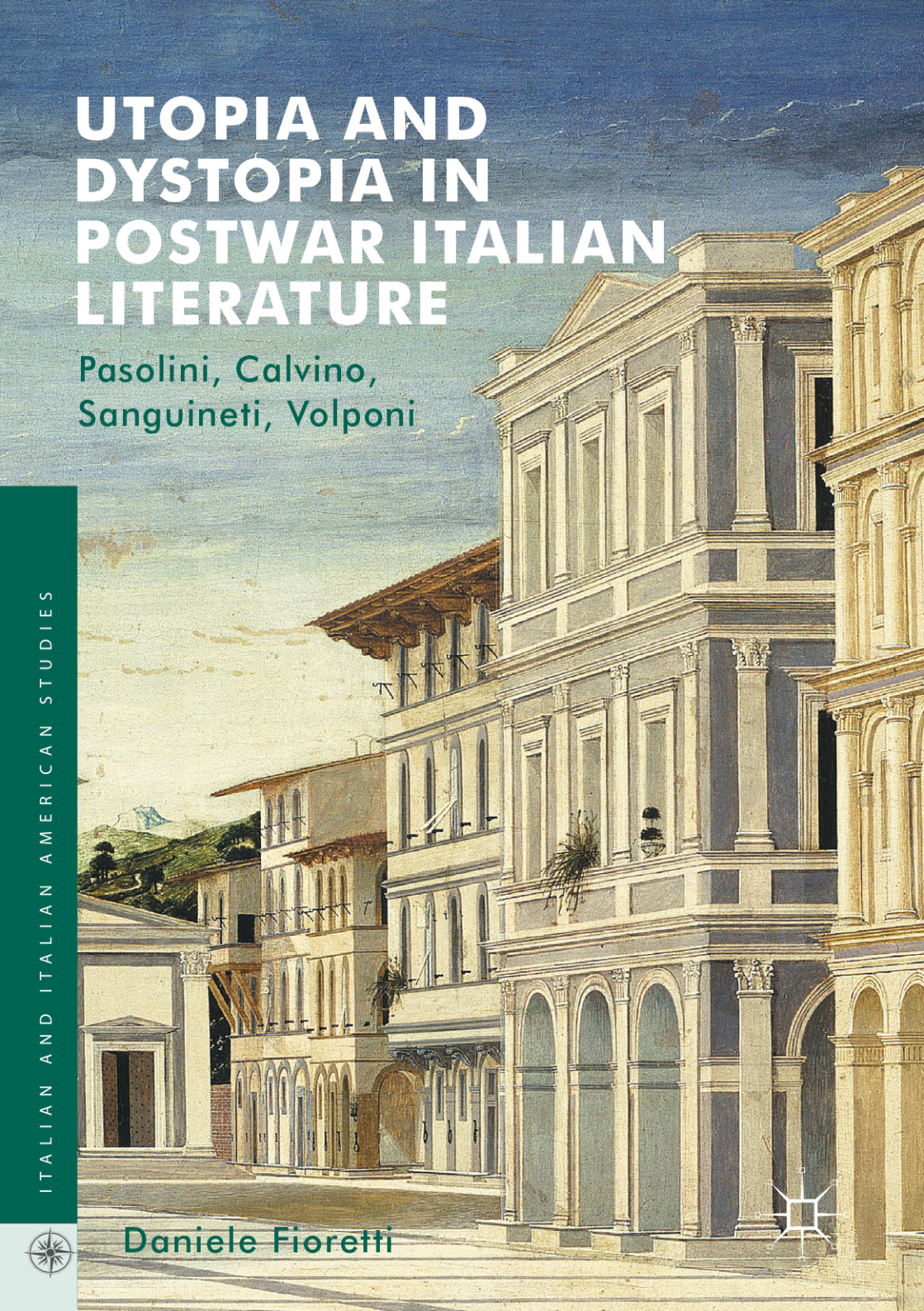
UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA IN POSTWAR ITALIAN LITERATURE

Pasolini, Calvino, Sanguineti, Volponi



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Utopia and Dystopia in Postwar Italian Literature

Pasolini, Calvino, Sanguineti, Volponi

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To my family

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Utopian literature, like any other literary genre, had moments of great prominence and others when it was almost forgotten. After the end of World War II and after two decades of fascist dictatorship, a young generation of poets and writers thought it was time for a regeneration of Italian society. Some imagined a new ideal society while others described a dystopian future often characterized by a nuclear or ecological catastrophe. Very often, during this period, utopia was connected to ideologies, particularly those with leftist perspectives.

