but corporate guild structures were dismantled into groups of wage-earners. The changes in labor processes and class-consciousness of early modernity would be fully actualized with the integration of labor-saving technological inventions into large-scale modes of agricultural and industrial production. To be sure, Italy's economic decline and marginalization among European powers in the late 17th and 18th centuries made it a late-comer to the Industrial Revolution that swept the European continent between 1780 and 1850. Nevertheless, localized forms of industrialization took place in the regions of Liguria, Piedmont, and Lombardy, the same regions that would become the heartland of the "triangolo industriale" from the 19th century onwards (e.g., Breda and Pirelli and the car manufacturing industry during the Giolitti era). At this time, Italy also emerged as a major player in progressive causes, as socialist and anarchist organizers took on the challenge of promoting worker's rights through demonstrations and strikes, famously rendered in the painting *Il Quarto Stato* by Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo (1901), but also by becoming one of Europe's largest exporter of labor migrants in the great exodus that, from 1876 to 1976, saw the departure of 25 million people. While many of them migrated to the Americas, two million Southerners relocated to work in the large conglomerates that had developed in the "triangolo industriale" between 1951 and 1972, in what is widely acknowledged to have been the greatest European interregional migration of the postwar era.

With the increased rationalization of work-productivity through the early doctrines of Taylorism and Fordism in the 20th century, Italy's role as a full-fledged, if belated, member of Western modernity was consolidated. The new work realities of industrial modernization would lead to a heightened consciousness of the workers' status, self-fulfillment, and agency. The political centrality and longevity of the Italian Communist Party (1921-1991), at one time the largest communist party in the West, testifies to these developments, as do the rich reflections on work and labor authored by Italian intellectuals, from Labriola and Pareto to Ferrero, Einaudi, Gramsci, Della Volpe, Rossi, Bobbio, and many others. In more recent times, this same consciousness of the workers' status unfolded into the culture of labor militancy and revolutionary politics of the 1960s and 1970s advanced by groups such as *Lotta continua*, *Potere operaio*, *Autonomia operaia* and theorized and discussed by Agamben, Berardi, Negri, Piperno, Revelli, Rossanda, Tronti, Vercellone, Virno, and others.

The crisis of Fordism that emerged with the workers' protests of the 1960s and 1970s also coincided with the advent of the neo-liberal economy that is today's hegemonic form of social organization. Like other Western societies, Italy is experiencing the return to a primitive and often violent logic of capitalist accumulation sustained by a biopolitical governance that reveals itself in the demise of the Keynesian compromise, in the pervasive condition of under- or

precarious employment (particularly grave for the youths), in the disintegration of the welfare safety net, in the dismantling of organized labor and in the production and surveillance of an ever growing transnational migrant labor-force. The temporary status of this labor-force within the Italian state sovereignty creates barriers and divisions between “us” and “them,” autochthonous and non-autochthonous workers, thus precluding acts of collective resistance viewed as necessary to the rebirth of a working class consciousness.

Italian culture has responded to the ever-evolving landscape of work and labor, broadly summarized here, through a wealth of aesthetic and intellectual expressions that bear witness to, but also challenge working and laboring environments across spaces and times. Without claiming to provide an exhaustive discussion of the indelible marks that work and labor have made on Italian cultural production, this issue of *Annali d’Italianistica* collects the work of scholars who, from different methodological perspectives and fields of specialty, provide contextualized investigations of work, labor, laborers’ self-fulfillment and agency in the literary, visual, and intellectual culture of Italy at crucial junctures of its work and labor history. The contributions have been loosely organized according to a diachronic order, though certain broader categories have been applied, in particular with regard to more contemporary representations.

