



Royal Holloway, University of London

School of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Italian

**‘Fantastic News’: Literary Modes of
Representation in Dino Buzzati’s
Journalism**

by

Francesco Schiavon

Supervisor: Dr. Fabrizio De Donno

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Royal Holloway, University of London
2013

Declaration

I Francesco Schiavon hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Francesco Schiavon

27.4.2013

To Melania and Concetta, equally beautiful creatures

Abstract

My main purpose is to investigate the characteristics of the merging of the literary mode of the fantastic and journalism that constitutes the most original element within Buzzati's non-fictional production. I intend to analyze the modes of representation that his journalism borrowed from fiction in order to demonstrate that Buzzati's journalism forces us to challenge our idea of objectivity and that the fictional element of representation which characterizes his articles provides a further option to investigate the ambivalence of the real. In order to understand Buzzati's contribution to the creation of this new hybrid prose that I will define 'fantastic news' I intend to focus on the cultural role of Buzzati's journalistic production, his relationship with his historical, cultural and social time, and the readership effected by Buzzati's distinctive narrative between the 1940s and 1970s.

I will ground my discussion on journalistic and literary theory, by taking in particular consideration those works which deal with the fantastic and the relationship between journalism and fiction. The close reading of the most relevant collections of his pieces of journalism will help to identify the factors that shaped the author's non-fictional prose. Particular attention will be given to the influence of Fascist censorship, the experience from Italian colonies, and aboard Italian Navy ships during the Second World War. I will also investigate Buzzati's interest in occultism, paranormal phenomena, and crime news. My research aims to provide a broader idea of the cultural implications carried by Buzzati's journalistic writings and the author's role in the context of fantastic journalism as a literary mode.

Despite his great success all around the world, It was the French, not the Italian scholars who initially studied Buzzati. Furthermore, Italian scholarship focused on his journalistic production only at the end of the 1990s. The amount of criticism is considerable in French and Italy today, whereas Buzzati still remains almost unknown in Anglophone criticism. Lastly, in spite of the increasing interest in Buzzati's production among Italian scholars during the last three decades, Buzzati is still not unanimously included in the Italian literary canon and his works are rarely anthologized.

It is my purpose to treat Buzzati's articles as part of a unitary production. I will analyze the author's modes of representation in order to demonstrate how his atypical position in the Italian cultural panorama, often defined 'isolated' by scholars, is due to the continuous dialogue between fantastic literature and non-fiction which characterizes his entire oeuvre.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgementsp. 7

Introductionp. 8

1. An Attempt to Reverse the Process: A New Kind of Journalism
2. What Has Been Done
3. A World beyond the Page: Buzzati and His Time
4. Issues of Otherness
5. Fantasy and the Fantastic; Mode, Genre, and Kind: Clearing the Field
6. Entropy, Metamorphoses, and Reflexive Reading: From Theory to Texts

PART 1: Theory

Chapter 1: ‘Fantastic News’: a Theory.....p. 36

- 1.1 What ‘Fantastic News’ is
- 1.2 A World around the Writer
- 1.3 A Modernist Writer?
- 1.4 The Other and the Self: is Conciliation Possible?
- 1.5 Realities

PART 2: Texts

**Chapter 2: Colonized ‘Otherness’ – Correspondence from
Libya and Ethiopia (1933, 1939, 1940)**.....p. 99

- 2.1 ‘Fantastic News’ in the Age of Colonialism: Aesthetics and Politics
- 2.2 Desert and Heroes: History in *L’Africa di Buzzati*
- 2.3 Racism and ‘Orientalism’
- 2.4 Engagement and Disengagement

Chapter 3: ‘Fantastic News’ at War – *Il Buttafuoco* (1940-1943).....p. 128

3.1 Fantasy and Reality aboard Navy Ships

3.2 Battles, Heroes, and Dread

3.3 ‘Acque deserte’: Incommunicability of War and the Sea

3.4 Fantasy and Censorship

Chapter 4: Crime News – outside the Dogma of Referentiality

(1945-1960s).....p. 157

4.1 Genre Fiction and ‘Approaches to Fantasy’ (*Meraviglioso, Assurdo, and Orrido*)

4.2 Crimes, Gothic, and *Noir*

4.3 Imagination and *Mimesis*: the lost Cause of Realism

4.4 A Silent Revolt: Crime News and Society

Chapter 5: Paranormal Activities – Inquiries into the Unknown

(1950s and 1960s).....p. 187

5.1 Esoteric Journalism: (Not Only) a Question of Genres

5.2 Existentialism, Nostalgia, and Parody

5.2 Materialism, Spiritualism, and Didacticism

5.3 Looking for Meaning

Conclusion.....p. 218

Bibliography.....p. 231

Acknowledgements

First of all I am deeply grateful to my Supervisor, Dr. Fabrizio De Donno, whose expertise and passion guided me in every moment of my research. His patience and helpfulness were fundamental all along my way, from the early, chaotic months of the doctorate until the final submission. Knowing that I could always count on him was vital in order to arrive here. Thank you for believing in me and what I had to say, more than I believed in it myself.

Thanks to Dr. Giuliana Pieri, my Adviser. Her experience was essential to help me understand how to face my work in the best possible way. Thanks for her precise annotations, her suggestions, for the constant encouragement and appreciation.

I want to thank also Prof. Jane Everson and Dr. Stefano Jossa, my first contacts not only with Royal Holloway, but with the British academic world in general.

Along the arc of these years of work I met many scholars who were the source of suggestions and support and who somehow made the realization of this thesis possible, even without knowing it. Thanks to Dr. Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Dr. Maria Bianca Da Rif of the Centro Studi Dino Buzzati. Thanks to Prof. Guido Baldassarri, my supervisor in Padua: without him I would have never arrived to Royal Holloway. Thanks to Francesca Tramma of the Historical Archive of the *Corriere della Sera*; to Prof. Charles Burdett for his help with the study of the Italian colonial period; and to Prof. Federica Pedriali for the enthusiasm and the energy she transmitted me every time we met. Thanks to Dr. Katia Pizzi, Dr. Daniela La Penna, and Dr. Federico Faloppa for their suggestions and advice arising from the I.G.R.S. Italian Studies Joint Programme. Thanks to Dr. Monica Jansen, whose humility and gentleness are equal only to her greatness as a scholar.

I want to mention the colleagues that I met in these years who became good friends and those who were friends already and were with me at every step, also from far away. Thanks to Alessandro, for his generosity which is really without limits; to Michele who, in my first day at Royal Holloway, gave me the best welcome I could desire and who crossed with me a big part of the walk; to Federico, Stefano, Irene and Giacomo, ‘visiting’ only as students, not as friends; to Francesca and Ilaria, sweet study-mates at the British Library; to Mark, Federica, Daniela, Alessandro, Matilde, Wanda, Edoardo, and Alessandra who have been my family in London during these years; to Derek, whose kindness, helpfulness, and professionalism were fundamental to succeed in giving solidity to my writing.

Thanks to Prof. Biancarosa Bagioli, wherever she is, because she was the beginning of everything.

Thanks to Chiara, who enlightens my days, for having decided to take me by the hand.

Finally, the most important ‘thank you’: to my family. I cannot even begin to list the reasons for a gratitude and love that words will never be able to explain. Without you nothing would have been possible and this thesis is only the last finishing line we have crossed together. You are always with me, in every word I say, think or write.

Introduction

[...] the realistic adaptation of fantasy
[...] his odd mixture of fantasy with journalistic devices [...] resulted in what we might call fantastic journalism.¹

Lawrence Venuti

The aim of my thesis is to demonstrate how Dino Buzzati re-interpreted the role of journalism in the twentieth century by giving it a literary status through the use of fantasy. I intend to analyze the modes of representation that his journalism borrowed from fiction in order to demonstrate that Buzzati's journalism forces us to challenge our idea of objectivity. The fictional element of representation which characterizes his journalistic articles provides the opportunity of investigating the ambivalence of the real. Finally, the merging of literature and journalism which is at the core of his narrative guarantees him a unique role within the European modernism framework.

1. An Attempt to Reverse the Process: A New Kind of Journalism

The merging of journalistic devices with fantastic narrative that characterizes his fiction represents a unique case study in the Italian literary panorama, and is still understudied. There is, in particular, a consistent discrepancy between the regard for this author in Italian and French scholarship and the lack of it in Anglophone scholarship.² In general, it is a sufficient body of studies in English that is missing, whereas there are many works conducted by non-Italian native speakers.³ With the exception of scholars such as Felix Siddell and Lawrence Venuti, studies in English on

¹ Lawrence Venuti, 'Dino Buzzati's Fantastic Journalism', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 28 (1982), 79-91 (p. 80).

² For German and Spanish criticism on Buzzati see Nella Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini. Significati e fortune dell'opera buzzatiana* (Florence, Olschi, 1996), pp. 225-234.

³ See for example: Walter Geerts, 'Forma, spazio, visione', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 157-168 and 'Strutture retoriche del giornalismo buzzatiano: l'esempio delle cronache del caso Fort', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 29-44; Brigitte Le Gouez, 'Buzzati e il mare nel 'Buttafuoco'', *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 34-42; Kyoko Masuyama, 'Le corrispondenze di Dino Buzzati da Tokyo', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 129-144; Ulla Musarra-Schrøeder, 'Immagini di città. Dino Buzzati e la tradizione moderna - postmoderna', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 59-71; Tatjana Peruško, 'La realtà deforme. La presenza del grottesco nei racconti di Dino Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 2 (1997), 112-135. Other major works on Buzzati conducted by non-Italian native speakers will be mentioned throughout my introduction.