This book focuses on four authors who were influenced in some way by Marxism: Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italo Calvino, Edoardo Sanguineti, and Paolo Volponi. All these writers envisioned new societies that could reduce or destroy any form of social inequality—a society where the working class would finally rule. They all felt that they had the duty, as committed intellectuals, to use their literary works to guide the Italian people to reach this goal.

While neorealism was an important social and political movement this book does not address neorealist literature—that has been already analyzed in many critical works. The relevant aspect of neorealism to this book is the intellectual crisis it precipitated. In the mid-1950s, and especially after the publication of Vasco Pratolini's novel *Metello* (1955), all the contradictions of neorealism became evident. Only one year later, in 1956, the Red Army invaded Hungary. Many Italian intellectuals were shocked by this aggression and began to distance themselves from the PCI (Partito

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Comunista Italiano, the Italian communist party) because it did not condemn the Soviet Union for its actions. In addition, Italian society was rapidly changing. The economic boom and the advent of neocapitalism changed Italian society significantly, causing many committed intellectuals to rethink their strategies and modify their points of view. In addition to the utopian tensions in their works, there is evidence of how their views on utopia changed in relation to the social changes in Italian society.

Far from being a simple diversion, utopia represents an essential part of their books, a plan to change not society as a whole, but the way many people looked at society as something 'natural', unchangeable, and undisputable. In order to reach this goal it was not particularly important if utopia was actually feasible. The important thing was to break the automatism of the common thought and to propose new problems instead of simple, unique, and straightforward solutions. For example, authors like Sanguineti or Pasolini, for different reasons and in different ways, changed their views on utopia over the years. Sanguineti completely abandoned utopia after he realized it was not a concretely viable perspective, while Pasolini, disillusioned about the revolutionary potential of the subproletarians, overturned his utopia in the apocalyptic dystopia of *Salò*. Others, like Volponi and Calvino, continued to believe in the possibility of utopia even in the moment of its deepest crisis; instead of abandoning it, they put utopia at the center of their literary works. Volponi in particular did not seem to worry if utopia was difficult—or impossible—to achieve. He kept writing about it, because he believed that to imagine different worlds and different kinds of societies meant to shatter the automatism of the single-minded thinkers who are against any social change. Volponi did not think of utopia as a panacea that can solve any problem. Rather he firmly believed that only trying to imagine different social models opens the field to meaningful discussions.

Why did I start this research? Reviewing the literature on utopia one can find a huge variety of studies dedicated to this topic from philosophical, historical, and sociological perspectives. There is no mention of the huge impact on the ideological implications of utopia. Even in recent years several interesting studies were published on utopian literature, like Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2007) and, in the Italian critical landscape, Francesco Muzzioli's *Scritture della catastrofe* (2007). These texts contain numerous important insights on utopia and dystopia, especially in connection with science fiction. However, they both take into consideration a

wide, transnational landscape of texts instead of focusing on a specific national literature. This book is intended to fill a gap, focusing specifically on Italian literature between the 1950s and the 1990s, that is, between the economic boom and the *Anni di piombo* (years of the bullets, the decade of Italian political terrorism). Within the study of Italian literature, scholars have already underscored the presence of utopian themes in all the authors analyzed in this book. What is missing is a comprehensive study that explores the similarities and differences of these authors' views of utopia. I chose these specific writers because I consider them representative of the different positions of the utopian debate in the second half of the twentieth century.

This work is structured in seven chapters. The first chapter is constituted by this introduction. The second chapter is dedicated to the theory of utopia, starting with the definition and the history of this concept. This research does not focus on utopia as a simplistic escapist fantasy that allows the reader to dream about a land of abundance, like the medieval Land of Cockaigne, where milk and honey flow in the rivers instead of water, and food is always available for free, without the need to work. Neither does this book look at utopia as a generic 'impulse' or push as the one described by Ernst Bloch in *The Spirit of Utopia* (*Geist der Utopie*, 1919) that could be found in every aspect of the society. Such an extension of the term would lead to a dilution of the concept itself. This book explores utopia as a social project and as a literary genre, focusing mostly on the books produced in the nineteenth and twentieth century, and taking into consideration, among others, philosophers like Charles Fourier, Claude De Saint-Simon, and Karl Marx.

