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Discovering the Mediterranean. Itineraries of travellers between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries in the Abruzzo region.

keywords: *itineraries of discovery; Grand Tour in Abruzzo, landscape, internal areas, heritage*

Introduction

This essay reconstructs some of the Grand Tour itineraries covered between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by intellectuals visiting the Abruzzo region, one of the "last unknown lands, far from the classic itineraries and avoided even by the most curious and courageous travellers" (Piccioni, 1998, p. 341). The production of a map and the reconstruction, in a historical perspective, of the way this part of Italy was conceived, of the landscape and of the population of the internal areas of the region aims at a better understanding of the current situation, characterised by the abandonment of many of the areas described by travellers in past centuries. The essay also takes a look at some of the changes which the landscape has undergone over the years by comparing the illustrations and descriptions of earlier travellers with contemporary photos and views, in order to highlight the effects caused, and still being caused by the marginalization of these areas. Finally, the question is raised as to the sense and purpose of proposing a network of itineraries which, by retracing the footsteps of the Grand Tour journeys in Abruzzo, would enable tourists and inhabitants to rediscover places full of significance.

The Grand Tour in Abruzzo

Until the mid-18th century, Abruzzo was only marginally involved in the Grand Tour itineraries, suffering as it did from the absence of appealing sites such as universities and administrative centres, and of roads suitable for the transit of carriages (Piccioni, 1998).

It was around the 1770s that the first "discovery of Abruzzo" took place, when a number of travellers, motivated by a dual interest in the archaeological evidence of classical antiquity and in lands still considered authentic and unspoiled (Piccioni, 1998), described the region in a series of guides and publications.

Between the 18th and the second half of the 19th century, the first accounts of travellers, such as those by Richard Colt Hoare, Richard Keppel Craven and Edward Lear, enable us to reconstruct the most recurrent itineraries and destinations. From these accounts we can perceive the importance of the artistic heritage created after ancient times, in particular after the middle ages, in which Abruzzo had been a key player (from the 12th until the late-15th century).

With the passing of time, and in particular between the end of the 19th and the early-20th century, thanks also to the spread of the works of Gabriele d'Annunzio and Francesco Paolo Michetti, interest in the region grew, also favoured by the development of the railway network, with the completion of the Rome-Sulmona line in 1888 and the Sulmona-Castel di Sangro-Isernia line in 1898.

The travellers' narratives give an image of the landscapes and society from which a rich and distinct civil and cultural identity emerges, of great interest to those who wish to better understand the

¹ Both authors have contributed to the work; M.A. conceived the original idea and supervised the final manuscript. Individual contribution in writing the manuscript is as follows: *Introduction* M.A.; *The Grand Tour in Abruzzo* M.A., V.C.; *The via Tiburtina and the Via degli Abruzzi* V.C.; *Travellers in Abruzzo in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* V.C.; *The late-19th and 20th centuries. The advent of the railway* V.C.; *After the Grand Tour. Effects of marginality on Apennine landscapes* M.A.; *Conclusions* M.A.

nature of inland Abruzzo. At the same time, the importance of these reports lies in the fact that for centuries they have been one of the main means of disseminating Abruzzo's artistic heritage at international level.