Dino Buzzati focus either only on his major works or on very general questions about his poetics.⁴

No other contemporary Italian writer who produced journalistic works used genres such as reportage or crime news as Buzzati did: in his hands they became a literary genre in which fantastic literature and journalism were put in dialogue. This special connection between his fictional and non-fictional production was seminal since the conception of *Il deserto dei Tartari*, which is his most well-known and critically acclaimed novel.⁵ Analyses of Buzzati's journalism have so far attempted to scrutinize and detect where Buzzati's fiction could be seen as grounded on journalistic style and informed by his years of practice in the newsroom. The impossibility of separating a *Buzzati-giornalista* from a *Buzzati-scrittore* – regardless of the specific work analyzed – appears to be the consensus now among many Buzzati's scholars. However, this consensus seems to be always stated as a premise which is left aside when it comes to decide whether or not Buzzati's journalistic articles deserve to be considered works of art as highbrow as his novels and short stories. Journalism is usually described as a useful training for Buzzati, a sort of field of apprenticeship in the process of developing his bold, clear, and straight-to-the-point prose. Journalistic practice is nevertheless always considered aesthetically inferior when compared to his fantastic production. My goal is to prove that Buzzati's often quoted statement 'l'optimum del Giornalista coincide con l'optimum della Letteratura'⁶ does not describe only a pose or a provocation, but an actual aesthetic proposition.

⁴ See: Rolando Caputo, 'Communicating Vessels: 'Il Deserto dei Tartari': Literature and Film', *Spunti e Ricerche*, 13 (1998), 111-122; Franco Schettino, 'The Dream-Like technique in 'Il Deserto dei Tartari': the Reader's Delight and the Critic's Nightmare', in *The Anxious Subject: Nightmares and Daydream in Literature and Film*, ed. by Moshe Lazar (Malibu: Undena, 1983), pp. 69-88; Stephen Martin, 'Exploring the Intertextual: Buzzati and his Readers of 'I Sette Messaggeri'', *Italica*, 72 (1), Spring 1995, 70-82; Judy Rawson, 'Dino Buzzati', in *Writers and Society in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Michael Caesar and Peter Hainsworth (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), pp. 191-210; and Judy Rawson, 'La lingua dei colori in Buzzati', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 285-293. In other occasions Buzzati has been mentioned within the context of comparative studies: it is the case of Cristina Pugliese who compared *Il deserto* to Coetzee's novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* (see Cristina Pugliese, 'Waiting for the Borders: A Comparative Study of Dino Buzzati's 'Il Deserto dei Tartari' and J.K. Coetzee's 'Waiting for the Barbarians'', *Italian Studies in Southern Africa*, 14 (2), 2001, 57-79); Anthony Winner's research 'Authenticity, Authority, and Application: Buzzati, Kundera, Gordimer', *Kenyon Review*, 20 (3-4), Summer-Fall 1998, 94-120; and Leon Riegel's study on the relationship between literature and war which comprehended a parallel study of Buzzati, Junger and Gracq (see Leon Riegel, 'Waiting for War to Break Out: Junger, Buzzati and Gracq', in *Literature and War*, ed. by David Bevon (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), pp. 97-108).

⁵ Dino Buzzati, *Il deserto dei Tartari* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1940).

⁶ From an interview to Dino Buzzati, *Corriere d'Informazione*, 11th June 1966. Stress added.

The critical attention that Buzzati's fiction received during the last twenty years may be extended further to his non-fiction. My intention is to show that the originality of Buzzati's work comes from the fact that he wrote without considering his journalistic production as marginal when compared to his fiction. Despite the recent increasing attention towards Buzzati from both Italian and foreign scholars, a comprehensive analysis of the relationship and connections between his fictional and journalistic production – conducted without the bias of considering highbrow the former and lowbrow the latter – is still lacking. Buzzati's journalism, even when it is approached without prejudice, is always considered ancillary when compared to his major fictional works.⁷ The most prominent Buzzati scholars – such as Giuliano Gramigna, Claudio Marabini, and Maria Luisa Altieri Biagi – have focused their attention on an investigation of how Buzzati used journalistic techniques in his fictional and fantastic production.⁸ The fantastic is always seen as a goal for Buzzati, and journalism is supposed to constitute a sort of toolbox from which to take useful instruments. I would like to reverse this process by showing that the author chose also to enrich his non-fiction with devices and techniques typical of fantastic literature: in these cases the single piece of news is not only a thematic starting point, but it is the central core of the fantastic narration. The originality of my analysis lies in this attempt to reverse a process which has always been described as mono-directional: from journalism to fiction. My premise is that, for Buzzati, it was not only journalism which could function as a toolbox for fantastic literature, but also the other way around: my argument states that Buzzati used devices which are typical of literary fiction within his journalistic reportage and that he did this not only when the articles were intended for publishing in the literary section of the newspaper, but also when they were meant for the news section or the front page.

Journalism and literature represented the most important activities in Buzzati's life even from a biographical point of view: he was employed by the *Corriere della*

⁷ In 1996 Nella Giannetto writes: 'C'è poi la questione del giornalismo. [...] l'attività giornalistica, cui Buzzati non volle mai rinunciare, offre anche il destro [...] per indicare nella sua opera un altro limite: egli non è un vero scrittore, ma un giornalista che fa lo scrittore e, come la maggior parte dei giornalisti-scrittori, è generalmente approssimativo e superficiale, interessato più a colpire e a commuovere che a suscitare in chi legge una profonda emozione estetica o una fattiva presa di coscienza di classe', in Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, p. 247.

⁸ See: Claudio Marabini, 'Buzzati e l'elzeviro', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 353-358; Maria Luisa Altieri Biagi, 'L'incipit cronistico nei testi narrativi di Buzzati', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 369-390; and Giuliano Gramigna, 'Buzzati: giornalismo e narrazione', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 347-352.

Sera in 1928, he covered all the roles of the journalistic ranks, from the correction of drafts to the war reportage from the Italian Navy ships during the Second World War, to the vice-editorship of *La Domenica del Corriere* from 1950 to 1963.⁹ Driven by strong moral values and an almost obsessive inclination towards rules and order, he always remained faithful to the *Corriere*, irrespectively of changes in the newspaper's political and ideological tendencies. Especially during the first part of his professional life, Buzzati rarely entered the cultural and political debate of his time and always avoided clear-cut ideological and political positions.¹⁰ This distance from active participation in the social and cultural debates was unusual in the Italian literary panorama, which was more familiar with the image of the *intellettuale impegnato*, as the examples of Benedetto Croce and Antonio Gramsci demonstrate. Even though this situation slightly changed in the postwar period and especially during the 1950s and the 1960s, the fact that Buzzati was a full-time journalist and that he never took a firm anti-Fascist stance created a prejudice, especially among Marxist scholars, which did not foster his inclusion in the official canon of Italian literature.¹¹ Underestimated by critics during his life and reassessed by scholarship after his death, and in particular during the last twenty years, Buzzati is one of the most translated Italian authors of the twentieth century,¹² and his fictional production has been unanimously defined as fantastic literature.¹³

⁹ Buzzati became vice-director of *La Domenica del Corriere* in 1950, under the direction of Eligio Possenti. He worked in the weekly newspaper until 1963, in fact directing it. See for details *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2006).

¹⁰ Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, p. 7: '[...] il suo italiano non piaceva neanche al suo professore di lettere, [...] gli intellettuali impegnati e gli accademici più illustri l'hanno ignorato perché non capiva niente di politica e di problemi sociali, di teoria della letteratura, strutturalismo e psicoanalisi'.

¹¹ See Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, pp. 225-252. In order to prove the bias of the left wing criticism Giannetto quotes in particular: Paolo Milano, 'Dino Buzzati o il brivido borghese', *L'Espresso*, 20 July 1958; Walter Pedullà, 'Buzzati scivola nel buonsenso', *Avanti*, 28 June 1966; Giorgio Bocca, 'I rischi e i timori di un reazionario', *Il Giorno*, 27 October 1971.

¹² See Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, p. 225: 'Sono pochi gli autori italiani di tutti i tempi che possono vantare un numero di traduzioni in lingua straniera paragonabile al numero di quelle che portano il nome di Buzzati'.

¹³ *Barnabo delle montagne* (Milan, Rome: Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1933) and *Il segreto del bosco vecchio* (Milan, Rome: Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1935) present an author who writes about fairylands in which the protagonists are marvellous mountains, magic woods, speaking winds and in which men happen to be almost a dissonant element within the natural, a-temporal environment. Even after the success of *Il deserto dei Tartari*, Buzzati remained faithful to fantasy in his most important collections of short stories: *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942) and *Paura alla Scala* (Milan: Mondadori, 1949). After the end of the war, social problems and a particular interest towards the contradictions of modern society entered more explicitly his poetic imaginary. Some of the social hints of *Paura alla Scala* return in *Il crollo della Baliverna* (Milan: Mondadori, 1954), in the collection *Sessanta racconti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1958) and in *Il Colombre* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966). The novel *Il grande ritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1960) is the only example of science-fiction within Buzzati's bibliography, whereas the controversial and semi-autobiographical *Un amore* (Milan: Mondadori, 1963) is an exceptional, even though still problematic, diversion into realism.

Buzzati enriched the cultural panorama of his time with a new genre, born of the fusion of the fantastic mode of representation and journalistic techniques which crossed the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction: I shall call this genre ‘fantastic news’.¹⁴ The ambition to go beyond the limits of different genres by merging diverse modes of narration and representation is evident also within his fictional production: *La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia*, which was born as an illustrated fairytale for children, was in fact an allegorical story on the corruption brought by human society within nature;¹⁵ *Poema a fumetti*, on the other hand, is a unique example of the literary comic, illustrated by the author himself, in which the story of a modern Orpheus is told through his journey into a hell which resembles a contemporary metropolis.¹⁶ These works are probably the most distant from his journalistic activity; nonetheless, they highlight the author’s quest for the realization of a narrative which is able to unite to literary prose other forms of communication. Buzzati’s narrative is the result of the blending between the journalistic genre of reportage and the literary mode of the fantastic that was defined for the first time by Lawrence Venuti as ‘fantastic journalism’:¹⁷ in following his path, I shall not analyze short stories that were written to be inserted in fictional collections, but focus instead on how the journalist, as opposed to the novelist, was able to enrich the news by adopting fictional techniques borrowed from fantasy.

2. What Has Been Done

Volumes which collected Buzzati’s journalistic activity were mostly edited posthumously. As Daniele Corradi suggests, the publication of this production can be divided into three different periods: between 1972 and 1989 five books came to light; and from 1989 to 2002 almost one book per year dedicated at least in part to Buzzati’s journalism was published.¹⁸ Between 2001 and 2004 the collections are divided in

¹⁴ My definition of ‘fantastic news’ is of course debtor of Lawrence Venuti’s ‘fantastic journalism’: I will explain in chapter 1 the reasons for my decision to modify Venuti’s terminology while building anyway my argument on his seminal work.