Utopias were very popular in the course of the nineteenth century, thanks to a spirit of general optimism that evolved from the industrial revolution and the new scientific and technological discoveries. In the course of the twentieth century this optimistic spirit tended to decline significantly, not only because of the crisis of the Hegelian idea of history as a teleological process aimed at a specific goal (that for Hegel was the development of the spirit), but also because of the shock caused by the world conflicts and by the impact of modern technologies on warfare, including the atomic bomb. It is not by chance that after World War II, and throughout the Cold War, there was an impressive resurgence of dystopia in literature, often based on the threat of a nuclear conflict that could annihilate the entire human race. However, dystopias and utopias are strongly connected. Dystopia is nothing but the complete reversal of utopia. Dystopian writers describe the destruction of the world in order

to preventing it from happening by inducing changes of mind in their readers. The writer is a critic of the society, and the literary text becomes a quasi-apotropaic mechanism intended to ward off the disaster that it describes.

Another aspect considered in the second chapter is the relationship between utopia and ideology. It is useful to remember that when the term "ideology" was proposed for the first time by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy it just meant "science of ideas"; it was Napoleon Bonaparte who, for the first time, used it in a negative sense, as a synonym of "revolutionary." Broadening this critique ideology received "a sense of abstract, impractical or fanatical theory" (Williams 1985, 126). The starting point was the works of Marx which had a relevant influence on Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* (*Ideologie und Utopie*, 1929), and on Paul Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986). In both of these books the concepts of ideology and utopia are combined by virtue of a common characteristic, the incompatibility with the laws that rule historical and political reality. Other thinkers that are taken into consideration in this study are Theodor W. Adorno, Jean Baudrillard, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben.

The chapters are organized thematically from utopia as a return to a mythical past (Pasolini) through the ideological crisis that Calvino faces in the course of the 1960s, to the first appearance of dystopia in Sanguineti's *Laborintus*, to end with the industrial utopia of Paolo Volponi. While on the surface it appeared that Volponi was disillusioned about utopia, in texts like *Le mosche del capitale* (*The Flies of the Capital*) and *Il silenzio campale* (*The Silence of the Battlefield*), it is clear that utopia remained a core issue that could not be given up, and that was more and more vital and fruitful when it was opposed by the political and economic status quo.

The decision to write about these authors is justified by specific motivations. First of all Pasolini, Calvino, Sanguineti, and Volponi are among the most representative personalities in Italian literature and culture in the second half of the twentieth century, and all of them showed in their works a deep interest in the theme of utopia; but the choice is also motivated by reasons of literary historiography. The twentieth century in Italy was the century of literary journals. Through working on these journals intellectuals met, expressed their opinion, formed groups, published their manifestos and their works. Therefore, the study of these literary journals is extremely important in order to understand the Italian literary context. All the authors in this book were deeply involved

with at least one of the most important literary journals published in the second half of the twentieth century: *Officina*, *il verri*, and *il menabò*.

A common element in all these journals, active between the 1950s and the 1960s was the effort to renovate the Italian literary landscape. Change became a necessity after the publication of Vasco Pratolini's novel *Metello* (1955). Far from being a masterpiece, *Metello* became famous for the heated discussion it precipitated about the limits of literary neorealism. Initially, the novel received positive reviews, especially from the critics who were aligned with the PCI, like Mario Alicata and Carlo Salinari. Carlo Muscetta critiqued *Metello* saying that Pratolini failed in the attempt to create a "typical" character as defined by Gyorgy Lukács—a character that is representative of an entire social class. In order to avoid the risk of transforming *Metello* into a socialist hero like the ones in the Russian propaganda novels, Muscetta wrote that Pratolini created a character that was morally questionable and politically inexistent. The real drawback of *Metello*, according to another critic, Rino Dal Sasso, was that the book was outdated. He wrote that *Metello* was a novel that looked like it was written in 1890 or in 1910, thus incapable of reflecting the dynamics of the 1950s. It is evident that the critics at that time preferred to discuss the thematic aspects and the ideological implications of a book, instead of analyzing it from a literary point of view.[1] A change of perspective was necessary, causing a new generation of critics and writers to give birth to new journals: *Officina*, *il verri*, *il menabò*, and *Nuovi Argomenti*.