The via Tiburtina and the Via degli Abruzzi

Observing the most recurring stops and itineraries in the journeys of artists and men of letters in Abruzzo, two routes strongly emerge, along which most of the destinations are concentrated: the west-east route, corresponding to that of the Via Tiburtina, the ancient Roman consular road linking Rome and Tibor (Tivoli), later extended as far as Aternum (Pescara), and the north-south route, identified with the Via degli Abruzzi, a major commercial and military artery in the Angevin era (Sabatini, 1960, p. 67), the heart of the Florentine trade, which linked Florence and Naples (fig. 1). The character of the two arteries appears from the destinations and intentions of the travellers along them. The Via Tiburtina route owes much of its appeal to the remains of Roman colonies, which can be found in the sites of Carsoli, Tagliacozzo, Scurcola Marsicana, Magliano de' Marsi, Alba Fucens, Avezzano, Marruvium (San Benedetto dei Marsi), Castelvechio Subequo, Castel di ieri, Sulmona, Popoli and Chieti. These destinations were perfectly in line with the interest of travellers in the second half of the eighteenth century, driven by a growing desire to study and investigate classical archaeological evidence. The Via degli Abruzzi, on the other hand, was an Apennine route, the length and conformation of which made it preferable to the route along the Tyrrhenian coast. The morphology of Abruzzo's inland territory, characterised by a sequence of parallel reliefs arranged in a north-south direction, alternating with valley floors or river valleys, has remained virtually unchanged over the centuries, since the nature of the land and its ruggedness did not allow identifying routes other than those already traced (De Sanctis, 2016). It is clear from travel diaries that this wild and unspoilt landscape was capable of arousing the interest and admiration of the Grand Tour travellers, constantly in search of the aesthetics of the sublime. However, as early as the 14th century, the Via degli Abruzzi was also a privileged trading route, and merchants, bankers and politicians from the Seigniory and the Neapolitan Court moved along it. Despite the inconvenience of the snowy mountain passes, they appreciated the opportunity to trade with cities rich in precious raw materials, such as L'Aquila (for saffron) and Sulmona (for wool). A particularly favourable picture emerges of a number of Abruzzi towns, such as Sulmona, which occupied a relevant place in the trade between Tuscany and Naples and was a crossroads for politicians and men of letters who frequented the Angevin court and assiduously followed the course of economic and political events (Sabatini, 1960).

Travellers in Abruzzo in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

In the late-18th century, European travellers, motivated by cultural interests and fervid curiosity, began to visit and leave evidence of their presence in this region.

The journey to Abruzzo made by Richard Colt Hoare, an English historian, archaeologist and writer, in 1791, is one of the first testimonies (fig.2). During his journey through Europe he became so fascinated by Italy that he wanted to illustrate a collection of books on its history and topography, which he donated to the British Museum in 1825. The diary of his journey resulted in the 1819 publication 'Classical Journey through Italy'. His passion for classical culture and his experience in the field of archaeology led him to embark on a journey with the aim of comparing the current state of classical artefacts with the data he had previously collected, thus building a valuable guide for later travellers. In his experience, as well as investigating cities and the natural environment, he looked for traces and evidence of the passage of the Marsi, who in ancient times occupied the cities of Alba Fucens and Marruvium.

In the introduction to his experience in Abruzzo, Hoare says that he wanted to visit that part of the

country that had remained unexplored during his last trip, made in the autumn, due to the unfavourable climate and the advancing cold season. The main and last stop on his journey was Lake Celano:

"I know not whether I was more attracted thither by the interest which the district derives from the records of antiquity, or by a love of novelty, and a curiosity to examine a country little frequented by foreigners, and imperfectly known from an historical point of view, even by the natives themselves" (Hoare, 1819, p. 242).

From a landscape and naturalistic point of view, the stages he covered are marked by the Emissary of Claudius (Cunicoli di Claudio (Tunnels of Claudius, Avezzano) and Lake Fucino, while the itinerary which brings him to the villages of Abruzzo is made up of a number of historical routes, such as that of the Via Tiburtina, in the sections between Colle di Montebove and Corfinio, and other roads that unravel through the wild natural environment and mountainous wilderness, such as that between Balsonaro and Morrea.

