

I FEEL A CITY.... THE SENSIBILITY OF PIER PAOLO PASOLINI ABOUT THE CONSERVATION OF ASSETS, PLACES AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES OF THE PEOPLES

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*Cries that which mutate, even
to become better. The light
of the future does not cease for a single moment
to wound us [1].*

Premise

After the liberation of Italy from Nazifascist regime, and especially between the mid '50s and early '60s, there was a great industrial and economic development called as "economic boom". In those years a great source of speculation was made at the expense of the landscape and of historic centers, with the demolition of entire historical areas, construction of new buildings of low architectural, structural and material quality with resulting in disfigurement of the environment in the name of progress and economic well-being.

Armenia, after independence from the former Soviet Union, and after a period of dramatic economic crisis of '90s, in recent years has been experiencing a phenomenon of "progress" similar to that lived in Italy after the Second World War. Armenia is, in its way, and with all the contradictions typical of this condition, experiencing its "economic boom" and committing the same mistakes made in Italy about fifty years ago.

Pier Paolo Pasolini, uncomfortable intellectual of great importance for Italian culture (but not only to, remembering, for example, the appeal did to UNESCO for the salvation of the Sana'a city in Yemen), was one of the few opponents to the changes in the name of alleged progress understood as a cancellation of the various manifestations of the historical memory of a People. Only after his death it became clear of his reasons, but in the meantime, much has been irreparably compromised.

It is therefore considered useful to disclose, also in Armenia, his thoughts so that we realize the great harm that are doing daily, in the name of progress and modernization of the country, but at detriment of environmental and architectural widespread heritage.

Because the problem, even in Armenia, is not only to save the monuments but to save the entire historical architectural and environmental texture of a nation.

Even that of nineteenth century and that of the communist era in Armenia that politically, in a way, has analogies with the Italian fascist past.

I wrote a similar paper in Italy for the first time in 1995 and then in 2007 [3, 4].

Today, more than ever, the dealt topics are of relevance also in Armenia and in other developing Countries.

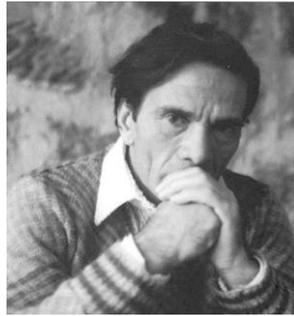


Fig. 1. Pier Paolo Pasolini

I feel a city...

I feel a city: the city of Orte.

I mean, practically I have chosen as the theme, the shape of a city, the profile of a city.

Here, what I would say is this: if I make a shot that before it showed the town of Orte in its stylistic perfection, that is, as an absolute perfect shape. Just I move the camera and behold, the shape of the city, the profile the city, the city's architectural mass is spoil, is defaced by something of extraneous: the house that you see on the left, can you see it? (...)

Many times I went to shoot out Italy, in Morocco, Persia, Eritrea and many times I had the problem to shoot a scene in which I could see a city in its entirety, in its entirety.

How many times have I suffered and blasphemed because this drawing, this absolute purity of the shape of the city was ruined by something modern, some foreign body that had nothing to do with this form of the city, with the profile of the city that I chose.

We are now in front of Orte from another point of view. There is the usual blue-brown haze of the great Northern Renaissance painting.

If I do a frame, I see a total it even more perfect than one before.

That is, the shape of the city is in its highest perfection, but if I panoramic from left to right what I said before, it is even more serious. In fact the city, from this point of view, far right, it ends with a magnificent aqueduct, on that brown ground, and immediately attacked the aqueduct there are other modern homes, I do not say horrible-looking but extremely middling, poor, unimaginative, no invention, in short social housing, which are extremely necessary, do not say no, but there are another disturber of the perfection of the form of the town of Orte like the house we've seen before.

Now what is it that gives me so much trouble, I would say almost a kind of pain, offend, anger: the presence of those social house, that however it there must be, if anything, the problem was to build them in another part, to program to build them somewhere else.

So what is it that offends me in them, is the fact that they belong to another world, have stylistic characteristics completely different from those of the ancient town of Orte, and the mix between the two annoys, is a crack, a disturbance the shape and style.

This perhaps I suffer in a special way, not only because I have a sense of aesthetics perhaps exaggerated, excessive, of "beautiful soul" but also because I worked so hard on historical films in which this problem was precisely a practical problem. Because this is not only an Italian but is a defect of all over the world by now, especially in the third world.



Fig. 2. View of Orte city



Fig. 3. Photo from the RAI TV video [5] of Orte. At bottom left the new building that for Pasolini is a break of the historical continuity

For example, in Persia, where there is a regime completely different from ours, where there is a kind of Empero ther Shah, the same things happen there, maybe even worse: I can think of a beautiful city that is called Jask on the Persian Gulf near the desert, a wonderful city because all the city had an old ventilation system, of two or three thousand years ago and it was remained intact.

Were little columns that were gathered up the wind and did enter into the city. So the city's skyline was dominated by these species of fans that seemed a bit of archaic Greek or Egyptian little temples, in short, a wonderful thing.

Well this town when I got there it was destroyed, as if there had been a bombing. The Shah made destroy to prove to his subjects, his people, that Persia was a modern country, which was advancing etc.etc.

But this also happens in countries exactly the opposite of Persia, in Communist countries: the State of Aden, nell'Aden the south where the government is even a group of extremists communist.

Well there is an ancient city on the sea, which is called Al Mukalla, this city had, towards the mainland, a beautiful door, gigantic, of granite, white as the rest of the city.