The first issue of *Officina* was published in May 1955, in the middle of the debate about *Metello*. The editors of the journal were Pier Paolo Pasolini, Francesco Leonetti, and Roberto Roversi. Other intellectuals who published articles regularly on *Officina* were Franco Fortini, Angelo Romanò, and Gianni Scalia. This first series—only 600 copies—was published by the Libreria Antiquaria Palmaverde, owned by Roversi; it was financed by the editors themselves. Essentially *Officina* was a journal aimed at élite readers, made and distributed with artisan-like, preindustrial criteria. It was a publication that, as Giancarlo Ferretti wrote, was still inspired by a secret aristocratic and intellectual spirit.[2] The first series ended in April 1958. The second one, published by a national publishing house, Bompiani, lasted only for two issues, between March and June 1959. The journal ended as the result of the heated debate that followed the publication of an epigram, *A un papa*, written by Pasolini, which contained a harsh critic to the pope.[3] From a theoretical point of view, *Officina* was against its predecessors, neorealist writers, and hermetic

poets. Neorealism, for the editors of *Officina*, was too outdated and therefore incapable of positively contributing to further developing Italian literature. The editors of *Officina* also criticized hermetic poetry but, unlike the New Avant-garde, they maintained a dialogue with them; in fact they gave space to one of the most famous of these poets, Mario Luzi, who published some of his poems under the title *Conversazione durante il viaggio* (*Conversation during the journey*) in the journal.[4]

Officina focused on Pasolini's *neosperimentalismo* (neo-experimentalism), which espoused innovating Italian literature without denying the tradition, particularly looking at the model of Giovanni Pascoli's linguistic experimentalism. In other words, *Officina*'s new literature could only come from a reinterpretation of the tradition. Not by chance, the piece that opens the first issue of the journal was an essay on Pascoli written by Pasolini himself. According to Pasolini, it is from Pascoli's plurilingualism (that is, from the insertion of an instrumental language in poetry) that neo-experimental poetry should start. In fact, in *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (*The Ashes of Gramsci*), Pasolini revisited the traditional form of narrative poetry in tercets that Pascoli took from Dante. Revolution, for the editors of *Officina*, could not be separated from a critical reinterpretation of the past.

All of the authors who are present in this book wrote for *Officina*. Calvino, for example, published the novel *I giovani del Po* in *Officina* between February 1957 and April 1958. Calvino decided not to publish the novel as a book, because he thought it was a failure. He was not satisfied with his depiction of the working-class characters in *I giovani del Po*. Nonetheless, Calvino decided that even a failed novel could represent a contribution to the discussion on industrial literature, because it could help other writers to avoid the same mistakes he made.[5] Here we can see how a literary journal like *Officina* was used not only as a vehicle to promote literary works, but also as a space of confrontation to foster critical debates.

Paolo Volponi also published in *Officina*. He was a close friend of Pasolini, who had a strong influence on the development on Volponi's poetry, especially in the transition from hermetic poetry to a more narrative dimension.[6] Volponi published two poems in *Officina, La vita* (no. 4, December 1955) and *Le catene d'oro* (no. 8, February 1957). But Volponi was also important among the contributors of *Officina*, because he was the first one who noticed the limit of the journal. He saw it as distant from the world of the industry that, in the years of post-war industrial development, had become an inescapable perspective to understand the Italian society.

As Volponi wrote in 1975 in the essay *"Officina" prima dell'industria*, the culture of the journal was essentially rural and preindustrial. Its editors were not versed in economics or sociology and did not know how to intervene in the new, dynamic, industrial landscape.[7]

Edoardo Sanguineti also published some poems in *Officina*, but he had a very conflicted relationship with the journal and, in particular, with Pasolini. In fact, their contrasting views on poetry pitted them against one other. The debate started in 1957 when *Officina* published two poems from Sanguineti's second book of poems, *Erotopaegnia*, together with other texts written by authors connected to the New Avant-garde like Alberto Arbasino and Elio Pagliarani, under the title *Piccola antologia neosperimentale* (*Small Neo-experimental anthology*). Pasolini's introduction to this collection, entitled *La libertà stilistica* (*The Stylistic Freedom*), was very critical of these poets. In fact, in this preface Pasolini drew a line between the "real" neo-experimentalism—the one pursued by the editors of *Officina*—and the "fake" one, which was merely a reproposition of the poetic of early twentieth-century avant-garde, with a particular reference to Eliot and Pound.[8] Sanguineti did not appreciate Pasolini's comments and accused Pasolini of having published these texts only to set a trap for him. He responded with an ironic poem, entitled *Una polemica in prosa* (*A Debate in Prose*) that was also published in *Officina*. Instead of accepting the definition of imitator of the early twentieth-century avant-garde, Sanguineti boasted to be "un passo più in là /dei miei contemporanei /(Pasolini non escluso)" [a step ahead /of my contemporaries /(Pasolini not excluded)] (*Officina* 2004, 452–453). Pasolini replied that Sanguineti's accusation was deeply unfair, since *La libertà stilistica* was only partially related to Sanguineti's poems.[9] Nevertheless, a deep enmity emerged between the two authors, and between neo-experimentalism and New Avant-garde. In the course of its short life, *Officina* was a central point of reference, not only for the authors examined in this book, but also for the debate in the Italian literary landscape during the 1950s.