Richard Keppel Craven, an English traveller and member of the Society of Dilettanti, an association of noblemen and men of letters which promoted the study of ancient Greek and Roman art, visited Abruzzo on two occasions, in 1826 and 1831, giving us an account of the journey that cannot be ascribed to the genre of the diary, as it is not narrated in chronological order, but split up according to the places visited. His work, together with that of the writer and illustrator Edward Lear, is one of the most important travel works of the Abruzzo region. The journey, first undertaken along the coast between Pescara and Giulianova (on the route that was to become the Adriatic State Highway), takes place mainly in Abruzzo Ultra, i.e., the heart of the inland areas of Abruzzo, more akin to the romantic taste of English travellers. In the Apennine region, Craven particularly appreciated the suggestions of the pastoral world, which he saw as a refuge from industrial reality. The two most important roads for his journey in the interior of Abruzzo are the Via Tiburtina and the Tratturo Magno L'Aquila-Foggia, as well as a series of minor sheep tracks and mountain paths.

These were the years in which the mountains began to exert an attraction for visitors and holidaymakers, a phenomenon proven by the setting up, just a few decades after Craven's journey, of the Club Alpino Italiano (1863), which, as stated in article 1 of its charter, *"has as its aim mountaineering in all its forms, knowledge and study of the mountains, especially those of Italy, and the defence of their natural environment"* and the Touring Club Italiano (1894).

Edward Lear's travels (between July 1843 and September 1844) are the most richly documented. Historians have been able to reconstruct the routes in detail thanks to the meticulous descriptions of the journeys and the precious and copious illustrations. Lear stayed with various influential personalities of the time, who often wrote him letters of reference, as was then the custom, thanks to which he would receive hospitality on subsequent stages.

He differs from his predecessor in the attention he pays to the description of the uses, customs and traditions of the inhabitants he meets, with whom he loves to spend time, particularly appreciating their kindness and hospitality: *"[...] I must here repeat with gratitude, that in these remote and unfrequented tracts we meet with that genuine and cordial hospitality, which is too seldom to be found in more favoured and more populous countries; and such as I shall for ever call to mind with pleasure and grateful remembrance"* (Lear, 2007, p. 377).

In this case too, his stays were almost exclusively in the inland areas of the region, Marsica in particular. In fact, while the first of his trips took him across the region as far as the coast, during the second and third, he only stayed in the Apennine area (fig.3).

The late-19th and 20th centuries. The advent of the railway

The first great revolution in transport and, consequently, in the development of tourism in Abruzzo, is represented by the advent of the two railway lines Terni-Sulmona (1883) and Rome-Sulmona

(1888).

One of the first examples of this new mode of travel comes to us thanks to the story and drawings of Leopold Gmelin who, having come to Rome in 1889 to visit the Exhibition of ancient and modern glass and ceramics, decided to visit Rieti, L'Aquila and Sulmona using the railway, intrigued by Luigi Degli Abati's guidebook entitled 'Da Roma a Sulmona. A historical and artistic guide to the region crossed by the railway'. Thanks to the slow progress of the trains on the mountain lines, as well as the long pauses in the stations, Gmelin was able to produce a vast series of sketches of landscapes, towns and architectural details that he put into his notebook. He also became interested in the medieval goldsmiths of Abruzzo and met some scholars of the time, such as Pietro Piccirilli (Ghisetti Giavarina, 2016). It was in the early years of the 20th century that the image of Abruzzo folklore, long outlined by scholars, began to be disseminated more effectively, in the forms that have survived to the present day, thanks above all to the paintings of Patini and Michetti and the short stories, poems and dramas of d'Annunzio. And it was Gabriele d'Annunzio himself who, in the late-19th century, enabled high-profile intellectuals to discover the region - such as the trips with Antonio De Nino, Francesco Paolo Michetti, and Costantino Barbella in 1881 and that with Antonio De Nino and Emile Bertaux in 1896 - (Ghisetti Giavarina, 2016, pp. 49-59), also using the railway line from Francavilla al Mare. It was in those years, between 1900 and 1905, that the first attempts to organise hotel accommodation were made in three towns on the plateau, although it was not until the following decade that the best-equipped initiatives were developed, which would later take the form of the "industria del forestiero" in Roccaraso (Sabatini, 1960).

