

THE 'SOUTHERN QUESTION'... AGAIN

Iain Chambers

Viewed from London, Los Angeles, New York, Berlin, Paris and Milan, the south of the world is invariably considered in terms of lacks and absences. It is not yet modern, it has still to catch up. It remains, as Dipesh Chakrabarty would put it, an inadequate place (Chakrabarty 2000). The south is spatially and temporally located elsewhere, at the edge of the map. Of course, as we know from Edward Said, and through him from Antonio Gramsci, this is a geography of power. It is about being placed and systematised in a manner not of your own choosing. It is about being rendered subordinate and subaltern to other forces, and being exploited, not only economically, but also politically and culturally, in order for that subalternity to be reproduced and reinforced. The south of the world is framed: not only conceptually enclosed, but also falsely accused of failing to respect a modernity being triumphantly pursued elsewhere. To return to the south as a critical, political and historical problem is, ultimately, to return to the north and its hegemonic management of the planet. The ills, failures and breakdowns that are located down there, across the border, are precisely the products of a northern will to make the world over in its image and interests. This is the political economy of location. Here the south, of Italy, of Europe, of the Mediterranean, of the world, is rendered both marginal but paradoxically central to the reproduction of that economy. If the whole world were equally modern then the logic that drives modernity would collapse. The cancellation of the inequalities, property and differences charging the planetary circuits of capitalist accumulation would render modernity superfluous. The subversion of linearity, and the evaporation of 'progress' and development would also undo historical time as it is presently understood. The 'south' as a political and historical question is, above all, about the power exercised on those held in its definitions.

BRIGANDS, MAFIA, LAZY PEASANTS AND CORRUPTION

If the stereotypical south of Italy is inhabited by brigands, mafia, lazy peasants and corruption we need, as a minimum, to understand the historical processes that led to this state of affairs. But then history always provides us with an ambiguous archive. Irreducible to simple causality and a transparent rationality, the 'south' emerges as a category, a construction, an invention (Petrušewicz 1998). Its definition reveals the semiotics of power. The 'south' is always destined to experience that combination of repression and refusal that marks the foreclosure of hegemony seeking to negate the trauma of its violent affirmation (Mellino 2012).

It is in within this matrix that we might turn to the unification and the creation of the modern Italy, engineered on the back of the conquest of one sovereign state (the Bourbon kingdom of the Two Sicilies) by another (the Piedmont monarchy of the House of Savoy). Behind the offensive labelling of its inhabitants, and the reduction of rebellion, resistance and refusal to that conquest as 'brigandage', there existed an altogether more complex social and political world. This was characterised by the brutal exercise of feudal powers, whose representatives willingly allied themselves to the new national Parliament and political order in order to continue their rule over the land and its peasantry. In brokering hegemonic interests, agricultural reform was deliberately avoided by the new, unitary state. It is really only after the conclusion of the Second World War that a certain degree of post-feudal land reform occurs in Italy. In the terrible conditions of agricultural life and labour, the fact that the 'bosses' live in Naples or Turin, and state authority shifts from Naples to Rome, makes little

difference. Reading Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, and registering the nuanced critique of Italian unification in Mario Martone's recent film *Noi Credevamo* (based on Anna Banti's beautiful novel), one stumbles across the persistent repression and exclusion of a subaltern peasantry from the national narrative. This, of course, is the key motif in Gramsci's analysis of the 'failure' of Italian unification.

Here it would be hypocritical to talk in terms of a historical progress that was directly attributable to the transit to the modern nation. The military occupation and juridical enforcement of unification in southern Italy, in the wake of military operations that witnessed the deployment of 120,000 troops and resulted in at least 30,000 dead, was followed by mass migration from rural poverty to the Americas. Subsequent colonial adventures in east Africa and Libya (home at one time to 150,000 Italians) were also considered a potential safety valve to relieve the pressure of southern destitution. There is no linear advancement here but rather a contorted spiral of development where the resources of southern Italy often fuelled northern interests and development. If the feudal regime of the Bourbons was suppressed and forcefully incorporated into the modern Italian state, the latter tended to govern this southern acquisition through the bio-political grammar of alterity, thereby evading the responsibilities that a centralised national government could have exercised in economic and cultural, and not just political, terms. The subordination of the south to northern concerns was a power relation. It was justified in the languages of colonialism and racism, and it rendered the south inferior, less European, inherently underdeveloped. This, of course, was a particular instance of the far wider appropriation of the Mediterranean and the south of Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece and the Balkans), not to speak of the extra-European world, when viewed and framed from London, Paris, Berlin, Turin, and later Rome. The south is relegated to the margins of the national epic, its existing conditions are considered an impediment to the realisation of 'progress', its history is yet to come. In this sense, *Christ Stopped at Eboli* becomes a profoundly instructive political text.