Now, since it also in the city of Al Mukalla a little traffic had increased, after the liberation of the state of Aden from Emirs, there was some more van and the door was narrow, what have they done?

They blew up it, and they were proud to have blasted this wonderful city door.They also said with great pride, "the revolution has liberated Al Mukalla by this encumbrance of the past."

Without speaking of Sanaa, that wonderful city of northern Yemen, placed on the desert as a kind of rustic Venice and who are already destroying, already have almost finished to destroying all the walls that surrounded it and to which gave her form with the absoluteness wonderful of ancient cities.

Or in Nepal that actually is still very much intact, especially the city of Bhadgaon is still almost as it was three thousand years ago.

But Kathmandu is already virtually destroyed as a form, remain the monuments, but are not the monuments the problem, that are easy to save, the entire shape of the city is difficult to save.

Therefore, this is a problem that arises in all countries of the world.

Of course, what most unsettle me and hurts me is that this happens in Italy.

Now, about the town of Orte, I would add one thing: since I have chosen as the theme of my argument the form of the city, I would like to point out that the shape of the city manifests itself, it appears, is revealed when compared with a natural backdrop.

For example, the shape of the town of Orte appears as such because on top of this brown hill, devoured by the autumn, with this haze in front of and against the gray sky.

Now those houses that I mentioned before, those social housing, what come to disturb? They come especially to upset at the relationship between the shape of the city and the nature.

The problem of the shape of the city, which is the problem of the salvation of the nature that surrounds the city, are a unique problem.

But always arises the problem of respecting the natural border between the shape of the city and the surrounding nature.

Now the case of the town of Orte is a case still very beautiful, the panorama is still pretty much perfect, apart from this defect, as I have already mentioned.

But if about Orte we can talk only of minor damage, as far as regards the general situation in Italy, the forms of Italian cities in the Italian nation, the situation is definitely irremediable and catastrophic.

The road on which we walk, this disconnected and ancient paved, it is nothing, it's almost nothing, it is a humble thing, you cannot even compare with some wonderful artwork of the Italian tradition.

Still, I think that this road of nothing, so humble, is to be defended with the same fury, with the same good will, with the same rigor with which it defends itself a work of art by a great author.

Just like you have to defend the heritage of anonymous folk poetry, like the poetry of author, such as the poetry of Dante, Petrarch, and so on.

And so, the point where this road leads, this ancient city door of Orte, this too is almost nothing, are simple city walls, the ramparts of a so gray color that in reality no one would beat with rigor, with anger to defend this thing.

And I have instead chosen to defend exactly this.

When I say that I chose to talk about the shape of the city, the structure of the city, the city skyline, I exactly wanted to say this: I want to defend something that is not ratified, not encoded, no one defends.

That which is the work, so to speak, of the people, of the whole history of the people of a city, of a multitude of nameless men but they have worked in an era that has produced the most extreme fruits, the most absolute, in author's work art.

And is this that is not felt, because if you speak with anyone immediately he agree with you in having to defend the work of art of an author, a monument, a church, a bell tower, a bridge, a ruin whose value town is well established, but no one realizes that instead what must be defended is this anonymous, this past anonymous, this unnamed past, this popular past.

Here we are in front of the structure, the form, the profile of another city steeped in a kind of gray lagoon light although there is a beautiful Mediterranean vegetation: it is Sabaudia.

How much we laughed, we intellectuals, about the regime's architecture, on the cities as Sabaudia.

Yet now, looking at this city, we experience a feeling totally unexpected. Its architecture has nothing unreal, of ridiculous.

Over the years has meant that this architecture, even if fascist, assume a character, so to speak, between the metaphysical and realistic.

Metaphysical in a sense truly European of the word: that is reminiscent of De Chirico's [painter] metaphysical works.

Is realistic because, even from afar, you feel that there cities are made, as they say a little rhetorically, at "human scale".

We feels that inside there are families formed in a regular manner, of human persons, living beings complete, whole, full, in their humility.

How do we explain such a miraculous thing?

A city ridiculous, Fascist, suddenly it seems so lovely.

We have to examine the question.

That is, Sabaudia was created by the regime, there is no doubt.

Actually it do not have anything of fascist, if not some external characters.

So I think this: that fascism, fascist regime, it was, in conclusion, not more than a group of criminals in power and this group of criminals in power actually could not do anything.

It was not been able to affect, not even remotely to sculpt, the reality of Italy.



Fig. 4. Historical photo of Sabaudia city



Fig. 5. Giorgio de Chirico (1888 - 1978), Piazza d'Italia, oil canvas, 1964

So Sabaudia, although ordered by the fascist regime according to certain criteria regionalist-aesthetic-academic character, does not find its roots in the regime who ordered it, but it find its roots in that reality that fascism dominated tyrannically but that it could not scratch.

That is, it is the reality of an Italy provincial, rustic, paleoindustrial, and so on that produced Sabaudia and not fascism.

Now, instead, the opposite happens.

The regime is a democratic regime, but that acculturation, that approval that fascism has failed absolutely to get, the power of today, that is the power of the consumer society instead, is able to get perfectly, destroying the particular realities, removing reality to the various ways of being men that Italy had produced historically in so much differentiated way.

Therefore, this acculturation is destroying, in fact, Italy and then I can certainly say that the real fascism is precisely this power of the consumer society that is destroying Italy.

This happened so quickly that, in the end, we did not realize it.

All happened in the last five, six, seven, ten years.

It been a sort of nightmare in which we saw around us destroy, disappear Italy and now awakening us, perhaps, from this nightmare, and looking us around, we realize that there is nothing more to be done [5].

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