The Dutch engraver Maurits Cornelis Escher visited Abruzzo three times between 1928 and 1935, and was greatly impressed by the natural environment and villages. He produced a series of engravings of the towns of Castrovalva, Goriano Sicoli, Scanno, Opi and Anversa degli Abruzzi, the latter being discussed in more detail in the following paragraph.

The itineraries covered by Grand Tour travellers reveal a wealth of cultural and scenic elements that for a long time were considered minor. Alongside these, a heritage of intangible aspects appears, represented by local productive traditions, the fulcrum of Abruzzo's sense of identity (Magistri, 2014). It is precisely the villages much appreciated by Grand Tour travellers which are currently most affected by depopulation: of the 315 municipalities that make up the Abruzzo region, 230 are classified by the National Strategy for Inner Areas as peripheral and ultraperipheral, mostly concentrated in the Apennine ridge. A comparative reading of the views and contemporary photographs, the subject of the next paragraph, while showing some invariances (the general conformation of the villages and the layout of the roads), brings to light the advanced abandonment of agricultural land, much of which is affected by massive spontaneous reforestation as a consequence of depopulation.

After the Grand Tour. Effects of marginality on Apennine landscapes

The effects of marginality on Apennine areas are visible to the naked eye. The areas that have fallen into decay bear the signs of abandonment both in their built-up fabric and open spaces. The most recognisable signs present in the built-up fabric are ruins, often responsible for the lyrical and romantic transfiguration of the landscape, a source of a risky and ephemeral aesthetic pleasure, made more intense by a beauty undermined by omens of death (Ottani Cavina, 2015).

The fascination exercised by the ruins of the past, the object of globalised tourist consumption and the focus of a vast literature, is a fascination similar to that of decadence, or, to use an expression

that Georg Simmel employed in his famous essay "Die Ruine"², of the 'mere fact of falling down'. Ruins convey to the landscapes of derelict towns a profound sense of the past and of places from which life has now taken its leave. There where man's aspiration to combat the law of gravity by raising buildings, the corrosive force of nature brings them down again; in the ruin, these two opposing forces, Simmel reveals, cooperate to form the pacifying image of a return to nature.

The gaps produced by ruined buildings are one of the most obvious features of the landscape in marginal areas. Other, less obvious and less romantic signs of the material degradation of buildings and infrastructures can be brought to light through the diachronic comparison of aerial photographs (especially IGM flights) and thematic maps (land use in particular), according to the techniques used in disciplines dealing with the transformation of the agro-forestry landscape. These readings are able to add valuable information to that which can be deduced from statistical factors, such as demographic and socio-economic indicators. However, it should be remembered that any analysis of landscape transformation, just like demographic changes, are imperfect tools, as they are unable to reveal 'hidden' processes of abandonment, i.e. those phenomena which, while not affecting the external appearance of the landscape, modify its social and economic structure.

An examination of landscape transformation was carried out around the historic centre of Anversa degli Abruzzi, through the acquisition of frames from IGM aerial flights and aerial photographs from the Google Earth platform from 1954 to 2004. This temporal threshold is subject to the availability of aerial images, but it is nevertheless adequate for the aims of the study, since it spans fifty years during which the structural changes in the agro-forestry landscape were clearly manifested, although the phenomenon of depopulation had already been underway for half a century.

The comparison of the images (fig. 4) shows the changes undergone by the open space near the residential area, at first largely cultivated and then progressively recaptured by the woodland. Even the pasture-meadows, present in the 1954 photogram, give way to heath-meadow formations and to shrubby and herbaceous vegetation. The direct relationship between built-up area and cultivation seen in the 1954 photogram is the one inherited from the agrarian structures of previous centuries, when agriculture occupied most of the possible space, to the detriment of woodland. The strong human presence and the scarcity of cropland had, in fact, in past centuries forced many men to cut down centuries-old trees in order to cultivate a few more hectares of land: "in the period between the Unification of Italy and the years immediately preceding the First World War there was an important contraction of the Italian woodland surface area, due above all to the expansion of agricultural and pasture land following growing demographic pressure in mountainous areas" (Agnoletti, 2010 p. 21).