The long national debate on the 'southern question' that accompanies the history of modern Italy and the incorporation of the ex-kingdom of the two Sicilies into the new nation constantly veers between outcries against an aggressive, northern act of deliberate colonisation and the more academic discussion of national and international cycles and rhythms evidencing uneven development. If, on the one side, the north apparently robbed the south of its financial assets in order to establish its industrial base, and in the process waged a war on the population in order to exercise this right, this was counterbalanced by a liberal paternalism that saw its task of dragging the south out of decadent government and feudal inefficiency in order to render it modern. While the colonising imperative that saw in the south an exotic world of disturbing alterity still remains very much in play today in internal racisms (and the Northern League is symptomatic of that virulent syntax), the liberal insistence on educating the south through a programmed 'progress' also continued to dominate the state policy of post-1945 Italy. The clearest manifestation of the latter approach was the creation in 1950 of a national fund – Cassa del Mezzogiorno – for financing the development of southern Italy. This was to launch the era of the notorious 'cathedrals in the desert': industrial plant parachuted into rural, southern Italy that was supposed to kick-start the local economy. Despite the massive amounts of money involved it was a historical failure; or, rather, its economic and social aims were largely side-tracked into the machinery of sustaining and reproducing political power. In this sense, it was by no means an exclusively 'southern question', but rather a component in the composition

and management of a national mosaic of political powers, financial interests and industrial groups.

One of the more obvious examples of this mechanism is that of the complex interweaving of national and local powers which witnessed political party machinery and organised crime allied in the creation and reproduction of political and cultural hegemony. This had already been encouraged by the Allied war authorities in their conquest of Sicily and southern Italy from Fascism after 1943. This alliance stretched from the maintenance of everyday, local consensus through political patronage and organised crime to domestic Cold War containment of political unrest and the subsequent crisis management of national emergencies and disasters. The 1980 earthquake in Campania is here emblematic. Massive state funding simultaneously consolidated and extended political power and organised crime at both the local and national level. The details, of course, are complicated, but again it is clear that the seemingly separate specificity of the 'southern question' is fully integrated into the political and economic arrangements that compose the national (and international) picture.

The continuing twentieth mass migration of the reserve army of labour of southern Italians to northern Italy and northern Europe, on the back of migration to the Americas and north Africa, alerts us to this structural reality, accompanied by the conceptual force of alterity and the periphery in composing and reaffirming the 'centre'. This needs to be consistently borne in mind if we want to avoid being dragged into an endless and fruitless debate over-determined by stereotypical language, racialising prejudices, and a bio-politics passing for common sense. Migration also reminds us of the shifting and heterogeneous conditions of transnational labour. While migration from the south of the world has serviced the north, the Italian south itself is today clearly destined never to be industrialised – today that nineteenth century model of 'progress' has literally migrated elsewhere, to be charted in the megapolises of Shanghai, Mumbai and Lagos. The labour pool has been outsourced along global networks that draw upon capital gains and infrastructures that the Mezzogiorno will never have. It is clearly necessary to change perspective and seek to reformulate the 'southern question'. To do this, I suggest we need to adopt another series of coordinates and maps.

THE ESCAPE FROM LOCALISM

I believe that Antonio Gramsci helps us to identify a series of elements that pull the question out of its immediate historical and critical coordinates in post-unification Italy and allows us to better consider its contemporary implications. Here we will discover that it is no longer possible to talk of a 'southern question' within the boundaries of the Italian nation state, and perhaps, despite all the immediate peculiarities of the 'Mezzogiorno', it never was. Without anticipating the argument, there lies here the suggestion that the 'southern question', identified as a political problem, and as a historical and cultural question, was not external to the modernity that presumed could resolve it. It was, and is, *internal* to modern Europe and the formation of its nation states. In an important sense, seeking to respond to the 'southern question' ultimately implies replying to the structural inequalities and distribution of power that accompanies the formation of nation building and Occidental modernity. I feel, as Gramsci himself once put it, that this 'thinking globally' is of significance in casting what seems an almost unresolvable historical, cultural and political dilemma into a more extensive critical space. Such a wider map throws a suggestive critical light back into the specificities of the Italian case.