The first section, *Cultures of Work from the Early Fathers to the Renaissance*, features Paolo Cherchi’s “Lavoro e letteratura dall’antichità al Rinascimento” and Susanna Barsella’s “Ars and Theology: Work, Salvation, and Social Doctrine in the Early Church Fathers.” Cherchi argues that despite the centrality of work to humanity, it is only in the early modern era that labor, in its physical and practical aspects, acquires a literary presence. To better assess the moment when this presence takes place, Cherchi embraces the methodological approach of the *longue durée* to offer an insightful examination of the culture of work that precedes the Cinquecento. What emerges from his survey of writers ranging from Homer to Plato, Aristotle, and Roman authors is that practical labor is relegated to the category of *banausia*, an activity directed towards usefulness and utility, and thus sharply distinct from, and inferior to, intellectual work. With the advent of Christianity comes a renewed attention to physical labor but, as Cherchi points out, early Christian and monastic conceptions of work are fraught with ambiguities so that significant changes only occur from the Quattrocento onwards when the many descriptions of the activities of the *homo faber* finally begin to question past prejudices. Focusing on Angelo Poliziano’s *Panepistemon* (1490), Cherchi finds an unprecedented degree of equality between intellectual and practical labor that functions as a prelude to the rehabilitation of the mechanical and technical arts of the Cinquecento recorded in the literature in *volgare* by Leonardo Fioravanti and especially Tomaso Garzoni. Yet, in his in-depth discussion of Garzoni’s *Piazza* (1585),

Cherchi also points to the limit of the vision of work that it provides. Despite the vast repertoire of the many forms of trades and professions, laborers themselves remain static and abstract, revealing the legacy of Greek and Roman culture and the resiliency of the binary paradigm of intellectual versus practical work that will only be subverted with the historical emergence of the dynamic laborer during the industrial revolution.

Barsella's "Ars and Theology: Work, Salvation, and Social Doctrine in the Early Church Fathers," argues that the Biblical and the Classical conceptualization of work came together in "the ethical-political theology" of early Church Fathers. From there, it unfolded into an idea of work as a means towards the perfectibility of the individual. However, since human labor, following the principle of *imitatio Christi*, was also seen as a form of participation in divine work, it came to be conceptualized as *poiesis*, a production of a Christian *polis*. In her exploration of the convergence of Biblical and Classical traditions into a Christian articulation of work, Barsella first examines the *Hexaemeron* by Cappadocian Father Basil of Cesarea. She illustrates how Basil provides a theological re-reading of Aristotle's philosophical conception of productive activities, as outlined in *Nicomachean Ethics*. Barsella also discusses two of Basil's *Rules* for monastic life before tracing Basil's influence on John Chrysostom, Saint Ambrose of Milan and Augustine. In her consideration of Chrysostom, she focuses on almsgiving as a form of *techne*, or an art that furthers the goal of social cohesiveness. Almsgiving is also at the center of Ambrose's reflection but his writings develop a number of themes of social justice, from the critique of idleness as detrimental to the common good to the necessity of protecting laborers from abuse. Moving on to Augustine, Barsella considers the *Rule* and *De opera monachorum*, the famed pamphlet in which Augustine critiques the refusal of manual work of Carthaginian monks and dignifies physical labor on the grounds that no type of work can be condemned since what matters is the performance of labor, not the type of labor. To Barsella, this is an essential milestone in the cultural history of work inasmuch as it frees mercantile trade from a long tradition of prejudices while setting the basis for the civic character of work that will become essential in subsequent centuries.

This issue's second section, *Work in the Renaissance and the Baroque*, consists of four essays. Juliann Vitullo ("*Otium* and *Negotium* in Alberti's *I libri della famiglia*") and Marianna Villa ("*L'etica del lavoro nel Quattrocento letterario: sondaggi nei Libri della famiglia albertiani*") examine Leon Battista Alberti's famous treatise on family and fatherhood. Focusing on Alberti's complex vision of leisure and work from gender categories, Vitullo argues that while *otium* can be a threat to male physical strength and virility, it is also essential to the education of citizens since through the intellectual pursuits of reading and writing provided by leisure time, young men are better equipped to lead their families and succeed through *negotium* in the new mercantile society.

Alberti's ambivalence towards *otium* is then traced back to Roman and Christian texts where it could have a double connotation of slothfulness and indolence, but also tranquility, peace, and serenity. Vitullo concludes by considering Alberti's ambivalence towards *negotium*, seen as a less physical and virile occupation when compared to other professions but also as an essential activity for the well-being of the community.