¹⁵ Dino Buzzati, *La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1945).

¹⁶ Dino Buzzati, *Poema a fumetti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969).

¹⁷ Lawrence Venuti, ‘Dino Buzzati’s Fantastic Journalism’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 28 (1982), 79-91.

¹⁸ Daniele Corradi, ‘Excursus tra le antologie degli scritti giornalistici di Dino Buzzati’, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 14 (2009), 77-100. These are the titles of the collections of Buzzati’s works which include journalism up to 2010: *Cronache terrestri*, ed. by Domenico Porzio (Milan: Mondadori, 1972); *I misteri d’Italia*, (Milan: Mondadori, 1978); *Dino Buzzati al giro d’Italia*, ed. by Claudio Marabini (Milan: Mondadori, 1981); *Cronache nere*, ed. by Oreste Del Buono (Rome, Naples: Theoria, 1984); *Le montagne di vetro*,

thematic sessions and the editing of the books alternates previously unpublished pieces of news with those which appeared only on the pages of the *Corriere*. Among this last group are the collections edited by Lorenzo Viganò which will form part of the core of my close readings: *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati* and *Le cronache fantastiche*.

Until 1980, Dino Buzzati has been almost ignored by Italian scholarship and quoted only as a minor surrealist novelist.¹⁹ Despite the success of his work both in Italy and abroad, he was considered an isolated element within the Italian literary establishment of the twentieth century. His estrangement from both the political and cultural debates of his time marginalized him and created an idiosyncratic situation among academic scholarship: while in Italy Buzzati was being ignored, in France *Il deserto dei Tartari* was considered a masterpiece from its first translation in 1949.²⁰ This happened despite the interest that renowned intellectuals such as Carlo Bo, Eugenio Montale, and Italo Calvino showed for the journalist of the *Corriere*.²¹ The few Italian studies on the author which are dated before the 1980s concentrated only on contents and themes of Buzzati's novels and short stories, whilst ignoring his prose, which appeared to be too close to journalism to be rated as literature.²² However, there

ed. by Enrico Camanni (Turin: Vivalda, 1990); *Lo strano Natale di Mr. Scrooge e altre storie*, ed. by Domenico Porzio (Milan: Mondadori, 1990); *Bestiario* (Milan: Mondadori, 1991); *Il Buttafuoco* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992); *Opere scelte*, ed. by Giulio Carnazzi (Milan: Mondadori, 1998); *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2002); *Le cronache fantastiche*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2003); *Il panettone non bastò* (Milan: Mondadori, 2004); *I fuorilegge della montagna. Uomini, cime, imprese*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2010).

¹⁹ Still in 1992, Pietro Sarzana writes: '[...] *Il deserto dei Tartari* [...] ottiene un successo di pubblico persino superiore ai suoi meriti [...]. C'è chi ha voluto vedere in questo una ripresa dei temi dell'assurdo cari a Kafka: e il paragone tra i due autori è diventato quasi di maniera, ma certo non tiene conto del dislivello esistente tra il grandissimo Kafka e l'onesto ma più superficiale Buzzati, che si potrà al più ritenere un attento e partecipe divulgatore delle tematiche diffuse dell'angoscia e dell'alienazione', in Cesare Segre and Clelia Martignoni, *Testi nella storia. La letteratura italiana dalle origini al Novecento*, ed. by Gianfranca Lavezzi, Clelia Martignoni, Pietro Sarzana, and Rossana Saccani (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), Vol 4, *Il Novecento*, pp. 840, 841. In Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, p. 241: 'I Falqui, i Cecchi, i De Robertis [...] si pronunciano, ma i loro giudizi sono tutt'altro che teneri e molto contribuiscono a consolidare quell'etichetta [...] di un kafkismo formato famiglia, addomesticato e prudente [...] di cui Buzzati non riuscirà per decenni a liberarsi'. For a detailed account of the history of Buzzati's fortune among academic scholarship and its situation at the present moment see: *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent'anni di promozione di studi dell'Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010).

²⁰ Dino Buzzati, *Le Désert des Tartares* (Paris: Laffont, 1949).

²¹ See: Eugenio Montale, 'Coriandoli di poesia', *Corriere della Sera*, 21 March 1951; Nella Giannetto, 'Uno scambio di lettere fra Buzzati e Calvino', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 1 (1996), 99-112; Italo Calvino, 'Quel deserto che ho attraversato anch'io', *La Repubblica*, 1 November 1980, p. 15; Carlo Bo, 'Buzzati e il tarlo della verità', *La Nuova Antologia*, 1468 (1933); Carlo Bo, 'Poetica pura', *Omnibus*, 21 April 1949; Carlo Bo, 'In quel preciso momento', *La Fiera Letteraria*, 7 January 1951.

²² See Giacomo Debenedetti, 'Dino Buzzati, premio Strega', *La Fiera letteraria*, 20 July 1958; Emilio Cecchi, 'Nuovi racconti di Buzzati', in Emilio Cecchi, *Letteratura italiana del Novecento* (Milan: Garzanti, 1972), pp. 1006-1011; and Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, p. 246: '[...] Continii [...] non

were some exceptions, in particular: Fausto Gianfranceschi's first monograph on Buzzati of 1967.²³ Gianfranceschi's work was appreciated by Buzzati, who wrote a letter to thank the critic: the event is remarkable given Buzzati's well-known reluctance to interfere in the critical debate on his production.²⁴ Gianfranceschi's study was followed in 1974 by Antonia Arslan's *Invito alla lettura di Dino Buzzati*;²⁵ Ilaria Crotti's *Dino Buzzati* in 1977,²⁶ and a decade later by Claudio Toscani's *Guida alla lettura di Dino Buzzati*,²⁷ and Giovanna Ioli's *Dino Buzzati*.²⁸ Finally, in 1975, Mondadori dedicated to the writer a volume of its series *I Meridiani*: despite containing only a small part of Buzzati's production and ignoring completely his journalistic work, this volume, entitled *Romanzi e racconti*, drove to a deeper study of the author, especially thanks to the introduction by Giuliano Gramigna.²⁹ However, none of the above monographs devoted any attention to Buzzati's journalism which remained unstudied for decades.

The first signal of a new interest in Buzzati's narrative centred on his language and appeared in 1982, with the publication of *Dino Buzzati*, the proceedings of a conference held in Venice in November 1980.³⁰ The volume contains a paper written by Andrea Zanzotto, who suggested for the first time how Buzzati's language needed to be analyzed more systematically for its characteristic of being only apparently simple

solo si guarda bene dal dedicargli una di quelle magistrali analisi che ha riservato a tanti autori, anche novecenteschi, ma addirittura omette del tutto il nome di Buzzati sia nelle due edizioni della sua antologia italiana moderna e contemporanea, sia [...] nelle due edizioni della sua *Italia magica*'.

²³ Fausto Gianfranceschi, *Dino Buzzati* (Turin: Borla, 1967).

²⁴ Nella Giannetto, 'Di solito ciò che si scrive su di me mi annoia terribilmente...': una lettera inedita di Buzzati sul libro dedicatogli da Gianfranceschi', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 2 (1997), 164-170.

²⁵ Antonia Arslan, *Invito alla lettura di Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1993 [1974]).

²⁶ Ilaria Crotti, *Dino Buzzati* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1977).

²⁷ Claudio Toscani, *Guida alla lettura di Buzzati* (Milan: Mondadori, 1987).

²⁸ Giovanna Ioli, *Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1988).

²⁹ Dino Buzzati, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Giuliano Gramigna (Milan: Milano, 1975). The absence of journalistic works in this volume has been mended by another editorial outcome: the second volume of the collection *I Meridiani* which Mondadori dedicated to the author. The volume, entitled *Opere scelte*, is edited by Giulio Carnazzi and its main difference with the previous *Romanzi e racconti* is that it offers a complete overview of Buzzati's oeuvre. *Il deserto dei Tartari* and *Un amore* are examples of novels; the fabulous narrative is represented by *La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia*; *Sessanta racconti* and a selection from *Il Colombre* give an overview of the short stories; there are two plays: *Un caso clinico* and *I suggeritori*; two librettos for music: *Procedura penale* and *Ferrovia sopraelevata*; and a selection of poems: *Il capitano Pic*; *Scusi da che parte per piazza Duomo?*; and *Tre colpi alla porta*. Lastly, there is a sample from Buzzati's journalism: *elzeviri*; crime news; works of reportage; and critical reviews on art, which prove to be able to stay next to more critically acclaimed narratives. One of Carnazzi's most important operations provided is a huge philological apparatus published for every single text: the collection of variants demonstrates the almost obsessive linguistic research of the writer in order to achieve a style as synthetic and communicative as possible.

³⁰ *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982).

whilst revealing itself instead to be the result of hard work and formal rigour.³¹ During the 1970s, the most important contributions came from the *Association Internationale des Amis de Dino Buzzati*, which published the journal *Cahiers Buzzati* from 1977 to 1994 and dedicated the last issue to the proceedings of the conference *Dino Buzzati: un écrivain européen* held in 1992.³² The main topic of the volume is the problem of the translation of Buzzati's prose: this choice gives an idea of the importance that the author – translated into more than thirty languages – had outside Italy, and highlights the intention of the *Association* of attracting the scholars' attention on the study of Buzzati's language. It is no coincidence that the newborn *Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, in 1994, published the volume *Dino Buzzati: la lingua, le lingue*, which represents the first Italian contribution to the linguistic research on Buzzati.³³ The conference's proceedings demonstrated the literariness of Buzzati's prose, by withdrawing the prejudice towards it derived from the journalistic apprenticeship of the author. Cinzia Mares states: 'Il convegno ha [...] offerto l'occasione per smentire ufficialmente quel famoso *cliché*, che accreditava a Buzzati l'appellativo di scrittore facile da leggere e da tradurre. In questo libro viene sostenuta e dimostrata, per la prima volta, la letterarietà della lingua buzzatiana [...]'.³⁴

The role of space in Buzzati's narrative has also been the subject of critical scrutiny. Buzzati organizes space mainly through the ambiguous conflict between the three most important geographical settings of his fiction: mountains and deserts, which represent nature, versus the city as a concrete jungle.³⁵ Marie-Hélène Caspar, editor of

³¹ Andrea Zanzotto, 'Per Dino Buzzati', in *Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Fontanella, pp.77-82.