I would argue that it is imperative to acknowledge further landmarks when referencing the 'southern question'. To avoid remaining trapped in a tangle of historical and cultural debate that reconstructs and deconstructs the question it is perhaps time to apply a critical cut. A local inheritance can never be cancelled, but it can be exposed to other questions, shifted into a new critical space. To step beyond the South's location in existing knowledge-power relationships, and follow Edward Said's proposal to de-orientalise the logic that reconfirms subordination in a self-perpetuating discourse, is to adopt a postcolonial approach. This is to insist that the colonisation and construction of the 'periphery' is essential for the sustenance and extension of metropolitan power. The rest of the world is not simply an accessory and witness to Occidental progress but is deeply stitched into its fabric of production and reproduction. It does not simply absorb and consume modernity; in its labour power, cultural forces and political antagonisms, it produces modernity. It is not simply where modernity recycles and dumps the refuse of 'progress', it is the very matrix of a modernity that requires the world, and not simply the West, in order to extract, circulate and accumulate its riches and authority (Mezzadra and Nielson 2013),

Beyond the pertinent provocation of Franco Cassano's 'southern thought' refusing a subaltern status, a postcolonial engagement allows us to promote an understanding of the southern question from the south itself (Cassano 2011). This is not simply to overturn the prevailing accounts that tend to reduce the Mezzogiorno of Italy to a stable and homogeneous object of analysis, robbing it of subjective agency. It also permits a wider exercise in challenging the premises and protocols of the critical machinery that believes that its version of 'modernity' and 'progress' is unique and hence universal.

Simultaneously, this also allows us to re-locate the Italian 'southern question' on a wider Mediterranean map. Here we are forced to annotate the annexation of southern Italy and subsequent national unification within the same temporal frame of the French annexation of Algeria and the British take-over of Egypt. Modalities of appropriation were different, the combination of histories never the same, although there was always the same military might, death and destruction to back up and enforce the enterprise. In the extension of one rule and law over another we find ourselves in the common nineteenth century matrix of colonialism that extends, without request, the civilising mission of the West to the rest. As a minimum, this establishes the Italian southern question in a colonial framework, not too dissimilar to the experiences of Scotland and Ireland and their political, administrative, cultural and military subordination to London and the unification of Great Britain.

In *The Southern Question* (1926), the Sardinian intellectual Antonio Gramsci offered a lucid analysis of the structural impoverishment of southern Italy in terms of existing economical, political and cultural forces. He spoke of stagnation characterized by the mass of peasantry in the economical and political clutches of large, often absentee, land owners. He also spoke of southern intellectuals supplying the administrative personnel of the Italian state, both locally and nationally, and of the role of such intellectuals (he was referring in particular to Benedetto Croce) in reproducing the *status quo*. Ten years later, incarcerated in a Fascist prison, he was to observe:

The poverty of the Mezzogiorno was historically incomprehensible for the popular masses of the North; they could not comprehend that national unity was not achieved on the basis of equality, but as the result of the hegemony of the

North on the Mezzogiorno and the territorial relationship of the city to the countryside; the North was an ‘octopus’ that enriched itself at the cost of the South, its industrial and economic progress was in a direct relationship to the impoverishment of southern industry and agriculture. (Gramsci 1975: 2021-2022)

Much of what Gramsci had to say then continues to echo within the existing political economy of the South and in its one time capital, Naples. Yet the ‘sources’ of this malaise perhaps lie not only in local coordinates, but also in a deep-seated inheritance that today would be considered part and parcel of the processes of ‘globalization’ (Chambers 2008).