Villa's contribution discusses the ethical dimension of Alberti's treatise by reading the work from the perspective of classical *oikonomia* (e.g., Aristotle's *Politica* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, Cicero's *De officiis*, Seneca's *Epistulae ad Lucilium* and *De brevitate vitae*) so as to explain an economic discourse that disparages gain, is not focused on productivity, and identifies in the good management of the household a social and political function that benefits the community. Villa also examines two other important concepts of Alberti's work: time and mercantilism. She finds that, for Alberti, a good use of time is not primarily conducive to increased productivity and accumulation of wealth but to the good maintenance and preservation of the patrimony for the future. As for mercantile work, Alberti conceives of it as an activity that brings honor to the individual, the family, and the community. At the same time, however, Alberti's vision reveals a modern conceptualization of work, such as the concept of gain as the result of the extraction of surplus value, and adaptation and flexibility to circumstances as strategies that lead to success. Despite these examples, it is Villa's contention that Alberti's discourse on work and labor occupies a middle position between classical and emerging economic systems. This explains Alberti's focus on the conservation of goods and the avoidance of risk taking, in contrast to the mercantile logic, as well as the appeal of land and agricultural holdings as alternatives and complementary to commerce and trade.

Erminia Ardissino and Lorenzo Sacchini address the evolution of the idea of work and labor in the 17th century. In "Lavorare per la nuova scienza. Galileo, i Lincei, i Galileiani," Ardissino traces the opposition between *otium* and *negotium* in Galileo's work and argues that it is the second term that recur more frequently in the descriptions of his scientific work at the Università di Padova, where he taught math while performing other work to support his two sisters. In 1610, Galileo moves back to Florence and, thanks to the support of his patron Cosimo de' Medici, finds the leisure that *otium* provides. Yet, it is also at this time that Galileo gives shape to the new figure of the modern scientist. Combining the values of *otium* alongside those of *negotium*, he engages in the labors of discovery through abstract speculations as well as in observations and experimentations carried out in natural and social spaces. Just like a modern scientist, Galileo disseminates his own work so as to foster participatory knowledge even at the risk of controversy. In this "esternazione del sapere" Galileo meets the efforts of the Lincei, whose labors implied the active forging of relationships and the creation of networks of exchanges through frequent

travels. Ardissino concludes her essay with a discussion of modern versus traditional science as applied to medicine and evidenced by the correspondence between Giovanni Faber, Federico Cesi, and Marcello Malpighi.

Sacchini's "Dalla solitudine della villa alla conversazione della città. Itinerari dell'ozio in una triade di lezioni accademiche secentesche di Cesare Crispolti," provides an overview of the negative connotations of *otium* in the Seicento, where it is associated with the vice of slothfulness by an entry in *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*. Sacchini further corroborates this evaluation of *otium* with evidence drawn from texts by Tommaso Costo, Alberto Lollio, and Cesare Ra, among others. By contrast, in Cesare Crispolti, a native of Perugia, who pursued a career as a priest and as a lawyer and was the head of the *Accademia degli Insensati*, Sacchini finds a much more nuanced description. Focusing on three of Crispolti's unpublished *Lezioni*, Sacchini argues that *otium* is discussed within the opposition of country and city, following a long tradition that contrasted the bustling urban life of *negotium* with the peace and contemplation of the countryside. However, his *Lezioni* also demonstrate an evolution towards a different and ultimately positive conception of the city while the countryside is increasingly seen as the place where *otium* can lead not only to physical and civic degradation but impairs the acquisition and sharing of knowledge that takes place in the urban spaces of courts and academies.