Another important literary journal, *il verri*, began in Milan in 1956. The founder and director was Luciano Anceschi, a critic that was already famous for his book *Autonomia ed eteronomia dell'arte* (*Autonomy and Heteronomy of the Art*, 1936), and for two important anthologies of poetry he edited: *Lirici nuovi* (*New Lyrics*, 1943) and *Linea lombarda* (*Lombard Line*, 1952). Anceschi was one of the first intellectuals who realized that hermetic poetry in the 1950s had entered into an irreversible crisis. He decided to create a journal that welcomed new ideas and

perspectives that then became the testing ground for the Italian New Avant-garde. Instead of relying, like *Officina*, on the tradition of the Italian historicism (De Sanctis, Croce, and Gramsci), *il verri* welcomed the most recent trends of the European culture: phenomenology, structuralism, psychoanalysis, and anthropology. Ideologically, the position of the authors of the New Avant-garde wavered between a Neo-Dadaism that refused any political commitment (Angelo Guglielmi, Nanni Balestrini), and a critical Marxism inspired by the Frankfurt School (Sanguineti in particular).

The contributors of *il verri*—Sanguineti, Umberto Eco, Alfredo Giuliani, Antonio Porta, and others—were viewed with hostility by the other intellectuals. Pasolini considered them his enemies, and Calvino had a heated debate with Angelo Guglielmi, published on the pages of the journal *il menabò*. Many accused the authors of the New Avant-garde to be incomprehensible and sometimes meaningless. Actually, as we anticipated, there were many different currents of thought in the New Avant-garde. Nanni Balestrini, for example, wrote poems made from a collage of different sources, sometimes making use of computers. These poems were designed to eliminate any communicative intention and to deny any possibility of meaning. Others, like Edoardo Sanguineti, more influenced by surrealism, produced poems and narrative texts where the traditional logic of the narration was replaced by an uncanny, oneiric process. In both cases these different approaches had the common intention of rejecting the language of the tradition and a pronounced emphasis on the formal aspect of the work of art. Since in literature the formal aspect of the work of art is represented by language, if society were to be changed artists should start from a radical critique of the common everyday language, imbued with the prejudices of the traditional bourgeois culture.

Regardless of the contrasts, it is important to underscore that both *il verri* and *Officina* represented two different answers to the same problem—the crisis of neorealist narrative and hermetic poetry. Even from their opposing fronts, both neo-experimentalism and New Avant-garde were in search of new ways of expression.[10] New Avant-garde, through *il verri*, had the important effect of renewing the stagnant cultural landscape in Italy, also influencing other authors such as Volponi who never were a part of New Avant-garde.

The third journal that is important for this study is *il menabò*. Thanks to the intellectual openness of Elio Vittorini this journal mediated between *Officina* and *il verri* by giving space to both neo-experimentalism and New Avant-garde. The first issue of this journal, directed by Vittorini and Calvino, was published in 1959. Between 1959 and 1967 *il menabò*