Naples, unlike Genoa and Venice, was never a major port and commercial centre in the manner of its northern cousins. Up to the end of the sixteenth century Venice and Genoa were ‘world ports’, central to a trading system that stretched from Bombay to Lima. The port of Naples served mainly for the importation of foodstuffs from Sicily and Puglia to feed its metropolitan population and immediate hinterland. In 1615 Naples was buying pepper from Livorno that had arrived via London. By then it was no longer the Mediterranean that sold spices to England and northern Europe, but spices arriving from London and Amsterdam that were now sold to the Mediterranean in the ports of Livorno, Naples and Istanbul. By the end of the seventeenth century virtually all of the sea-borne commercial traffic of the Kingdom of Naples was transported on English merchant ships. In the second half of the century the hegemony of English commerce in the Mediterranean, reinforced by the regular presence of the Royal Navy, supervised the structural undoing of the relationship between a commercial and industrial northern Italy and its complementary relationship to the agricultural south. Both the north, with its own commerce, cloth and silk industries subordinated to the needs of London and the emerging English textile industry, and the agricultural south, were equally transformed into sources for primary materials for the markets and merchandising of northern Europe and the Atlantic seaboard. By 1680 the conditions of the ‘southern question’ – economic underdevelopment, social backwardness and cultural isolation from northern Italy – had been established, not so much through Spanish domination of the Kingdom of Naples, or northern Italian ‘progress’, where capital once invested in sea-going ventures was now conserved in the security of land and revenue, as by English mercantile hegemony in the Mediterranean (Pagano de Divitiis 1997).

These historical observation might provide one way to re-open the ‘southern question’. They serve, above all, to insist on the critical necessity of adopting a diverse cartography in order to step out of the straight-jacket of a debate, overwhelmingly shaped by regional and national concerns, that urgently needs to be ‘provincialized’ (Chakrabarty 2000). The pauperisation of the peasantry in the rural fringes of an emerging modern European – both in Calabria and in the Highlands of Scotland – are as interconnected as the price of pepper on the London Stock Exchange and in the markets of Naples and Istanbul. In the following century, the nascent Neapolitan Republic, directly inspired by the French Revolution, will be crushed in May 1799 by a peasant army overseen by the presence of the British fleet in the Bay of Naples. Part of that fleet, together with its commander Admiral Horatio Nelson, had the previous year destroyed French naval forces in Egyptian waters in the Battle of Aboukir Bay. In the very same period, republican France was refusing the demands of the slaves in revolt to extend the terms of the French Revolution to its Caribbean colony Saint-Dominique. Freedom, equality and brotherhood were denied until the ‘Black Jacobins’

successfully expunged French control and established the black republic of Haiti in 1804.

These wider coordinates are not intended to stifle the local narrative. If anything they serve to deepen and extend that account in the belief that they help us to grasp the historical and cultural density of the question in the context of the ‘global colonial archive’ (Conelli 2013). What holds this particular picture together in the first instance is the struggle for world hegemony between Britain and France, waged in the many corners of Europe, from Spain and Italy to the steppes of Russia, as well as across the seas and islands of the world. This exercise of power, its administrative, military, economical and cultural organisation – frequently out-sourced to non-nationals (Polish troops deployed in the unsuccessful French attempts to reconquer Saint-Dominique, black African sailors in the British fleet) – was in the last instance about the control of resources, riches and markets required in order to command the world and ensure the planetary reproduction of its political economy.

With this in mind we could now move back to the ‘southern question’ with a further set of concerns. One of the central features that emerges from the incorporation of the ex-Kingdom of the Two Sicilies into the new Italian state in 1861 is that of the systematic racialisation of the south (Moe 2002). The evidence – drawn from Piedmont officers and government officials involved in the ‘pacification’ of the Mezzogiorno, to subsequent endorsement by sociologists, anthropologists and criminologists – is overwhelming. Southern Italy, whether explained in biological or historical terms, is populated by an inferior ‘race’. The racialisation of southern Italy was an essential part of its subordination to colonisation by the nascent national state, that in turn applied verdicts already rehearsed by visitors in English, German and French. Anthropological generalisations quickly flowed into a more precise institutional regime of knowledge through the criminalisation of dissent and revolt. It produced a pathology to be catalogued, studied and defined. Historical and cultural differences were transformed into arbitrary distinctions. These acquired the legislative force to incorporate, discipline and educate the captured, subordinated body. Once defined, catalogued and located, that body reconfirmed the practices and procedures of its objectification. Even if we might want today to consign such perspectives to the closed chapter of European positivism, such practices seeped down into the practices of everyday life and cast long historical shadows. In the opening sequences of Luchino Visconti’s *Rocco and his brothers* (1960), the arrival from Lucania of the Parondi family in a Milanese housing estate is simply greeted with the exclamation ‘Africa’.