The volume's third section, *Culture of Work and Labor in the 19th Century*, explores cultural responses to the changed landscape of labor in 19th-century Northern Italy through the fiction of Edmondo De Amicis and Antonio Fogazzaro. In "Prima della FIAT: lavoro e lavoratori, realizzazione e sfruttamento (1869-1908) nella Torino di Edmondo De Amicis," Roberto Risso makes a strong case for the centrality of labor and laborers in De Amicis' works by considering a wide range of texts, including *La vita militare*, *Romanzo di un maestro*, the short stories of *Fra casa e scuola*, *Cuore*, *Primo maggio*, and *La carrozza di tutti*, among others. Bearing witness to the evolution of Italian society from the immediate aftermath of unification to the establishment of the most famous Italian car company, De Amicis depicts a wide range of workers, from the industrial laborers to the teachers, the coachmen, the artisans, and the clerks of a modern society in the making. Risso also follows the many stages of De Amicis's oeuvre and argues that the conservative ideology of his earlier works is tempered in the writer's later years. De Amicis's friendship with Filippo Turati and his familiarity with socialist circles heighten his sensibility towards the plight of the working classes as revealed in his attention to the ills of industrialization (e.g., labor-migration, alcoholism, diseases, work-related accidents, child labor, and malnutrition). Nevertheless, since De Amicis continues to view labor, even in its most exploitative forms, as a means to achieve social progress, Risso comes to the conclusion that his prose does not offer a socialist or a reformist answer to the class struggle between proletarians and industrialists that he represents, ultimately confining his writing to a

“partecipazione empatica, intellettuale e letteraria della realtà contraddittoria del tempo.”

Giulia Brian’s “L’esperienza formativa di Franco Maironi in *Piccolo mondo antico* di Antonio Fogazzaro: ‘Partire, lavorare e soffrire,’” follows the working trajectory of Franco Maironi, the male protagonist of Fogazzaro’s best known novel. Brian begins by drawing a sharp distinction between Franco and his wife Luisa. While Luisa responds to difficult material circumstances by embracing manual work in an embodiment of *negotium*, Franco represents the aristocratic *otium*, an idleness which Fogazzaro emphasizes by surrounding his character with a wide range of workers. Brian then contextualizes this “galleria di lavoratori” within the large scale industrialization of the late 19th century, which Fogazzaro knew well because of his frequent travels to Milan and Turin. Brian also accounts for the influence of Fogazzaro’s circle, which included individuals such as Alessandro Rossi, Fedele Lampertico and Franco Lioy, in sharpening his awareness of the world of 19th-century labor. However, as in a *Bildungsroman*, in and through labor, Franco progressively acquires the sense of duties and responsibilities that come with his role of husband and father. He leaves Valsolda to migrate to Turin, where he becomes a humble translator of the journal *L’opinione* to support his family before finally joining the Piedmontese army, where he will perish in battle.

Section four, *Work and Labor in the 20th Century*, provides an examination of cultural responses to major events in the history of work and labor from unification to the present. The earlier period is the focus of the first three essays by Rhiannon Noel Welch, Giovanna Miceli Jeffries, and Mimmo Cangiano. In “Race and Colonial (Re)productivity in Post-the first three Unification Italy,” Welch unpacks the concept of productivity from the turn of the 19th century to the First World War to reveal an imbricated discourse of labor and biological reproductivity in the debate on the Southern Question, colonialism and emigration. Her main exhibits are parliamentary reports by Francesco Crispi and Leopoldo Franchetti and Pastrone’s *Cabiria* (1914), a silent epic that celebrates the invasion of Libya of 1911 and represents colonial war as life-producing, a means to improve the Italian race as opposed to a confrontation between races. In this sense, the film shares Giovanni Pascoli’s address of 1911, which hails colonialism as a defensive war waged by “la grande proletaria” to secure economic gains through the acquisition of nearby territories, but also mold emigrant Italians into “vital subjects,” that is, “robust, vigorous, hard-working, well-nourished, and (re)productive.”

Miceli Jeffries, in “Darwinismo, machiavellismo e ‘creative destruction’ nella rappresentazione del lavoro e degli affari in Svevo,” offers a most detailed discussion of the historical experience of Svevo in the world of commerce and trade in his native city of Trieste and his narrative transposition in the character of Zeno. More than a reflection of the author’s own experience, however, *La coscienza di Zeno* aligns, without confronting them, the cultures of modern

capitalism and humanism. Miceli Jeffries explores this alignment through an examination of the social Darwinism and Machiavellian realism that traverse the novel. Particularly illuminating is Miceli Jeffries's reading of the ending of *La coscienza*, where the apocalyptic demise of the human species as a result of mankind's technological inventiveness does not lead to an indictment of industrial society from an ethical perspective but to the possibility of a rebirth. In this sense, Svevo's novel illustrates the "fenice economica" of capitalism and the concept of "creative destruction." Theorized by Joseph Schumpeter and known as "Schumpeter's gale," this concept, which harks back to classical Marxist economic theory as elaborated by Adam Smith, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, and Robert Malthus, points to the regenerative forces of capital at the expense of the proletariat.