³² *Dino Buzzati: un écrivain européen. Problèmes de traduction et d'analyse textuelle*, in *Cahiers Buzzati*, 9 (1994).

³³ *Dino Buzzati: la lingua, le lingue (Atti del Convegno internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 26-29 settembre 1991)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1994). The *Associazione Dino Buzzati* was founded by Nella Giannetto in 1988, but it became international only in 1994 after having joined the French *Association*.

³⁴ Cinzia Mares, 'Il punto su Buzzati', *Bollettino '900*, 2 (2002),

<<http://www3.unibo.it/boll900/numeri/2001-ii/w-bol/Mares/Mares.html>> [accessed 20 October 2010]. Mares also mentions three more studies that enriched the analysis of Buzzati's language: Nella Giannetto, *Il coraggio della fantasia. Studi e ricerche intorno a Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Arcipelago, 1989); Maria Luisa Altieri Biagi, 'Aspetti sintattici della scrittura narrativa di Buzzati', in *Norma e lingua in Italia: alcune riflessioni fra passato e presente* (Milan: Istituto Lombardo di scienze e lettere, 1997), pp. 147-165; Angelo Colombo, 'Un linguaggio universalmente comprensibile'. *Correzioni e varianti nei primi racconti di Buzzati* (Seren del Grappa: Edizioni DBS, 1996). To these works I would also add Franca Baratto Trentin, 'Le lingue di Buzzati', *Studi buzzatiani*, 1 (1996), 123-128; Marie-Hélène Caspar, 'L'organizzazione spaziale nei racconti di Dino Buzzati', in *Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Fontanella, pp. 121-138, and Valter Deon, 'Strategie d'uso dei tempi verbali in tre racconti di Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 1 (1996), 129-135.

³⁵ See in particular Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, pp. 12-18.

the journal *Narrativa*, confirmed the particular attention dedicated to Buzzati by French scholarship by editing, in 1994, a special issue of the journal entitled *Dino Buzzati. Immagini dal mondo*, which focused on the role of particular places and settings, such as the concept of the world as an island and the negative connotations of the metropolis.³⁶ Two other studies worth mentioning and published during the same year are *Montagne di vetro, di pietra, di carta. Le montagne di Buzzati fra vissuto e rappresentazione*³⁷ and *Tre voci sospette. Buzzati, Piovene, Parise*.³⁸ Whereas the former collects several papers on the analysis of the relationship between Buzzati and the mountains, either from a biographical or a representational point of view, the latter is a study by the scholar Ilaria Crotti on the theme of the geographical culture that unites the three authors from the Veneto.³⁹

Journalism is the youngest field of investigation of Buzzatian studies: apart from Laurence Venuti, who anticipated Italian scholars with his work, and after a pioneering attempt by Renato Bertacchini in 1976,⁴⁰ the first essay which analyzes this part of Buzzati's work is Alberto Cavallari's 'Buzzati journaliste'.⁴¹ The paper was presented in Venice in 1982 (but it had already been published in *Cahiers Buzzati*, 2, 1978, 27-34), and was followed in 1985 by the study 'Le journaliste confronté au merveilleux quotidien'.⁴² Cavallari's interest in the manifestation of the 'marvellous' in Buzzati's journalism underlines the intimate connection between the fictional and the factual in Buzzati's poetics. An interesting contribution is offered also by Paola Lagomanzini in 1992 with her 'Appunti su Buzzati giornalista'.⁴³ However, the first strong incentive in Italy to the close examination of the writer's journalistic production was given by the international conference *Buzzati giornalista*, held in 1995 in Feltre and Belluno and organized by the Centro Studi Dino Buzzati. The volume which collects the proceedings

³⁶ *Dino Buzzati. Immagini dal mondo. Etudes réunies par Marie-Hélène Caspar*, in *Narrativa*, 6 (1994).

³⁷ *Montagne di vetro, di pietra, di carta. Le montagne di Buzzati fra vissuto e rappresentazione* (Turin: Vivalda, 1994).

³⁸ Ilaria Crotti, *Tre voci sospette. Buzzati, Piovene, Parise* (Milan: Mursia, 1994).

³⁹ On the topic of space see also Ulla Mussarra-Schrøeder, 'Immagini di città. Dino Buzzati e la tradizione moderna - postmoderna', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 59-71; Alessandro Scarsella, 'Buzzati e il mito della città nella letteratura italiana contemporanea', in *Il pianeta Buzzati*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 431-446; and Luigi De Anna, *Dino Buzzati e il segreto della montagna* (Verbania: Tararà, 1997).

⁴⁰ Renato Bertacchini, 'Buzzati cronista terrestre', *Italianistica*, 5 (1976), 309-319.

⁴¹ Alberto Cavallari, 'Buzzati journaliste', in *Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Fontanella, pp. 267-272.

⁴² Alberto Cavallari, 'Le journaliste confronté au merveilleux quotidien', *Cahiers Buzzati*, 6 (1985), 59-65.

⁴³ Paola Lagomanzini, 'Appunti su Buzzati giornalista', in *Il pianeta Buzzati*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 431-445.

of the conference traces the milestones of Buzzati's journalistic career through an analysis of the role of the *'meraviglioso mestiere'* within the author's oeuvre.

Walter Geerts concentrates on the rhetorical structures of Buzzatian journalism with a close reading of a selection of crime news:⁴⁴ the choice of texts is relevant because crime news was the most successful genre within Buzzati's journalistic production. It is no coincidence that crime news constituted the main part of *Cronache terrestri*, which was Buzzati's first posthumous work and at the same time the first publication dedicated to his journalistic production. Besides, two more crime news collections come to light between 1984 and 2002: *Cronache nere* and *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*. Maria Luisa Altieri Biagi applied a critical methodology as rigorous as Geerts', by focusing on the linguistic devices that characterize Buzzati's news, such as the almost constant use of the past tense.⁴⁵ She catalogues them under the label *'concomitanze temporali'* by referring to the use of *imperfetto* and *passato remoto* in particular, and shows how most of Buzzati's short stories start with a journalistic *incipit*. Fabio Atzori, one of the most active Italian scholars in the analysis of Buzzati's language, offers a close linguistic examination of the early production of the writer between literature and journalism.⁴⁶ Other studies collected in the volume focus on the connection between Buzzati's fictional and factual production: Giuliano Gramigna in *'Buzzati: giornalismo e narrazione'* suggests that the journalistic practice entered the fantastic narrative by becoming its topic,⁴⁷ whereas Claudio Marabini, in his study of *'elzeviri buzzatiani'*, finds this form of the journalistic article as particularly suitable for Buzzati's style, since it allows him to create fantastic stories while remaining linked to reality.⁴⁸ Marabini argues that Buzzati puts a distance between the story and the news in order to set the latter in another dimension, by creating in this way an allegory.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Walter Geerts, 'Strutture retoriche del giornalismo buzzatiano: l'esempio delle cronache del caso Fort', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 29-44.

⁴⁵ Maria Luisa Altieri Biagi, 'L'incipit cronistico nei testi narrativi di Buzzati', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 369-390.

⁴⁶ Fabio Atzori, 'Alias in via Solferino: la lingua del primo Buzzati (1928-1940) tra giornalismo e letteratura', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 423-452.

⁴⁷ Giuliano Gramigna, 'Buzzati: giornalismo e narrazione', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 347-352.

⁴⁸ Claudio Marabini, 'Buzzati e l'elzeviro', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 353-358.

⁴⁹ It is impossible to remember here all the contributions included in *Buzzati giornalista*. However, it will be necessary to quote at least the most relevant and influential for my thesis: for Buzzati's war reportage see Lorena Bizzotto, 'Buzzati e il ritratto eroico: 'Un comandante'', pp. 471-480; for journalism on the paranormal see Giuseppina Giacomazzi, 'Cronaca e racconto nei 'Misteri d'Italia' fra scetticismo e tensione metafisica', pp. 495-512; and Alessandro Scarsella, 'Una paura senza soggetto': l'inviato Buzzati a caccia di misteri', pp. 63-74; for the relationship journalism - literature see Giuliana

The study of allegory is not a novelty for the criticism on Buzzati: the novelty of Marabini's study is the idea that allegory is based on putting the news in dialogue with fantasy. I suggest that it is possible to take this concept a step further, by arguing that the piece of news represents the first part of a bi-directional relationship between fiction and non-fiction, the aim of which is to dig into reality in order to discover its hidden tracks by using the fantastic as a survey instrument. I will try to demonstrate with a close reading of Buzzati's works of reportage that this process began to be present in his journalism from the articles written during the Second World War. The object is to offer a critical reading of these articles, by taking as a starting point the work that Caspar began in 1997 with *L'Africa di Buzzati*.⁵⁰ This volume is a collection of seventy-four articles that Buzzati wrote during his work as a special correspondent for the *Corriere della Sera* from two Italian colonies: Libya and Ethiopia. He was in the former during 1933 and in the latter between 1939 and 1940. The collection includes sixty articles which were published in the newspaper and fourteen which the Fascist censorship blocked. Caspar's volume is enriched by an extensive apparatus of notes and illustrations which document the phenomenon of Italian colonization from Buzzati's particular viewpoint. Caspar also dedicated her paper for the conference *Buzzati giornalista* to Buzzati's presence in Ethiopia, by underlining again the literary characteristics of this production.⁵¹ Caspar's example was followed by Emmanuel Mattiato who, in 2002, published the article 'Le recours au mythe dans les articles africains de Dino Buzzati (1933-1940)' in the journal *Narrativa*,⁵² after having already explored the problem of Buzzati's relationship with Fascist censorship.⁵³ Caspar and Mattiato's studies created the conditions for an examination of Buzzati's journalism which took into account its relationship with fantasy by considering this production as inseparable from the political context in which it developed. My object is to recover this historical approach to the texts and to demonstrate how Buzzati developed and

Finocchiaro Chimirri, 'Dalla 'terza pagina' al volume: un lavoro 'in progress'', pp. 359-368; and Felix Siddell, 'Buzzati e la luna', pp. 157-168; for the crime news see Franco Di Bella, 'Buzzati giornalista e la cronaca', pp. 21-28; Ivo Prandin, 'Buzzati e le catastrofi', pp. 53-62; and Guido Vergani, 'Buzzati inviato speciale', pp. 45-52.