The transference of landed property to financial gain and commercial profit, of the revenue of rural estates to industrial and financial capital and urban life styles, accompanied by the passage from peasantry to the national and international labour market, is a constant rhythm in the formation of the modern political economy since 1500. In the planetary processes induced by capitalist accumulation there are obviously many regional differentiations, within the nation as well as beyond its frontiers. Some would call them time-lags and apply the terminology of backwardness and underdevelopment to explain their presence. Here history is apparently a train called Progress that carries us into the future. However, when slavery co-exists with the foundation of republican democracy, as in the Atlantic world of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and feudal land ties with the establishment of modern industrial plant, as in Italy in the first half of the twentieth century, it is perhaps critically more instructive to consider their political interaction and historical complementarity. Rather than assume that one dimension (modern, democratic and industrial) is separate

and superior to the negative survival of the seemingly archaic histories of slavery and feudalism we need to acknowledge their being coeval. And if we are understanding these to be planetary, and not merely national, conditions and forces, then we are required to recognise this dissonant and heterogeneous history to be integral to modernity; that is, to be *the* history of modernity itself.

The violent accumulation of capital does not simply lie back there with slave labour, colonialism and racialised hegemony, or with expropriation of the commons, the expulsion of peasantry from the land and its subsequent enclosure by a land-owning class seeking to invest its gains elsewhere (in the colonies, in industry, in buildings, transport and cultural goods). It continues. There is no simple passage from an original or primitive accumulation to a subsequently more civil and ordered one. Eighteenth century Scottish crofters despatched to Canada after the crushing of the 1745 Rebellion, peasants moving from Lucania to Milan and the Alfa Romeo factory in the 1950s and 1960s (the subject of Luchino Visconti's 1961 film, *Rocco and his brothers*), and present-day Chinese labour migrating in millions from rural areas to the high-tech belts of Guangdong, Shaanxi, Qingdao and Shenzhen, are part of a shared spatio-temporality. In other words the creative destruction of territory and time by capital that produces a mobile constellation of effects on a planetary level is not to be explained in terms of the linear succession of circles of development irradiating out from a primary centre in Europe. The resources that went into European development, as the history of modern racial slavery so powerfully portrays – both in its labour and in its abolition and compensatory payments – always depended on a planetary network of conquest, exploitation and management (Hall 2013). Dispossession, expropriation and unilateral control of land, law and political licence are not simply the prerogative of Seventeenth century England and life in the North American colonies; they are very much part of our world today. That 'original' violence persists – from seeking to patent medicinal plants to bulldozing villages and towns into dams. It is part, as Kalyan Sanyal has argued, of the very reproduction of capital: it is not a trace of the past, but rather an unstable universalism oriented to the future (Sanyal 2007). Rather than localised transitions to accumulation, registered in the linear fashioning of time, there are transformations that reach through a mosaic of temporal and spatial scales and coordinates, sometimes subtle and subterfuge, more usually brutal, violent and without redress.

These considerations throw a very different light into the 'southern question'. Here we discover not pockets of underdevelopment, inhabited by those who apparently live outside the measured time of modernity and have not yet been invested by progress, but what Gramsci referred to as 'traces of autonomous initiatives'. These signal the multiple contours of the modern world where a hegemonic pulse is folded into local performances, crossed by translation and mixed by tradition, sounded and sourced in the on-going construction of place and belonging. The blueprint is dirtied and deviated, punctuated by the dense grammars of cultural immediacies, by a resistance to a singular will (Chambers 2013).

What lies 'south of the border', in the undisciplined excess of life that seemingly does not respect the rules, is clearly a threat to the disciplined productivity of the linear accumulation of capitalist and cultural redemption. These other, southern, spaces, however, are not merely decadent and unruly peripheries, expelled from the motor of modernity. They propose the challenge of heterotopia. Although constantly seeking to establish borders, set limits, monitor unrest and patrol confines, modernity is unable to produce a distinct exterior, a not yet modern or still primitive elsewhere. What is

othered, rendered subaltern and subordinate within the institutions and practices of 'advanced' capitalist culture is at the same time structurally integral to the very production and reproduction of dominance and subordination (Mezzadra 2011). The negated, feared and despised 'native', black, Arab, Muslim, Rom, and migrant other is inside the modernity that seeks to define, discipline and decide his or her place. No matter how objectified and anonymously rendered, the subaltern is nevertheless a historical actor, a subjectivising force *within* a shared but differentiated universe (Guha 2003). The chains of power are here tested (and not simply suffered), stretched and sometimes snap. If, then, there is no absolute outside to house the excluded and the damned, there is also no untouched nor pure alternative to the historical network and assemblage in which these political and cultural relations are inscribed. It is precisely in this sense, that the 'southern question' irrupts within the midst of a modernity still to be registered and recognised.