published 10 issues, each dedicated to a specific theme. The first issues were dedicated to neorealism, war narratives, and southern writers. Starting with the fourth issue (1961), the journal started to discuss topics more connected to the contemporary literary debate, like industrial narrative and the relationship between literature and industry. In his introduction to the issue, Vittorini emphasized that the Italian culture was still outdated by expressing his dissatisfaction with the texts published in the issue. Unlike Pasolini with the *Piccola antologia neosperimentale*, Vittorini's intention was not to discredit those contributions. On the contrary, he was pushing for a broader discussion, and calling for a new direction of literary research. Basically, Vittorini complained about the fact that the industrial literature had not been able to renew its form together with its content, therefore it remained limited by naturalism.[11] According to Vittorini, a new social phenomenon required a new literature and new forms, like the ones expressed by the neo-experimentalists of *Officina*. In fact, *il menabò* perpetuated the energies generated by *Officina* after the end of that journal. Many intellectuals who came from *Officina* (Pasolini, Volponi, Leonetti, Fortini, Roversi, and Scalia) collaborated with *il menabò*. Volponi, for example, published the long poem *L'Appennino contadino* (*The Rural Apennine*) in the second issue; Pasolini's poem *Le belle bandiere* (*The Beautiful Flags*) appeared in *il menabò* 6 in 1963. At the same time, Vittorini's journal opened its doors to authors coming from the New Avant-garde. This is particularly evident in the fifth issue, published in 1962 (the year before the creation of the Gruppo 63), which contained the essay *Del modo di formare come impegno sulla realtà* (*On the Way of Shaping as a Commitment towards Reality*) by Umberto Eco, Elio Pagliarani's *La ragazza Carla* (*The Girl Carla*), an excerpt from a novel, and some poems written by Sanguineti. Vittorini was interested in the New Avant-garde movement because, as in neo-experimentalism, he saw an attempt to overcome the stalemate of the Italian culture. Only a true attempt to face the economic and social reality of neocapitalism could bring Italian literature out of the quagmire of naturalism.

Vittorini's interest in the New Avant-garde was not shared by the other editor of *il menabò*, Italo Calvino. In fact, in *il menabò* 2 (1960) Calvino published the essay *Il mare dell'oggettività* (*The Sea of the Objectivity*) where he, polemically, disassociated from what he called the "visceral trend" of the avant-garde, and in particular from Samuel Beckett and Alain Robbe-Grillet, who were two of the main sources of inspiration for the New Avant-garde. In 1962 he also published an essay entitled *La Sfida*

al labirinto (*The Challenge to the Labyrinth*) in *il menabo* 5, where he criticized the French *Ecole du regard* and the informal painting (Burri, Fautrier) and, implicitly, the Italian New Avant-garde as well. Calvino asserted that he stood for a literature that represented a challenge, and not a surrender, to the labyrinth, where the image of the labyrinth stood for the annihilation of every possible meaning and the renouncing of every possibility of interpretation of the reality.[12]

Finally, we cannot forget another important literary journal, *Nuovi Argomenti*, founded in 1953 by Alberto Carocci and Alberto Moravia. This journal, since its foundation and at least until the mid-1960s, was strongly influenced by Marxism: in the first number appeared Moravia's survey on Arts and Communism and an introduction on Marx and Engels' writings on aesthetics written by Gyorgy Lukács. *Nuovi Argomenti* focused mostly on narrative, since its aim was to examine the Italian society not from a lyrical, but from an objective point of view. If compared to the other journals examined so far, *Nuovi Argomenti* had a different approach to literature. Instead of proposing new literary trends, like *Officina* and *il verri*, this journal was characterized by surveys and questionnaires on different topics, like the nine questions on Stalinism, the eight questions on literary criticism, and the ten questions on neocapitalism and literature. *Nuovi Argomenti* also dedicated monographic issues to the international political landscape: the situation in America and in China, the war in Algeria, and others. Only two of the writers examined in this book wrote on this journal. Calvino, who published in *Nuovi Argomenti* his short novel *La nuvola di smog* and his *Diario Americano*, and Pasolini: in fact, the first poem published in the journal was Pasolini's *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (*The Ashes of Gramsci*) in 1956. Pasolini also became one of the directors in 1966.

This brief analysis shows the important role these authors played in the cultural debate of post-neorealism. It also shows the complex, but essential role, played by the aforementioned literary journals. *Officina, il verri*, and *il menabò* all had their origin in the crisis of neorealist prose and hermetic poetry, and each of them tried to find a possible way out. All the authors in this study developed a personal image of utopia which will be examined in the next chapters. Their varied perspectives provide deep insight into the complex landscape of these journals through the eyes of the protagonists of this history. By examining how Pasolini, Calvino, Sanguineti, and Volponi reflected on the same problems and interacted with each other it becomes evident how their different opinions and

backgrounds and their different points of view really shaped the discussion about what utopia represented in the context of the second half of the twentieth century.