⁵⁰ *L'Africa di Buzzati*, ed. by Marie-Hélène Caspar (Paris: E. Univeristé Paris X, 1997).

⁵¹ Marie-Hélène Caspar, 'Buzzati in Etiopia: un cronista scrittore', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 75-128.

⁵² Emmanuel Mattiato, 'Le recours au mythe dans les articles africains de Dino Buzzati (1933-1940)', *Narrativa*, 6, (1994), 211-245.

⁵³ See Emmanuel Mattiato, 'Ecrivains-journalistes sous le fascisme. Le cas de Dino Buzzati et du 'Corriere della Sera'', *Narrativa*, 18 (2000), monographic issue.

improved the merging of fiction and non-fiction in his journalism throughout his career, from the first attempt of the colonial period, the experience of the war, crime news, and, finally, his articles about paranormal phenomena.

3. A World Beyond the Page: Buzzati and His Time

The setting of a clear historical background will be the necessary premise for the understanding of how Buzzati's journalism evolved throughout different phases of his career. I will indicate three periods in particular: the production during Fascism, his work during the 1950s, and finally his activity in the 1960s. Buzzati developed his unique merging of fantasy and news from the beginning of his career, which means during a very particular historical context shaped by Fascism, colonialism, and the Second World War. However, Buzzati continued to work for the *Corriere* during the dramatic postwar years. In particular, the presence of Fascist censorship constitutes an interesting and problematic challenge for the analysis of Buzzati's war correspondence, whereas the political and cultural changes within the newborn Italian Republic influenced his most famous works of reportage as well as his fictional production. It is particularly interesting to note here that the bibliography on the influence of censorship on journalism during Fascism is very poor, as observed by Guido Bonsaver in his book *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*.⁵⁴ Besides, there is no study which tries to analyze the role of Dino Buzzati in the context of the history of journalism in order to understand his original contribution to the evolution of the profession. These two gaps cannot be underestimated or remain unrelated, for Buzzati worked for the *Corriere* without any break between 1928 and 1972, by keeping his role of reporter and *elzevirista* before, during, and after the Fascist regime.⁵⁵

The role of contemporary history in Buzzati's work has been underestimated. The only exceptions within this field of studies are the works of some French scholars who tried to read the texts by going beyond a strictly literary approach: the work of Yves

⁵⁴ Guido Bonsaver, *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

⁵⁵ The word *elzevirista* indicates a journalist who is specialised in the journalistic form of *elzeviro*. The *elzeviro* is a typeface created in the sixteenth-century by the engraver Christoffel van Dyck for the Dutch family Elzevier. The Italian press uses the term to indicate a piece of literary criticism or theatre, or a scholarly reflection on a topical issue or customs, which is usually placed in the cultural page of the newspaper. Originally, the *elzeviro* was the opening article of the third page. See: Paolo Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano. Dalle gazzette a Internet* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), p. 138.

Panafieu in particular is of seminal importance for an ideological and sociological inquiry into Buzzati's prose. In 'Aspetti storici, morali e politici del discorso sull'impotenza', Panafieu argues that Buzzati's fantastic narrative hides a strong critique of modern society, by concentrating on a 'decisa volontà polemica, accentrata sui risvolti morali, sociali, economici e politici [...] che fin dall'inizio Buzzati ha proposto ai suoi lettori'.⁵⁶ After 1945, the main target of Buzzati's polemic is what Panafieu calls 'problematica del potere' (p. 25), an issue organized by the journalist in three different categories: moral, economical and political satire. Panafieu's idea about the controversial statements of Buzzati on wars is particularly relevant:

Le stesse guerre, nonostante clamorose dichiarazioni dell'autore in certe interviste, sono considerate in modo molto critico: se l'esteta Buzzati si commuove davanti allo spettacolo di un assalto della cavalleria, l'uomo, il testimone Buzzati sono profondamente colpiti dal macello generalizzato cui i vari poteri vigenti e gli Stati Maggiori hanno inviato i popoli del mondo in questo nostro ventesimo secolo (p. 26).

Panafieu's conclusion is that history cannot be set apart too easily when analyzing Buzzati's texts, despite their fantastic literary nature:

[...] credo [...] che sotto l'apparente evasione [...] [Buzzati] ha saputo anche proporre al lettore una sensibilità critica riguardo a comportamenti sociali che il suo sguardo lucido vedeva attuarsi [...]. La testimonianza non poteva essere altro che velata [...]. Quelli erano tempi in cui [...] non gli si apriva altra via che quella del conformismo [...] o dell'evasione (p. 43).

Panafieu's analysis is dealt with greater depth in *Janus*, where the scholar conducts a systematic close reading of the entire fictional production of the author, in order to discover its sociological and ideological implications.⁵⁷ Panafieu underlines in particular the increasing presence of historical themes within Buzzati's fantastic narrative after the end of the Second World War. Another French scholar, Emmanuel Mattiato, in *Ecrivains-journalistes sous le fascisme. Le cas de Dino Buzzati et du 'Corriere della Sera'* tries to take the discussion of the political implications of

⁵⁶ Yves Panafieu, 'Aspetti storici, morali e politici del discorso sull'impotenza', in *Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Fontanella, pp. 23-43 (p. 25). Further references to this article are given in the text.

⁵⁷ Yves Panafieu, *Janus: Propositions pour un décryptage sociologique et idéologique de l'oeuvre de Dino Buzzati* (Paris: Laffont, 1989).

Buzzati's discourse a step further.⁵⁸ By analyzing Buzzati's correspondence from the Italian colonies, Mattiato argues that Buzzati's narrative is rich in themes – such as the military setting of the stories; the appeal exerted by military discipline on the author; and the heroism of soldiers facing dangers – which are common to some of the propagandistic themes of the Fascist regime. For this reason and for the absence of clear declarations concerning political issues in Buzzati's work, Mattiato argues that it is impossible to decide, once and for all, where Buzzati's prose hides a sarcastic critique to Fascism and where, on the contrary, it is aligned with the regime's ideology. Patrizia Dalla Rosa, while reviewing Mattiato's work, writes:

Mattiato arriva a dimostrare che gli articoli africani di Buzzati, pur non esprimendo sempre l'atteggiamento e le opinioni più vere dell'autore, rimangono, tuttavia, fortemente rivelatori della visione del mondo fascista. Certi *topoi* dell'ispirazione buzzatiana si avvicinano all'immaginario della cultura fascista. Ma il simbolo è per sua natura polisemico. [...] Ad esempio, il mito dell'atto eroico è onnipresente in Buzzati, ma in lui non ha lo stesso significato che gli ha dato il Fascismo per fini politici.⁵⁹

I intend to broaden Panafieu's work on Buzzati's fictional production to his journalism and to enlarge Mattiato's study to include Buzzati's war reportage and his postwar non-fiction. Apart from several declarations by colleagues and friends, most of which have the character of memories,⁶⁰ the last study on the political and historical implications of Buzzati's narrative, which is worth mentioning, is D'Agostino's 'L'ideologia anacronistica: Buzzati e la politica apolitica'.⁶¹ D'Agostino suggests that the a-political attitude taken by Buzzati, both during and after Fascism, cannot be considered as a mere disengagement, but is revealing of the author's scepticism towards modernity, and to this extent may be considered a forerunner of the postmodern distancing from all kinds of ideology.⁶² The problem of fantasy in Dino Buzzati's oeuvre did not help us to study with systematic attention the relationship between

⁵⁸ See the already quoted Mattiato, 'Ecrivains-journalistes sous le fascisme'.

⁵⁹ Patrizia Dalla Rosa, 'Review of Emmanuel Mattiato, *Ecrivains-journalistes sous le fascisme. Le cas de Dino Buzzati et du 'Corriere della Sera'*', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 6 (2001), 172-174 (p. 173).

⁶⁰ See for example Indro Montanelli, 'Buzzati giornalista e la politica', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 19-20.

⁶¹ Paul D'Agostino, 'L'ideologia anacronistica: Buzzati e la politica apolitica', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 193-201.

⁶² See for this also Fausto Gianfranceschi, 'Buzzati postmoderno', in Dino Buzzati, *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984 [1942]), pp. 5-10.

Buzzati and his time. By focusing on the isolation of the author from cultural and political affiliations of any kind, Buzzati has been read as a stranger not only within the Italian literary scene, but within Italian history as well. I argue that with regard to this situation, Buzzati's journalism is particularly relevant and worthy of further study for it implied the daily report of the author's contemporary social, cultural, and political situation in Italy.

4. Issues of Otherness

In 2002 Patrizia Dalla Rosa published "Al di sopra dei lucernari e delle guglie": gli 'altrove' intravisti da Dino Buzzati'.⁶³ Dalla Rosa works actively for the Centro Studi Dino Buzzati; she is a member of the editorial staff of the journal *Studi buzzatiani*; and her comprehensive knowledge of the author ensured the quality of a work that studies the narrative manifestations of the 'other-world', which is created by Buzzati beyond the empirical one. The concept of 'otherness' is one of the core aesthetic issues of Buzzati's poetics. Dalla Rosa suggests how the epistemological quest of the writer starts from a geographical 'otherness' which symbolizes the sense of mystery inherent in the whole of Buzzati's imaginative world. On the other hand, Felix Siddell's comparative study *Death or Deception: Sense of Place in Buzzati and Morante* is the most recent contribution on the theme of place within Buzzati's work.⁶⁴ Siddell analyzes the coexisting and conflicting approaches of the two writers. He argues that in Buzzati "place" is approached alternatively as either an outcome of individual perception or a location separate from the individual. Buzzati's texts shift from plausible indications of location to perception-bound spaces, by conceptualizing the elsewhere as a form of 'otherness'. In the chapter 'The Observer in the Buzzatian Expanse' Siddell shows many examples of Buzzati's contradictory sense of place, mainly from *Il Buttafuoco* and *Il deserto dei Tartari*.⁶⁵ the choice is relevant because the former is a collection of journalistic works, while the latter is a novel. Siddell's analysis explains how Buzzati's use of space, as either a subjective construction of the viewer's

⁶³ Patrizia Dalla Rosa, "Al di sopra dei lucernari e delle guglie": gli 'altrove' intravisti da Dino Buzzati', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 127-143. See also Patrizia Dalla Rosa, 'Immagini della città nel linguaggio del Buzzati narratore', *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 111-124, and Patrizia Dalla Rosa, *Dove qualcosa sfugge: lingue e luoghi di Buzzati* (Pisa: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2004).