Whereas in *La coscienza di Zeno* the paradoxes of modern capitalism do not lead to a critique but, rather, to the ironic gaze of the narrator, in Cangiano's discussion of Scipio Slataper ("Nelle pieghe della *Zivilisation*: Scipio Slataper fra Etica e Lavoro"), it becomes a central (if, ultimately, failed) concern. Slataper, explains Cangiano, elaborates an idea of artistic labor and of *Kultur* to overcome the contradictions of bourgeois modernity visible in Trieste, the metropolis of modern *Zivilisation* uneasily poised between the cultural and economic poles of Vienna and Rome. Yet, Slataper responds to the *Krisis* by progressively developing an optimistic, harmonizing view of bourgeois society that, on the eve of Italy's entrance in World War I, led him to embrace reactionary positions.

Simone Giorgino, "Un colletto bianco all'"Inferno": la poesia di Giudici e le utopie dell'Ingegnere Adriano," takes us to the years of the economic miracle through the writings of the poet Giovanni Giudici. Giorgino describes Italy's evolution from a rural society to an industrial one, focusing especially on the years of the boom between 1957 and 1963. He accounts for the relationships between literature and industry before examining Giudici's twenty-five years as an office worker at the Olivetti factory in Ivrea. Although the factory was conceived as a progressive labor environment, the embodiment of an industry-led welfare as "terza via fra capitalismo e socialismo," Giorgino finds that Giudici's poetry does not praise the "capitalismo illuminato" promised by the Olivettis. Alienated from his writing and having become a "poeta-impiegato" because of necessity, Giudici — Giorgino argues — dismantles the Olivetti utopia while foreshadowing an experience common today, when the *otium* of intellectual work is subsumed by the usefulness and productivity required by the *negotium* of capitalist society.

Another major node in the panorama of work and labor of post-War Italy is examined in Paolo Chirumbolo's "*Il maleppeggio*: cronache dell'Italia del lavoro degli anni duemila," which takes us from the turn of the 20th century to jobless, post-industrial, and de-regulated present-day Italy. Focusing on literary responses to our contemporary wasteland, Chirumbolo discusses the emergence

of a literature centered on the impact of globalized neo-liberal capitalism on the lives of individuals and society by examining *il malepeggio — storie di lavori*. Chirumbolo explains that the journal, founded by Lanfranco Caminiti between 2006 and 2007, does not advance an explicit ideological agenda but limits itself to the effort of restoring “la dignità individuale delle persone e dei loro (non) lavori” as illustrated by stories such as Elena Stancanelli’s “Subsidenze,” Christian Raimo’s “Stanze di precari” and “La montagna Bianca” and Lorenza Pieri’s “Tengo famiglia,” among others. Nevertheless, by elaborating on some ideas developed by James Rifkin’s *The Empathic Civilization*, Chirumbolo contends that the contemporary wasteland that is narrated in *il malepeggio* might also establish relationships of affectivity and empathy as the basis from which to rebuild a class consciousness.

Section five, *The Italian Factory on Stage*, examines the response to work and labor in the dramatic genre and provides two case studies of theatrical performances spanning from post-war modernization and the economic miracle to the workers’ social protests of the 1960s and 1970s. Juliet Guzzetta’s “At Work, at Home: Women, Labor, and Laura Curino’s Olivetti Plays,” brings us back to the utopian project of a pro-worker, benevolent and more humane factory that was established in Ivrea by the Olivettis. Guzzetta discusses the experimental *teatro di narrazione* of Laura Curino, especially her 1990s plays *Camillo Olivetti: alle radici di un sogno* and *Adriano Olivetti: il sogno possibile*. Although these plays ostensibly describe the openness of the Olivettis toward new, forward-looking practices of industrial labor, the author illustrates that the pieces do not focus on the Olivetti men, but on Elvira Sacerdoti, the mother of Camillo, and Luisa Revel, Camillo’s wife and Adriano’s mother. In doing so, Curino voices one of the central concerns of *Lotta Femminista*: women’s wage-less labor of reproduction as the extraction of a (free) surplus value that is central to capitalist accumulation.