Exemplified in Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, Ernesto De Martino's ethnographic field research in the Mezzogiorno of Italy in the 1950s, and the cinema of Pier Paolo Pasolini, seemingly pre-modern practices, beliefs and customs are not 'back there', in an abjured or primitive past, but are 'in here', part of the stratified and subaltern complexities of the present. Through rendering the familiar unhomely and out of joint, the present becomes plural and incomplete; that is, irreducible to a single point of view or manner of narration. Along this critical path lies the injunction to think less *of* the south and rather more *with* the south. Here, where historical, cultural and structural conditions have been formed in subordination to the needs of the north of the world, the predictable critical frame is decentred and destabilised. The powerful lessons of the Subaltern Studies group in India, of the lengthy tradition of Black Atlantic intellectuals and artists, of the critical constellation of radical Latin American thought and practice, clearly confirms this point. The abstract universalisms of 'progress', 'humanism' and 'democracy' unwind in the cruel insistence of their being historical embedded in power, exploitation and unjust cultural detail. This observation, most obviously drawn from Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, allows us to register the structural inequalities of economic, political, social and cultural justice that characterise the souths of the planet while at the same time harvesting the specificities of a precise elaboration of space and time that distinguishes one place from another.

RADICAL RURALITY

To remain in the rural south for a moment also allows us to continue to cultivate further lines of flight from conventional accounts of this region as a political problem. I, personally, have had some involvement in projects that have sought in mountain areas to encourage a radical revaluation of contemporary rurality in the light of modern memory and migration (Chambers. et.al, 2007). Associated with this involvement is the ethno-literature and proposed 'ruralogy' (*paesologia*) of the writer Franco Arminio who poetically reworks a received inheritance into a modality of modern connections (Arminio 2011). In a form of psychogeography, Arminio's words drift in rural landscapes that actively query their subaltern location in the mappings of modernity. What comes to be registered are an impossible set of roots: village life is neither autonomous nor separated from the modernity that produces it as alterity. There emerges the awareness that belonging draws upon a series of locations: from a high mountain village in Matese to a suburb of New York. It is a process impossible to confine to a single place. This provides another critical compass with which to navigate the multiple spaces of modernity. Perhaps this is a lesson that was first learnt by rural folk. If their lives were subordinated to the demands of the metropolis, they experienced migration, social upheaval and transformation under the sign of the city

long before the inhabitants of the city began querying their own assumed stability. In the same manner, the rest of the world has experienced precarious livelihood, structural unemployment and the violence of capital in colonial conditions for many decades prior to the ingression of these conditions into the heartlands of the West itself.

The external, rural interruption, is, of course, not really external, only repressed and negated, consigned to the margins. Today's metropolis is the modern world. And if the city does not fully absorb the surrounding world it does, however, profoundly discipline its horizons of expectancy. In this sense, the rural scene provides one of the places and temporalities of modernity. It is not on the outside. It circulates within as a potential critical seed. It proposes another rurality that lies both beyond the placid Romantic framing of the sublime or the brutal vitalism of imposed economic 'progress'. Its very hybridity – after all, today no one simply lives in the countryside whether in Irpinia in southern Italy or in rural Bangladesh, without the presence of television, cell phones, computers and Internet – suggests an altogether more extensive critical cartography. In a truly political and poetical sense this renewed sense of rurality promotes a subaltern and minor history able to challenge and deviate hegemonic versions of a unilateral modernity. Defending seed banks in rural India against Occidental monopolies, contesting economically and socially unviable high-speed trains in the Alpine valleys of northern Italy, is, in however a ragged and unsystematic fashion, to express local democracies that are witness to a modernity that is not simply authorized by the existing institutions of political and economic power. Here the rural world is no longer something left over from yesterday, an appendage to today's urban life, providing foodstuffs, recreation and relics of superseded life styles, but rather reveals the potential of a critical interrogation. A seemingly 'lost' world actually proposes new points of departure. The elaboration of the 'loss' can lead to the proposal of beginnings for those seeking to escape both the claustrophobic localism of blood and soil and the terrible costs of previous rural life. To elaborate that inheritance and work it through is also to re-elaborate modernity itself. Emigration, exploitation and poverty, both yesterday and today, are woven together along global axes. The abandoned village in the Apennines is not merely the sign of local disaster, it is the also the symptom of the processes of a planetary political economy. The question, then, is how to narrate this complex suturing of time and place, of modernity as rurality, in a manner that leads to a new, critical sense of 'place' and temporality that simultaneously exists along multiple scales of belonging: from the local bar to relatives in New York, to the extended family sustained in Internet.