⁶⁴ Felix Siddell, *Death or Deception: Sense of Place in Buzzati e Morante* (Leicester: Trobadour, 2006).

⁶⁵ Siddell, *Death or Deception*, pp. 1-22. Further references to this volume are given in the text.

mind or an objective map of reality, is driven by an aesthetic quest the aim of which is to present the duality between the comforting nature of the visible and knowable and the threat of what lies ‘where visual perception cannot apply’ (p. 14). What is interesting for me is that a journalistic collection of reportage is studied next and compared to a fictional work at an equal level of literary relevance. Siddell uses the close reading of journalistic texts in order to sustain a literary analysis of the sense of place and to illustrate how it is related to the presence of ‘otherness’ in Buzzati’s prose.⁶⁶

Both Dalla Rosa’s and Siddell’s research shows the relevance of the issue of ‘otherness’ in Buzzati’s narrative. My argument moves from the assumption of the necessity for a quest of the deepest meaning of this narrative, its ideological implications and its relationship with the cultural and historical contemporary framework. Instead of looking only for rhetorical and stylistic techniques in order to reconstruct the way in which Buzzati worked from a strictly formal and literary point of view, it will be more useful to investigate the dialogue between Buzzati’s imaginary and the specific time in which it developed. Buzzati’s journalism can be used as well as his fictional production to discover new insights within his poetics and the reading of Buzzati’s journalistic production cannot leave out of consideration a study of the historical and cultural panorama in which his work for the *Corriere* developed. In order to achieve my objectives it is necessary to clarify what I intend with the term ‘otherness’ when speaking about Buzzati’s prose, by taking into account the centrality of this concept. I will consider two different kinds of ‘other’: a narrative one and an anthropological one.

By ‘narrative otherness’ I intend the fictional figures, settings and atmospheres which Buzzati uses in his fantastic novels and short stories. It is possible to group into a broad category different definitions that scholars gave to the *fantastico buzzatiano*. Lorenzo Viganò speaks about an ‘altro mondo fantastico eppure reale e plausibile, parallelo a quello che viviamo’, in which past and present are confused concepts and the words ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ lose their meaning;⁶⁷ Ulla Mussarra writes about ‘mondi possibili’;⁶⁸ whereas Jean Lacroix dedicated a study to the ‘utopie buzzatiane’.⁶⁹ My

⁶⁶ See also Felix Siddell, ‘Surveillance in ‘Il Buttafuoco’’, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 3 (1998), 52-63.

⁶⁷ Lorenzo Viganò, ‘Introduzione’, in *Le cronache fantastiche di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), pp. IX-XXXIX (p. IX).

⁶⁸ Mussarra, ‘Mondi possibili’ e strategie narrative’, *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 101-110.

⁶⁹ Lacroix, ‘Utopie buzzatiane: il racconto dell’altrove’, in *Il pianeta Buzzati*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 199-218; pp. 199-218.

hypothesis is that Buzzati's interest in neo-romantic themes which deal with 'other' worlds – such as occultism, the paranormal, the anthropomorphization of the inanimate, and the quest of ways to transcend human nature – derives also from his aim to create a new kind of journalism. When he uses these themes within a journalistic context as opposed to the fictional one, the aim is, whilst still remaining accurate, to use fantasy in order to be more complete and to report every aspect of life, including the non-visible ones. Buzzati's idea is that what is 'other', when compared to the empirical and visible world, is not something which is set apart from us, but something which is hidden between the layers of our own reality.

However, there is also what I call an 'anthropological otherness' which influenced Buzzati's oeuvre and his journalism in particular, and only a few critical studies have noticed it despite its relevance. Apart from Crotti, Giannetto, and Dalla Rosa, only Caspar and Mattiato noticed how Buzzati's presence first in Africa and then aboard Italian Navy ships offers a great chance to investigate how the journalist's prose reflected the physical, empirical, and intellectual encounter with what was 'other' than himself. In this context the 'other' for Buzzati is not only a hidden, uncanny, transcendental presence like the narrator's mother of 'Ottavio Sebastian, vecchia fornace' or the ghost of 'Lo spirito in granaio':⁷⁰ in Africa and in the Mediterranean Sea Buzzati faces another kind of otherness. The 'otherness' of what is beyond human empirical perception and understanding and which is rendered in Buzzati's fiction through the use of metaphors, ghosts, and hunting presences, assumes cultural but above all racial distinguishing marks. In Buzzati's works of reportage, colonized populations are 'other' when confronted by colonizers: their physical aspect, their behaviour, and their culture are 'other'. Human beings, even from similar historical and cultural backgrounds, can become 'other' because they are enemies during battle. However, it is when it comes to describe African populations of the colonized territories that Buzzati's point of view becomes particularly problematic: here the 'other' becomes a concept grounded on anthropological arguments such as religion, culture, political institutions and social relationships. In these texts, Buzzati's idea seems to be particularly consistent with the definition of the concept of the 'other' given by Kevin Robins in *New*

⁷⁰ See Dino Buzzati, *Il reggimento parte all'alba*, ed. by Indro Montanelli and Guido Piovene (Milan: Frassinelli, 1985), pp. 74-85, and *I misteri d'Italia*, pp. 155-163.

Keywords.⁷¹ This book continues and broadens the series of definitions which is present in the second and amplified edition of Raymond William's *Keywords*.⁷² Robins' contribution is very useful in order to understand the nature of Buzzati's work in Africa:

[...] The other is what eludes our consciousness and knowing, and it is what resides outside the sphere of 'our' culture and community. It is the non-self and the non-us [...].

[...] On the one hand, the other provokes fear and anxiety. On the other hand, however, there is the deep sense that we also need otherness [...]. The other is necessary for change and creativity to exist in the world [...]. The other is, then, the cause and the object of ambivalent feelings, attitudes, and thoughts.⁷³

Journalism confronts Buzzati with real, traumatic experience: the encounter with a cultural, social, and racial otherness influenced the sensibility of the novelist. I shall call 'anthropological otherness' the distance Buzzati felt between what he considered to be his world as a bourgeois Italian intellectual and the world of the people he met in Africa who were subjected to the regime he was, willingly or not, representing as a reporter of a major Italian newspaper. This 'anthropological otherness' felt by Buzzati towards the natives both in Libya and Ethiopia often emerges from his texts and by transmitting an essentializing and simplified view of other cultures complicates the ideological and political connotation of his work. The short circuit between journalism and fiction then completed at the narrative level what Buzzati experienced as a reporter.

The two kinds of otherness which I have defined contribute to make the constant shifting of roles between fiction and non-fiction in Buzzati's work possible. The topic of this shifting is approached also by Franco Zangrilli in *La penna diabolica*.⁷⁴ Zangrilli has the merit of attempting for the first time a comprehensive analysis of Buzzati's journalistic production, by dividing it into seven thematic categories: *cronaca africana*; *cronaca di guerra*; *cronaca italiana*; *cronaca nera*; *cronaca animale*; *cronaca alpinistica*; and *cronaca ciclistica*. The aim of the volume is to illustrate the relationship between news and fiction, but its outcome is a summary of the well-known results of most of the studies on the topic. As written by Delia Garofano in her review of Zangrilli's study, it seems that the latter's aim is to overturn the relationship between

⁷¹ *New Keywords: a Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, ed. by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 249-251.

⁷² Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1988 [1976]).

⁷³ *New Keywords*, ed. by Bennett, Grossberg, and Morris, p. 249.

⁷⁴ Franco Zangrilli, *La penna diabolica: Buzzati scrittore-giornalista* (Pesaro: Metauro, 2004).

Buzzati's journalism and Buzzati's fiction by arguing that in the former lies his originality.⁷⁵ I view this relationship not as a challenge but as an open dialogue between two forms of writing neither of which can be excluded if one's object is not to offer a partial portrait of the author.

5. Fantasy and the Fantastic: Mode, Genre, and Kind: Clearing the Field

Fantastic literature is the field in which Buzzati chose to insert his narrative: the author's declarations about his favourite readings, the explicit reference to the nineteenth-century tradition of fantastic writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and E.T.A. Hoffmann,⁷⁶ and the aesthetic quest for an 'otherness' which crosses the boundaries of the empirical world, suggest that Buzzati's fiction needs to be considered as part of the complex and multifaceted framework of the fantastic tradition. Neuro Bonifazi has no doubts at all: in *Teoria del fantastico e il racconto fantastico in Italia: Tarchetti, Pirandello, Buzzati*, he not only gives a definition of the fantastic genre but uses Buzzati as an example of it.⁷⁷ Bonifazi grounds his argument on two of the most influential analyses of the genre – Sartre's 'Aminadab or the Fantastic Considered as a Language' and Todorov's *The Fantastic* – and his contribution is important to me because its focus is on the constant relationship between Buzzati's fantasy and reality.⁷⁸ I argue that the characteristic of verisimilitude in Buzzati's fictional stories, which the relationship between fantasy and reality makes possible, is its being grounded in journalism:

Io, raccontando una storia di tipo fantastico, devo cercare al massimo di renderla plausibile ed evidente. [...] Per questo, secondo me, la cosa fantastica deve essere resa il più vicino possibile, proprio, alla cronaca [...].⁷⁹

⁷⁵ '[...] pare di intendere che Franco Zangrilli proprio alla formazione di Buzzati giornalista [...] asciva [...] la modernità di Buzzati scrittore [...]]' in Delia Garofano, 'Review of Franco Zangrilli, *La penna diabolica: Buzzati scrittore-giornalista* (Pesaro: Metauro, 2004)', in *Studi buzzatiani*, 12 (2007), 130-134.