The most recent photos (Fig. 5) therefore clearly show the process of 'rewilding' that has affected the areas around the centre of Anversa since the 1970s/1980s, just as it has affected all the interior areas of the country. According to the data of the National Inventory of Forests and Forest Carbon Sinks (Gasparini, Tabacchi, 2015), in Italy, woodland regrowth from 1971 to 2011 involved about 3.5 million hectares of land, most of which had been previously dedicated to agriculture and grazing. In the years between 2005 and 2015, the woodland expanded even further, occupying a surface area of 600 thousand hectares and today Italian woodland covers a total of 11 million hectares, compared to 4 million in 1930.

A portrait of the Anversa area in 1930 (fig. 6) is offered by the lithograph that Maurits Cornelis Escher made during one of his stays in Abruzzo. Escher depicted a view from the top of the rocky

² Simmel G., (1911) "Die Ruine", in *Philosophische Kultur. Gesammelte Essays*, Leipzig. The essay, translated into Italian, is present in "Rivista di Estetica", no. 8, 1981, pp. 121-127 and in Simmel G., *Saggi di cultura filosofica*, Longanesi, Milan 1985, republished by Guanda, Parma 1993, pp. 108-114.

spur of Castrovalva looking down on the centre of Anversa degli Abruzzi, tightly nestled on the hills and surrounded by open countryside, the latter depicted as an orderly space, lined with white roads and dotted with trees. The mixed cultivation of orchards and arable land produced a finely articulated landscape, with crops arranged at different heights, depending on the distance from the town and the amount of care required.

At the time of the drawing, Anversa degli Abruzzi had about 1,600 inhabitants; at the 2011 census, it had only 368. Depopulation and the abandonment of agricultural activities on the hillsides have led to significant changes in the landscape, and if Escher could repeat his depiction today, the territory of Anversa degli Abruzzi would look very different, with the farmland covered by woodland patches, the result of the process of rewilding undergone by the abandoned agricultural areas just described.

However, this transformation should not necessarily be seen in a bad light; the intense deforestation of the 18th and 19th centuries had caused a lot of environmental damage to the Apennine system, offering in return very low and insufficient agricultural production to satisfy the food needs of the highland populations. In 1833, Carlo Afán De Rivera commented on the effects of deforestation as follows:

“The three Abruzzi regions, where the climate is harsher, experience a great shortage of firewood and building timber. In the towns near the coast, it is customary to use the timber transported from Trieste, and the General Directorate of Bridges and Roads had to bring oak timber from that place to build the wooden bridges over the Piomba and Salino rivers. [...] Almost all the woodland in the vicinity of L’Aquila has been devastated, and that city with its harsh climate is forced to obtain fuel from distant places. The high mountains that crown the Fucino basin, are for the most part stripped of forests, so that the wood needed for work on the Emissary of Claudius had to be brought from very distant sites” (Afán De Rivera, 1833, p. 44-45).

In the province of Teramo too, deforestation proceeded speedily, and between 1870 and 1880 almost twenty thousand hectares of woodland were destroyed. The effects of the denuding of the mountains were vast, "hydrogeological instability, [...], landslides, swamping and malaria, climatic changes and drying up of the springs" (Tino, 1989, p. 694). A very eloquent description is given by Raffaele Quaranta, writing about L’Aquila's mountains during the Agrarian Inquiry:

"[...] the peasant, always in search of property or land at a lower rent, reaches the highest peaks and ravines, clearing, cutting, digging out stones and roots, and with hard work he cultivates those slopes in order to sow rye and potatoes, so much so that in rainy weather, deploring floods occur in the fertile valleys below. The towns are largely responsible for this because of the so-called "cesinazione" (clearing) roles, by means of which, and for a tenuous and momentary gain, they authorise this ruinous and wandering cultivation, since the peasant farmer, having exploited a location later abandoned, instead of reclaiming it, ploughs up another one which is more convenient to his precarious interests, and in this way, woodland and meadow are increasingly diminished with great damage [to] the economic interests of forestry, pastoralism, hygiene and territorial consistency".