The third chapter analyzes the works of Pasolini, who was a very prolific and eclectic artist: he wrote poetry, novels, theatrical plays, and directed movies. This chapter focuses mostly on Pasolini's poetry, starting from *La meglio gioventù* (*The Best of Youth*) through *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (*The Ashes of Gramsci*), and *Poesia in forma di rosa* (*Poem in the Shape of a Rose*), with a reference to more recent collections like *Trasumanar e organizzar* (*To Transhumanize and to Organize*) and *La nuova gioventù* (*The New Youth*). It also explores the novels *Ragazzi di vita* (*The Ragazzi*) and *Una vita violenta* (*A Violent Life*) and some movies, in particular from *Accattone* to *La sequenza del fiore di carta* (*The Sequence of the Paper Flower*). Among the writers in this book Pasolini is the first author discussed because he was more connected with the Italian literary tradition, the symbolism of Pascoli and D'Annunzio and with the hermetic generation of the 1930s. Pasolini's work is structured around some themes that are sometimes in conflict against one other: on the one hand innocence and memory (in one word, passion), and on the other hand political commitment and ideology. Not by chance the first collection of essays published by Pasolini was entitled *Passione e ideologia* (1960). These two terms are in a constant dialectical tension that never find a synthesis or a resolution. Pasolini is very clear about it in the note that closes the book: if not completely adversative, the conjunction "e" (and) is for the author at least disjunctive, it suggests a chronological relationship: "'Prima passione *e poi* ideologia', o meglio 'Prima passione, *ma poi* ideologia'" ('First the passion *then* ideology', or better 'First the passion, *but then* ideology') (Pasolini 1238).

The concept of utopia in Pasolini is centered on the idea of the lower-class people as "innocent" subjects. The Friulian day laborers, the subproletarians, and later the people who lived in the so-called Third World, represented for Pasolini the repository of an original "grace" and natural innocence. They were not yet ruined by the capitalistic progress and by the petit bourgeois culture. Pasolini's utopia was therefore originally pre-capitalistic and inspired by the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau. As Pasolini stated, it was a pre-Christian utopia because the lowest class remained untouched by the Christian spirit and, in particular, by the concept of original sin. This ideal in Pasolini got mixed with Marxism. He thought that, after the economic boom the working class lost its revolutionary power, therefore only the subproletarians represented the true revolutionary class. Nonetheless, despite his Marxist ideals, Pasolini was not the typical

Gramscian "intellettuale organico" (a bourgeois intellectual that works for and with the proletarians). On the contrary, he was painfully aware that, as a bourgeois, he would never be able to identify completely with the lower class. Pasolini believed that only the poor people had sound, upright principles, because they were untainted by the corruption that characterized the bourgeois culture. He was conscious that as an artist and intellectual, he was only able to understand and appreciate the naivety of the subproletarians because he was not one of them. According to Pasolini, the role of the bourgeois intellectual was to enlighten the subproletarians of their social position. Yet, there was an aporetic aspect of Pasolini's thought: the subproletarians were innocent, but the only way to make them conscious of their social position was to destroy this blissful state of ignorance. If they did not achieve social awareness they would never be rebellious. But, if they became aware they would lose their innocence and their role as an alternative to the status quo. This contradiction became more and more problematic in Pasolini's works in the course of the 1960s, until it caused the collapse of his own utopian system, followed by an abjuration of his past works and the condemnation of those people that he considered innocent and "sacred." The poems of *La nuova gioventù* and the triumph of evil in *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (*Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*) remain as witnesses of an insoluble crisis.

The fourth chapter considers the narrative production of Italo Calvino. His cultural and political development were strongly influenced by his experience as a partisan in the Resistance movement. That involvement led him to join the Italian communist party (PCI) at the end of the Second World War. At least in the first part of his career as a writer, this experience caused Calvino, to identify utopia with Marxism. The role of the intellectual was pivotal in his utopia, because she/he was supposed to act as a moral guide for the society, and her/his works should help form the new democratic ruling class. For example, this is the ideological message in *Il barone rampante* (*The Baron in the Trees*). This colorful and apparently lighthearted novel is essentially a symbolic/allegoric text in which the protagonist, the baron Cosimo Piovasco di Rondò, like a bourgeois intellectual, is able to help the peasants because of his wider perspective that is the consequence of his education and privileged status.

The Hungarian crisis in 1956 forced Calvino, like many other leftist intellectuals, to rethink his role as an engaged intellectual and, eventually, to quit the PCI. Nonetheless, Calvino never gave up utopia, nor his rationalistic perspective which were strongly influenced by the ideals of