Andrea Scapolo’s “Mettere in scena il lavoro: la fabbrica, gli operai, Gramsci e il partito nel ‘teatro rivoluzionario’ di Dario Fo e Franca Rame,” provides a historical excursus into the revolutionary years between 1968 and 1977 when intellectual discussions charted the transformation of the “operaio di massa” of Taylorism and Fordism into the “operaio sociale.” Sustained by traditional forms of protests, but also given a theoretical articulation in the revolutionary discourse of “operaismo” articulated by intellectuals such as Mario Tronti and Toni Negri, this transformation is revealed in the theatre of Fo and Rame examined by Scapolo at the intersection of the discourses of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary lefts and in their re-reading of Gramsci’s cultural legacy as established by the PCI.

The sixth section, *Screening Work and Labor in Films and Documentaries*, comprises four essays that study cinematic responses to the issues that the economic boom and the industrialization of the country created in Italy in the post-World War II period. Paola Bonifazio’s “United We Drill: ENI, Films, and

the Culture of Work” opens this section with an analysis of documentary films produced in the post-World War II era. From the premise that most fictional films rarely featured industrial work as a central concern, the author analyzes the educative and programmatic function of state-sponsored and corporate documentaries from the 1950s and 1960s. The goal of these films, besides the promotion of industrial development, was to engage in nation building discourses — following the physical and emotional destruction wrought by the war — by eulogizing the positive influence that industrial work had in furthering familial and political stability, while helping to solve development issues such as those pertaining to the Southern Question. By focusing specifically on the ENI (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi) documentaries *I prigionieri del sottosuolo* and *A Gela qualcosa di nuovo*, Bonifazio highlights the oftentimes paternalistic and sexist perspective that they display in advancing the *missione civilizzatrice* of Italian industrial concerns. On the one hand, these documentaries affirm the power of the energy industry to return the country to economic autarchy, while reestablishing a gendered order to the family that requires the man to be its productive member and the woman to support his efforts. On the other, they suggest that progress in the south, and hence its development, could only be attained through the benevolent (and almost charitable) influx of northern investment.

In “Italiani e lavoro: il cinema di Ermanno Olmi negli anni del *Boom*,” Antonio Daniele discusses the early films of Ermanno Olmi, in particular *Il posto* (1961) and *I fidanzati* (1963), which embody a new attention of Italian cinema toward the social and cultural alienation that the industrial development of the north — especially in Olmi’s own Lombardy — created for generations of workers moving from the countryside into Italy’s urban peripheries. Daniele’s analysis of *Il posto* highlights the director’s attention to urban and work spaces as emblematic of the alienation that the protagonist, Domenico, risks by investing himself fully in the pursuit of an office worker’s career to the detriment of the human relationships that seem instead central to his characterization (especially as it pertains to his relationship with Antonietta / Magali). *I fidanzati* represents instead the evolution of the relationship between worker and workforce in the new industrialized reality of the 1960s. Here, however, as Daniele remarks, work has already destabilized human relationships, since the work transfer of the protagonist to Sicily, in a world where mobility no longer embodies the search for work, but rather the control that work exercises on one’s life, corresponds to difficulties in the relationship with his girlfriend Liliana. In doing so, *I fidanzati* screens the alienation caused to human relationships by Italy’s industrial growth in the 1960s.