In a passage from Richard Keppel Craven's travel report after his stay in Abruzzo, one notices the writer's astonishment at how busy some peasant farmers are cultivating a piece of land in an impervious location:

"Whenever an inconsiderable space of vegetable soil shows itself among these rocky recesses, it is cultivated with great care and assiduity; and I observed some ploughmen so employed in spots

whose situation rendered it a matter of wonder how the oxen and the implements they drew could ever have been brought there". (Craven, 1838, p. 180).

The intense deforestation, carried out without rules and in a predatory manner, with all the contours of that phenomenon which Hardin (1968) described as the "drama of common resources", produced an ecological crisis, the impact of which on the mountain ecosystem was such that, according to some authors, it represented one of the determining factors in the economic decline of the mountains themselves. The woodland had an irreplaceable role in climate regulation, acting as a real "regulating factor for atmospheric humidity, temperature, rain, the regular flow of groundwater and the salubrity of the air" (Tino, 1989, p. 693). The alteration of all these parameters caused a number of problems for the already precarious mountain agriculture, but also for fishing and sheep farming, due to the drying up of the springs and the alteration of the local climate caused by the disappearance of the tree cover. In 1878, the forestry inspector's report to the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce reported on the Chieti mountain area:

"Unfortunately, many of the mountainous areas of this province are lacking in water due to intemperate deforestation, as the springs that were once plentiful have disappeared. For this reason, the inhabitants are forced to travel immense distances to find water that is not always drinkable for domestic use, both to water their livestock and to provide themselves with the necessary water for their families." (quoted in Tino, 1989, p. 694).

The age we are living in, considered the most wooded in the last thousand years, has restored to the Apennine mountains a heritage of naturalness which had gone lost in recent centuries, with all the benefits this brings in terms of the presence of wild animals and greater hydrogeological safety, thanks to the contribution which the root system gives to slope stability. Sustainable woodland management is also one of the options for starting new life cycles in marginal areas. On the other hand, the expansion of woodland has led to a reduction in "biodiversity linked to the great variety of land uses that once characterised the landscape in some [...] mountain areas [...] with the consequent trivialisation and homogenisation of the landscape" (Agnoletti, 2010, p. 24).

From the point of view of aesthetic appreciation, the return of woodland to the highland areas has brought about a profound transformation of the landscape. The Apennine environment was often described in the diaries of Grand Tour travellers as a well-kept garden, the result of the hard work of hungry peasant farmers always on the lookout for new land to cultivate. But at the same time, also remarked on was the bare appearance of the mountains, the upshot of the wild deforestation which took place above all during the nineteenth century; this can be seen once again in the writings of Craven, who, on a journey between Avezzano and L'Aquila, comments on the landscape that appeared before him as follows:

"Notwithstanding these rural advantages, and the clusters of villages which render it, for its size, the best peopled district in the kingdom, the general aspect of the plain is dreary from the want of trees, and the bleak and bare surface of the encircling mountains" (Craven, 1838, p. 199, 200).

The relationship between the population of the Apennine villages and the characteristics of the surrounding landscape is therefore evident - the latter being the Litmus paper of the living conditions in the villages. In the long history of the Apennines, the phases of expansion during the years of the Grand Tour and subsequent demographic contraction have been accompanied by different conditions of use of the surrounding open space, the effects of which have had, at certain times in history, a decisive influence on the overall economy of the inland areas.

Conclusions

In this essay, the identification and mapping of the Grand Tour itineraries should not be understood as an implicit invitation to undertake tourism enhancement initiatives, often erroneously considered the only possible way to revive the economy of the Apennine villages.