At this point, where does a place, a locality, a village and territory conclude, and something else commence? Perhaps the very linearity of this reasoning suggests another configuration in which 'place' and belonging is simultaneously proposed and lived in multiple sites. These offer other narrative forms. In an altogether more fluid topography, specificities such as poverty, organised crime, structural unemployment, migration and peripheral 'underdevelopment' are mapped on multiple maps that simultaneously conjoin the local with those wider, trans-national coordinates that also produce the local. Modernity at this point is opened up to interpretations that challenge a unitary logic. And alterity, as both the past that has never past and the presence of the rural and the extra-European world, radically interrupts the present. Such proximities invite us, as a minimum, not so much to speak for these negated matters, and thereby reproduce our authority, as to speak in their vicinity in a manner that leads precisely to the undoing of that authority (Djebar 1999).

THE SOUTH OF THE WORLD

Borrowing this suggestion from the Algerian writer Assia Djebar, the final perspective I would like to propose consists in considering the interruption of the intellectual structure that produces the 'south' as a delimited space (Bhabra 2007). This obviously extends the Italian 'southern question' through a geography of powers onto a planetary scale. It also fruitfully intersects a growing intent to rethink modernity outside the geo-political structures and ethnographic dividends of European colonialism and their installation in the assumed 'neutrality' of the social sciences and a methodological homogeneity (Connell 2007). Brought into the multiple folds of a postcolonial reevaluation, such a critical configuration permits us to re-open the archive in order to expose the present-day coordinates of a multi-layered modernity: the latter now emerges as a global, networked formation in historical process, rather than as a conceptual bloc or place (the Occident). If this is to world the West, it is also to re-engage the 'southern question', and with it the south of Europe and the south of the world, with a very different set of critical languages and questions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arminio, F (2011) *Terracarne. Viaggio nei paesi invisibili e nei paesi giganti del Sud Italia*, Milan: Mondadori.
- Bhabra, G.R (2007) *Rethinking Modernity. Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Cassano, F (2011) *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean*, New York: Fordham University Press.
- Chakrabarty, D (2000) *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Chambers, I (2008) *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Chambers, I (2013) 'Lessons from the south', *UniNomade 2.0*: <http://www.uninomade.org/lessons-from-the-south/>
- Chambers, I et. al. (2007) 'Landscapes, Parks, Art and Cultural Change', *Third Text* vol.21, Issue 3.
- Conelli, C (2013) 'Per una storia postcoloniale del Mezzogiorno d'Italia', unpublished MA thesis, University of Naples, "Orientale".
- Connell, R (2007) *Southern Theory. The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Djebar, A (1999) *Women of Algiers in their Apartments*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Fanon, F (2001) *The Wretched of the Earth*, London: Penguin.
- Gramsci, A (1975) *Quaderni del Carcere*, Turin: Einaudi.
- Guha, R *History at the Limit of World-History*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hall, C (2013) *Legacies of British Slave-ownership*: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>
- Levi, C *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, London: Penguin.
- Mellino, M (2012) *Cittadinanze Postcoloniali. Appartenenze, razza e razzismo in Italia e in Europa*, Carocci, Rome: Carocci, 2012.
- Mezzadra, S (2011) 'Bringing capital back in: a materialist turn in postcolonial studies?', *Inter-Asian Cultural Studies*, vol.12, n.1.
- Mezzadra, S and Neilson, B (2013) 'Extraction, logistics, finance', *Radical Philosophy* 178.

- Moe, N (2002) *The view from Vesuvius. Italian culture and the southern question*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pagano de Divitiis, G (1997) *English Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Italy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Petrusewicz, M (1998) *Come il Meridione divenne una questione. Rappresentazioni del Sud prima e dopo il Quarantotto*, Cosenza : Rubbettino.
- Sanyal, K (2007) *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Post-Colonial Capitalism*, New Delhi : Routledge.