⁷⁶ See Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, pp. 75-104.

⁷⁷ Neuro Bonifazi, *Teoria del fantastico e il racconto fantastico in Italia: Tarchetti, Pirandello, Buzzati* (Ravenna: Longo, 1982).

⁷⁸ See Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Aminadab or the Fantatic Considered as a Language', in *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. by Annette Michelson (New York: Collier Books, 1968 [1955]), pp. 56-72, and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic, a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973 [1970]).

⁷⁹ Yves Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1973), p. 168.

What I intend to do with my research is not only to read the texts as pieces of literature or journalism, but, as suggested by Rosemary Jackson in *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion*, to move outwards from them by considering the historical and cultural framework in which the works are situated.⁸⁰ However, I need first to clarify my theoretical terminology: I will use the term ‘fantasy’ in order to indicate Buzzati’s way of looking at reality almost as a synonym of ‘imagination’. I propose to treat these terms as near-synonymous because in Buzzati’s case the fantastic is hardly ever interpreted only as an aesthetic category. When talking about Buzzati the word ‘fantasy’ describes an attitude towards reality, namely the possibility but also the capability of going beyond the visible by using the tool of imagination. This broad understanding of the word ‘fantasy’ – which overcomes the limits imposed by strict definitions of literary categories – allows us to comprehend the relevance of Buzzati’s aesthetic choices as linked not only to his interpretation of fictional and non-fictional genres but also to his idea of interpreting the surrounding reality and the way he wanted to describe it. When I use the term ‘fantasy’ by talking about its presence within Buzzati’s work, I am not referring to a precise literary genre, but to the ability to conceive thoughts and images that do not necessarily follow fixed rules and logic, to the imaginary perception and representation of objects and phenomena as if they were tangibly present. This specification is necessary in order to avoid interpreting the word ‘fantasy’ as a subset of the category of the fantastic: in this sense it is linkable only to works of fiction which create other-worlds that have no links with the real one. Examples of authors of ‘fantasy’ novels would be C.S. Lewis, Phillip Pullman, J.K. Rowling, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Buzzati has no relationship with this kind of fiction. While the identifying traits of ‘fantasy’ are the inclusion of fantastic elements in a scenery which is self-coherent, with consistent influence from folklore, Buzzati is not a ‘fantasy author’: his fantastic short stories and novels – while being direct inheritors of the nineteenth-century literary tradition – are different from the saga novel that is typical of ‘fantasy’.⁸¹ Other subsets

⁸⁰ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 6, 7.

⁸¹ Kathryn Hume - while talking about the branch of tales of conquest and adventures as one of the outcome of what she defines as ‘escape literature’ - writes: ‘[...] Tolkien fans clearly find bourgeois life deeply unsatisfying. Its democratic ideals, and its petty-minded betrayal of even those ideals, give no sense of personal significance’. In Buzzati’s work, on the contrary, the narrator uses fantasy within a common, realistic world: it is within this world that imagination finds its proper place and its significance. Buzzati’s reader - as opposite to Tolkien’s one and to the reader of ‘fantasy novels’ in general - look for new insights and hidden meaningful messages within bourgeois life. See Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis, Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 66-68.

of the fantastic are for me science fiction; magical realism; the ghost story; the gothic novel etc.

I will consider then the fantastic not as a genre, but as a mode which can assume different generic forms, as it is defined by Rosemary Jackson.⁸² This choice is justified by the fact that, as I will try to demonstrate, Buzzati's fantastic is not inscribable within any of the strict definitions given by scholars. There are short stories and articles which fit the Todorovian categories on which Bonifazi grounded his study, but, by building on Bonifazi's descriptive and structural approach to take into account the Freudian category of the 'uncanny', it is possible to recognize how the prose of the Italian journalist responds also to the psychological description of the fantastic tradition.⁸³ The consequence of the impossibility of choosing only one definition of the fantastic in which Buzzati can enter is that, despite appearances, his prose is difficult to label as simply fantastic. Even though Jackson's suggestion of considering the fantastic as a 'literature of desire'⁸⁴ is not always suitable for Buzzati,⁸⁵ the Freudian definition of the 'uncanny' is coherent with one of the main characteristics of the journalist's poetics: the refusal of what is invented and detached from the real, in order to attempt to manifest what is repressed. Buzzati's narrative, as well as Freud's 'uncanny', is in close connection with the empirical world. Fantasy represents a world which is neither 'real' nor 'unreal', and it is for this reason that Todorov's scheme is sharable, but it needs to be contextualized, for the definition of what is 'real' or not changes historically.

Felix Siddell asks: 'How useful is the notion of genre when analyzing the work of Buzzati?'⁸⁶ and he also quotes Ilaria Crotti's statement: 'La cronaca e la favola [...] solo apparentemente sembrano due strumenti rappresentativi opposti: le finalità di entrambe [...] le unificano in una medesima direzione [...]'.⁸⁷ One of the elements that reinforce Siddell's doubt is the fact that Buzzati's fantastic often overlaps with allegory, and scholars such as Panafieu and Mellarini have demonstrated the presence of pedagogical

For the problem of the distinction and difference between 'fantasy' and 'fantastic' see Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp. 27-31.

⁸² See Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy*, pp. 13-60.

⁸³ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003 [1899]).

⁸⁴ Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ There are anyway some exceptions: Nella Giannetto demonstrates that in the case of the short story *Il Borghese stregato* Buzzati gives an example of the Freudian idea of the '*desiderio insoddisfatto*'. The scholar proposes a close reading of the story as a case of correspondence between the results of Buzzati's fantastic and Freudian psychology. See Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini*, pp. 55-74.

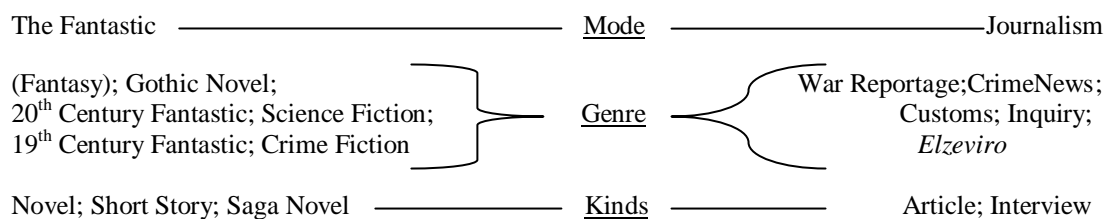
⁸⁶ Felix Siddell, 'Introductory Essay. Buzzati and Genre: Waiting for an Answer', *Spunti e Ricerche*, 13 (1998), 5-8 (p. 5).

⁸⁷ Crotti, *Dino Buzzati*, p. 21.

and moral lessons, which are usually hidden by the narrator under recurrent metaphors.⁸⁸ By quoting Siddell again, I argue that Buzzati hardly belongs to the fantastic framework if we consider the genre as it has been defined by either Todorov, Sartre, Bonifazi, or Freud: rather than a precise type of fantasy Buzzati chooses to give it ‘dynamic rather than a sense of coherence’, especially in his works of journalism.⁸⁹

I consider the fantastic as a mode in the same way as I consider journalism: when speaking about it I intend a large container of different genres which can include the war reportage, the crime news, the news about customs, manners etc. I call kinds the formal realisations of both the fantastic and journalism. For the former they are the novel, the short story, or the saga novel; for the latter the article or the interview.

With the exception of the term ‘fantasy’ which, as I have said, I will use in order to name the particular imagination which drives Buzzati’s view of the real, the set of my terminology can be schematically exemplified in this way:



It is important to clarify here that this classification of genre categories is only apparently rigid and needs to be interpreted as a point of departure to show the fluidity and contingency of the conventions that concern the classification of literary genres. The use of theoretical models, even radical ones such as Derrida and Foucault (see Chapter One) must not be read as contradictory when compared to the definitions provided in this introduction. The latter must serve only as points of reference and departure, especially in relationship to the existing critical work that has used, often in very different ways, this same terminology. Throughout his career Buzzati never relied to specific theoretical or philosophical models. This might lead to interpret as a stretching of the meaning of his work the use of thinkers as Barthes and Foucault when studying Buzzati. Nevertheless, theory, also when it is not directly called into question

⁸⁸ See chapter 2 of Panafieu, *Janus*, pp. 33-53; and Bruno Mellarini, ‘Tra favolismo e allegorismo, ricerca e perdita del mito in due racconti buzzatiani degli anni Quaranta’, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 14 (2009), 101-135.

⁸⁹ Siddell, ‘Introductory Essay’, p. 7.

by the author, gives us some useful tools to provide new interpretations and to shed a different light on his production. It also allows us to understand its value in relation to the contemporary cultural and historical context, despite Buzzati's attempts to remain isolated from it. For these reasons the categorization that I proposed is meant to be interpreted as a mobile and mutable structure, which is useful for orientating oneself within the mass of different definitions of the same critical terms provided by scholars.

I am also aware of the risk that the use of the term 'fantasy' in this scheme could trivialize my analysis. However, mine is a theoretical choice built on the results of different studies on Dino Buzzati's work. In Italy, the most quoted and influential study on Buzzati's fantasy is Giannetto's *Il sudario delle caligini*.⁹⁰ This volume is divided in eight chapters, each of which analyzes a different aspect of Buzzati's oeuvre: fantasy is considered the core of the entire production, but, rather than the inscription of the author within a strict, codified genre, fantasy is seen – as I intend – as the author's way of looking at the surrounding reality. Fantasy is a symbol and represents the result of the entire poetical imagery of the author. The peculiarity of Buzzati's fantasy has been widely investigated also by Marie-Hélène Caspar, who dedicated to this issue two different studies: *Le fantastique dans l'œuvre narrative de Dino Buzzati* and *Fantastique et mythe personnel dans l'œuvre de Buzzati*.⁹¹ The interest of the French scholar in the role of fantasy within Buzzati's production is brought a step further by Jean Lacroix who, in 1989, focused his attention on the theme of 'otherness' by inscribing in this way his study in a critical tradition of which I wrote in the previous section.⁹²

The interest in the particular characteristics of Buzzati's fantasy is driven by Caspar's attempt to establish the uniqueness of Buzzati's discourse and has, as a consequence, the effect of liberating the author from the comparison with Kafka. This sort of challenge between the two writers was born immediately after the publication of *Il deserto dei Tartari* and had the prejudicial aim of demonstrating the triviality of Buzzati's production. However, from Gianfranceschi's monography to Giannetto's studies, the parallel between Dino Buzzati and Kafka that had dominated initial studies

⁹⁰ The volume includes also the previously published study Nella Giannetto, *Il coraggio della fantasia. Studi e ricerche intorno a Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Arcipelago, 1989).