Rather, it is a project that invites us to look at abandoned places from new angles, suggested by the eyes of the first travellers who ventured there, guided by the desire to discover the traces of an exotic civilisation. But also to note the changes that have taken place, not necessarily in a negative sense, by comparing descriptions and illustrations from the past with contemporary images.

In the centuries when a small group of Grand Tour travellers discovered Abruzzo, the inland areas were the richest and most populous places in the whole region. The wool industry and related trading activities sustained a dignified, albeit modest, existence in the mountain villages. In Abruzzo, in fact, and in the rest of the Kingdom of Naples, until the beginning of the 19th century, the industry *par excellence* - industry in the full sense of the word - was that of wool, which later met with a period of crisis due to numerous factors, including local ones, such as the transformation of the land use regime in the Tavoliere area with the special law of 26 February 1865, recurring epidemics and the loss of protection and privileges enjoyed by shepherds, and global factors, such as the progressive affirmation of South African, Argentine and Australian wool at the expense of Italian wool (from the late 1840s).

Therefore, between the 18th and 19th centuries, the Apennines, to overturn Manlio Rossi-Doria's famous metaphor, were the "pulp" of the South, where resources, population and services were concentrated³. This centrality, not only geographical and spatial but also demographic and settlement-related, made the Apennines a reference point for the coastal and hill areas, which were still underdeveloped.

A quarter of the country's total population was concentrated in mountain areas in southern Italy, with an average density of almost 52 inhabitants per square kilometre⁴. The settlement structure was thus mainly represented by the mountains and inland hills.

It is easy to understand how at that time, and until the 19th century, the mountains of Abruzzo could express what Mercurio⁵ defines as a real "economic and cultural hegemony", which was felt "far beyond regional borders, through the complex mechanism of transhumance and wool production" (Mercurio, 1989 p. 812).

At the end of the Grand Tour era, the scenario in the mountains of Abruzzo changed profoundly. The Apennine areas slipped into a condition of economic and demographic marginality, while the development of the coastal areas became impetuous.

In the emerging Adriatic cities, job opportunities increased exponentially and the inhabitants of the inland areas, already accustomed to moving for the usual seasonal migrations - were the mountains not, as Braudel stated, "a factory of men at the service of others"? (Braudel, 1986, p. 37) - were increasingly seeking opportunities to work and settle permanently in the lowland towns⁶. From this viewpoint, the history of small mountain villages is in a way the other side of the story of the rise of the urban lifestyle. From peasant to townsman, a process of anthropological mutation involving an

³ The fortunate image of pulp and bone appears for the first time in the introduction to *Dieci anni di politica agraria*, by Manlio Rossi-Doria, published by Laterza in Bari in 1958.

⁴ The population-land density ratios varied widely, with an average density in the South of 52 inhabitants/square kilometre and regions such as Campania and Molise reaching around 69 and 64 inhabitants/square kilometres respectively, while Abruzzo had less than 40 inhabitants/square kilometre.

⁵ F. Mercurio, *Reti di comunicazione e formazione delle gerarchie territoriali*, in M. Costantini-C. Felice (edited by), *Storia d'Italia. Le regioni dall'Unità a oggi, L'Abruzzo*, Turin 2000, pp. 811-5.

⁶ The studies carried out in Abruzzo for the Agrarian Inquiry presided by Stefano Jacini show how the areas traditionally linked to seasonal emigration were the first to give rise to permanent transfers and expatriations.

increasing number of men and women in Italy in the second half of the 20th century.

If travellers on the Grand Tour were to return today, they would find a reversed land, with a centre (the mountains) depopulated and the marginal area (the coast) overcrowded. The skilfully cultivated lands that were once places of enchantment have been abandoned and slowly recaptured by woodland; many noble buildings and farms have fallen into ruin.

Preserving the memory of these landscapes and the people who populated them is an important task and a cornerstone for a territorial redefinition project that restores value and meaning to functional and identity relations which have long been lost.

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