William Van Watson sent us the last revision to his essay, “The Obscure Commodity of Desire: The Lure to Labor in Italian Film from the *Dopoguerra* to the *Sorpasso*,” just days before his untimely death. A *tour de force* across five decades of Italian cinema, the essay focuses centrally on the way in which Maurizio Nichetti’s *Ladri di saponette* symbolically contains and summarizes what the author calls the “desire for the commodity as the lure to labor” that

emerges as a theme throughout Italian films dedicated to work, starting with De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* and continuing, chronologically, through movies by Lattuada, Olmi, Monicelli, Gregoretti, Giannetti, Comencini, Wertmüller, and Maselli. Frequently interspersing his filmic analysis with pointed digressions into economic, political and aesthetic theory, Van Watson argues that the economic *boom* of the 1960s, as it is rendered cinematically, testifies to a commodification of desire, through consumerism, that did not lead to the happily-ever-after ending advertised by capitalist interests. On the contrary, as Van Watson's repeatedly points out, it caused a profound alienation in the labor-force that is the result of the exploitation and drudgery of work under capitalism.

The last essay in this section, Carlo Testa's "Goodbye to the Future: Italy's Social and Economic Retreat from Modernity in Luchetti's *Our Life* (2010)," takes an at times ironic, at times bemused look at the phenomenon of "viral capitalism" as it is on display not only in Luchetti's 2010 film, but more broadly in Italian society at large. With *Our Life* as its point of departure, Testa's essay explores the transformation endured by the all-Italian *arte dell'arrangiarsi*, as it is exemplified in the film by generations of unlawful (yet lucrative) construction practices. As the loss of local production sites through the de-industrialization of the West renders untenable the labor structure upon which Italy's economic boom was built, Testa points out the compounding of these issues through *Berlusconismo*: the practice of unproductive cronyism that assigns money and power not based on hard work and industry, but according to an almost regal control of public institution and media channels. Though the author and the film center much of these practices in Italy's construction industry, the portrait they paint is one of devastation and general pessimism toward the changes wrought by global capitalism on the Italian landscape.

Section seven, *Italy's Migrant Work Cultures*, consists of two essays by Fred Gardaphe and Norma Bouchard and Valerio Ferme, respectively, that examine the planetary reach of Italian labor of yesterday and today. Gardaphe's "Italian American Literature and Working-Class Culture" reveals that Italian labor migration across the Atlantic has not only played a fundamental role in the building of the American nation, but has contributed in essential, if not always acknowledged, ways to the shaping of ethnic working class cultures in the United States. As early as the 1900s, thus only a few years after the beginning of the great Italian migration, Arturo Giovannitti was already authoring cogent accounts of the political, social and economic structure of North American capitalism while Luigi Farina's poems were restoring dignity to the lives of working class immigrants. Yet, as Gardaphe's shows, many more writers followed in the stead of Giovannitti and Farina. They include Pietro di Donato and Carlo Marzani as well as a later generation of children and grand-children of immigrants that comprises Mary Bucci Bush, Paola Corso, Valerie Fioravanti, Joseph Torra, Tony Ardizzone, Emilio De Grazia, Thom Tamaro, and Tony Romano, among others.

If the advent of an Italian American Literature testifies to the essential role that labor migration played in the formation of the North American literary canon and working class consciousness during the years of industrial capitalism, Norma Bouchard's and Valerio Ferme's "Narratives of Migrant Labor of Global Capitalism" lead us back to contemporary Italy. An ever growing number of migrants and children of migrants are not only reconfiguring the national labor market but, in a cultural production that ranges from testimonial accounts of lived experience to self-reflexive experimentations with languages, genres, modes, and traditions, these people lay bare the production of subalternity of contemporary globalized capitalism through the exploitative capture of legal and illegal migrant labor force; the differential processes of inclusion of migrant laborers across lines of race, gender, and geographical origin; and the biopolitical apparatus of state control that is presently regulating transnational labor mobility. At the same time, by narrating and often questioning how capitalism changes the ways in which human beings conceive themselves as subjects, these works lead to the subject-ivation of their speakers through the labor of language.

Section eight, *The Work and Workers of Education*, consists of essays by Tom Peterson and Anna Maria Grossi that examine philosophical and literary responses to pedagogical labor, respectively. Peterson's "Gentile, Gramsci and the Labors of Education," provides a brief overview of the history of pedagogy and of the foundational role of Vico's *On The Study Methods of Our Time* (1708-09), before discussing divergent approaches to the philosophy of pedagogy by Giovanni Gentile and Antonio Gramsci. Responding to the well-known limitations of the Casati Law of 1859, which had centralized national education, Gentile and Gramsci developed contrasting philosophical accounts, as illustrated by their differing evaluation of the central concepts of "educazione" and "istruzione."

Grossi's "La fatica di insegnare: i maestri in De Amicis e Mastronardi" examines the narrative work of two writers, who were themselves experts in pedagogy: Edmondo De Amicis and Lucio Mastronardi. In her reading of the figure of the "maestro unico" in De Amicis's *Il romanzo di un maestro* (1890) and Mastronardi's *Il maestro di Vigevano* (1962), Grossi brings to light two significant moments in the cultural history of the Italian education system: the post-unification and the post-republican periods. Her discussion of De Amicis's novel illustrates the challenges of educating a highly illiterate and/or dialect-speaking student population taught by underpaid and often ill-prepared teachers. Just as great, however, are the challenges of the post-war era. If linguistic unification has been achieved, these are also the years of a rapid modernization and of a deepening division between classes that manifest themselves in the in the relationships among pupils, as well as between pupils and their teachers. Grossi concludes her discussion with an overview of yet a third series of challenges, that of the present, when teachers not only face the precariousness of temporary working contracts but also the need to integrate non-Italian speakers.

The last section, *Theorizing the Subject of Post-Fordist Work and Labor*, is devoted to theoretical discussion of two possible critiques of our contemporary, post-Fordist society. Giuseppina Mecchia's "Paolo Virno: From the Language of Labor to the Labor of Language," examines the trajectory of Virno's reflection on language from the late 1970s to the present. A member of the post-workerist movement, Virno was one of the founders of *Potere operaio*, a collective subject of students and workers that engaged in intervention through a vast array of political speech acts. With the suppression of groups such as *Potere operaio*, Virno and other thinkers of the workerist movement reconsidered the relationship between political intervention of the multitudes and language. However, in her examination of Virno's *Convenzione e materialismo* and especially *Quando il verbo si fa carne*, Mecchia finds that Virno's dialogue with American and Continental philosophers of language (e.g., de Saussure, Peirce, Wittgenstein, Benveniste, Chomsky) has led to a meta-historical, self-referential understanding of the linguistic subject of today's information technology so that no examples of multitude-based forms of enunciation can be provided and also, by implication, of socio-political intervention in an ever-more anomic society.

The political agency of the subject in post-Fordist society is also at the center of Andrea Righi's "The Ontological Experience of Absolute Presence: Sebastiano Timpanaro and the Groundwork for a Critique of Late Hyper-Idealism." From the premise that in knowledge-based or biocapitalist society the subject is at serious risk of losing agency in the world of reality, Righi looks back to the work of Sebastiano Timpanaro to outline a materialist critique of our highly speculative, knowledge-based lives, including the claims of total sovereignty that the digital age offers. Following Robert Dombroski, who had identified in the work of Timpanaro "the opportunity to 'return to ideology,'" Righi argues for the relevance of Timpanaro's thought as a tool to dissect post-Fordist models of governmentality that, in Italy, find expression in Berlusconi as well as in the Five Star Movement. Righi also expands his revisiting of Timpanaro to describe two psychotic conditions of the subject of post-Fordist immaterial society. While the compulsive subject responds with "more work, more consumption, more pleasure," the paranoid subject expresses vulnerability and a sense of threat. Yet, in this subject's bewildered response to what is a non-governable exteriority, Righi also locates a symptom of (weak) resistance and the nucleus of a possible critique of the libidinal and technological fetishes promised by cognitive capitalism.

Righi's cautious optimism provides a fitting conclusion to this introduction of the 32nd issue of *Annali d'Italianistica* (2014). Our collaborators, in their investigations of the many aesthetic and philosophical responses of Italian culture to the ever-evolving landscape of labor from the Early Church Fathers to the present, provide a welcoming reminder of the historicity of modes of capitalist accumulation, production, and consumption, and of our social and individual formations as citizens and subjects. More importantly, through their

essays, they foreground the need for new labor-processes, forms of governance and modes of solidarity, including the necessity of preserving the frail but essential balance between *otium* and *negotium*.

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