⁹¹ See Marie-Hélène Caspar, *Le fantastique dans l'œuvre narrative de Dino Buzzati* (Paris : Université Sorbonne, 1988), and Marie-Hélène Caspar, *Fantastique et mythe personnel dans l'œuvre de Buzzati* (La Garenne-Colombes: Editons Européennes Erasme, 1990).

⁹² Lacroix, 'Utopie buzzatiane', pp. 199-218.

on the Italian journalist has been clearly demonstrated to be misleading.⁹³ Kafka's novels and short stories present a world that has lost its meaning, where human beings act as if this loss had already been accepted as inevitable, whereas Buzzati, on the other hand, fills his fantastic world with didactic values and cause-effect connections with the real. The mystery which characterizes Buzzati's narrative lies often behind the most ordinary aspects of our world. It is no coincidence that the most common device used as passage between this world and the 'other' is the door: '[...] the door provides a point of connection between different orders of reality'.⁹⁴

Giuseppe Fanelli, in 'Buzzati, la critica e il fantastico', shows how several scholars share the idea that the peculiarity of Buzzati's fantasy lies both in its verisimilitude and in its capacity to avoid rigid definitions of the genre.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Stefano Lazzarin underlines two aspects in particular of the journalist's fictional production which define the originality of Buzzati's use of fantasy: on the one hand Buzzati approaches the fantastic with a mixture of nostalgia and irony by inscribing his narrative within a twentieth-century tradition which includes writers such as Calvino and Manganelli.⁹⁶ On the other hand, Lazzarin notices that the classic chronotopes of the fantastic – haunted houses, gothic environments, forests, and castles – are replaced by modern chronotopes: trains, cinemas, streets full of cars, and telephone wires. Technology seems to have spread to the literature of the supernatural. According to

⁹³ The problem of the relationship between Buzzati and Kafka is one of the most debated by critics. In order to confirm the incompatibility of the two authors I will quote here the main parts of Alvaro Biondi's references to Arslan and Gianfranceschi which support the thesis of the distance between these two writers (see: Alvaro Biondi, 'Metafora e sogno: la narrativa di Buzzati fra 'Italia magica' e 'surrealismo italiano'', in *Il pianeta Buzzati*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 15-60): '[...] la visione che i due scrittori hanno dell'universo è [...] diversa. Kafka [...] crea un universo alternativo, statico, in cui il simbolo serve, ha un valore funzionale [...], perché è presupposto il riferimento a una realtà che [...] non esiste [...]. Per Buzzati la realtà non è meno realtà per il fatto di essere ambigua [...]: la sua Milano esiste; il Castello di Kafka è un castello - simbolo', in Arslan, *Invito alla lettura di Dino Buzzati*, pp. 144-145); 'La particolarità ricorrente nelle [...] pagine [di Buzzati] è lo scatto di un inverosimile che però non ha mai le apparenze gratuite [...] né [...] incomprensibili (come in Kafka), ma assume il valore di una quarta dimensione che aiuta a capire, che completa il senso dell'approccio a un'esperienza [...]', in Fausto Gianfranceschi, 'Introduzione', in Dino Buzzati, *I sette messaggeri* (Milano: Mondadori, 1984), p. 9.

⁹⁴ Siddell, *Death or Deception*, p.177.

⁹⁵ Fanelli, 'Buzzati, la critica e il fantastico', pp. 395-397 quotes in particular: Giannetto, *Il coraggio della fantasia*, pp. 53-76. See also: Aase Lagoni Dranstrup, 'Dino Buzzati et le rapport dialectique de la littérature fantastique avec l'individu et la société', *Cahiers Buzzati*, 3, 1979, 71-115; Giuliano Gramigna, 'Prefazione', in Dino Buzzati, *Romanzi e Racconti*, ed. by Gramigna, pp. XI-XLV; and Crotti, *Dino Buzzati*, pp. 4, 5.

⁹⁶ Stefano Lazzarin, "Ed è per questo che gli spiriti non vogliono vivere con noi": Buzzati e la linea 'nostalgica' nella letteratura fantastica del Novecento', in *Buzzati d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, ed. by Angelo Colombo and Delphine Bahuet-Gachet (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2008). For the relationship with Calvino in particular see: Aase Lagoni Dranstrup, 'Buzzati e Calvino: due scrittori e due concezioni del fantastico', in *Il pianeta Buzzati*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 137-150 and Nella Giannetto, 'Uno scambio di lettere fra Buzzati e Calvino', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 1 (1996), 99-112.

Lazzarin, Dino Buzzati's fantasy is a good example of this process and confirms the close link between the author's work and his historical time.⁹⁷ This link will be a guideline for my research: I argue that by analyzing Buzzati's journalistic production one cannot avoid reading it not only as a cogent part of the author's literary work, but also as deeply influenced by the reality that he was reporting for the newspaper. The strong connection between Buzzati's fantastic world and reality, which has been largely demonstrated by scholars, is a figure with two faces: by claiming the verisimilitude of his fiction we have to admit fantasy as a component of his journalism. Paul D'Agostino clearly described the situation in 2002:

His is a duplex universe: on the one hand it is strange, paranormal, unsettling, fantastical, contradictory and magical; but on the other hand it's also logical, quotidian, recognizable, pacifying and not entirely devoid of relief and hope.⁹⁸

6. Entropy, Metamorphoses, and Reflexive Reading: From Theory to Texts

Jackson's *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* will be my main reference for the application of the concept of entropy to narrative.⁹⁹ She argues that entropy, according to Freud, is a state similar to Nirvana, in which there is the lowest level of separation and difference between the 'self' and the 'other'. I argue with Jackson that entropy is what the fantastic represents at a literary level and that Buzzati realizes it at a formal level by merging journalism and fiction. On the other hand, at the level of the signified, entropy is realized by a tension towards an ideal reality in which men and nature co-exist in balance. However, whereas for Freud the entropic process is not reversible and leads to a state of complete calm, Buzzati's thought is that men can reach absolute calm only with death: in Buzzati, there is a constant conflict between the wish for order and the crossing of boundaries which guarantee order. In Buzzati, rules and social norms – like journalistic hierarchies and military discipline – are necessary to the survival of the 'weak men' who cannot accept the meaninglessness of their existence.

⁹⁷ Stefano Lazzarin, *Fantasmî antichi e moderni. Tecnologia e perturbante in Buzzati e nella letteratura fantastica otto-novecentesca* (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2008). On the issue of technology within Buzzati's fantasy see also: Mariangela Polesana, 'Buzzati e l'animazione degli oggetti: dai mobili alle automobili', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 2 (1997), 93-111.

⁹⁸ Paul D'Agostino, 'Buzzati's Spiral: Judgement, Solitude and the Absurd', in *Studi Buzzatiani*, 7 (2002), 53-66 (p. 53).

⁹⁹ Jackson, *Fantasy*, pp. 72-82.

Metamorphosis is the main theme linked to the drive of the fantastic towards entropy. As it is analyzed and defined by Marina Warner in her study on this topic,¹⁰⁰ the process of metamorphosis, typical of fantastic literature, is used by Buzzati in his journalism apparently with the aim of the anthropomorphization. I will try to demonstrate that the real aim of the author is, on the contrary, the ‘animation of the inanimate’: a more complex process – put into practice with the goal of going beyond the paucity of the human condition – in which inanimate objects do not necessarily assume characteristics that are typical only of humans, but which confer them the properties of living beings. I will use the general thrusts of Warner’s analysis and some of her categories of fantastic representations to inform my research in order to study Buzzati’s imagery and to make the thematic link between journalism and fantasy more apparent. The wide historical background of Warner’s study will also be a useful example to integrate the presence of what I defined as ‘anthropological otherness’ within Buzzati’s war reportage and his work from the Italian colonies.

The concepts of entropy and metamorphoses that I have now defined will inform the analysis of the ‘otherness’ – as it has been clarified above – within Buzzati’s oeuvre. The first chapter of my thesis will constitute the theoretical core of my research: I will illustrate the most original aspects of Buzzati’s fantastic journalism by analyzing his unique way of looking at the journalistic medium as a narrative mode. Apart from those already mentioned I will also take into account other relevant studies on the fantastic, such as those by Terry Castle and Remo Ceserani; while Angelo Del Boca’s studies on Italian colonialism will constitute the background for the historical context.¹⁰¹

The second part of the thesis will focus on the close reading of the most relevant of Buzzati’s journalistic works: the analysis of the correspondence from Libya and Ethiopia will be followed by that of *Il Buttafuoco. Cronache di guerra sul mare*, which collects the best works of reportage written from the Italian Navy ships during the

¹⁰⁰ Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁰¹ See Terry Castle, ‘Introduction’, in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 3-20; Remo Ceserani, *Il fantastico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996); Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Vol. 2: Dal fascismo a Gheddafi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997); and Angelo Del Boca, *La guerra d’Etiopia. L’ultima impresa del colonialismo* (Milan: Longanesi, 2010). For a wider international historical framework see Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For a specialistic history of Italian journalism see Paolo Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano. Dalle gazzette a Internet* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006).

Second World War; *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, which collects all the crime news published by Buzzati for the *Corriere della Sera*; *Le cronache fantastiche* and *I misteri d'Italia*, finally, contains most of the articles dedicated to paranormal events and those *elzeviri* and pieces of news which are more similar in both content and form to Buzzati's fantastic short stories.

The analysis of Buzzati's fantastic news will be built on the general thrusts of a series of studies which have in common the research into the interaction between journalism and literature in different times and countries: Clotilde Bertoni's *Letteratura e giornalismo* will provide a close view of the dialogue between these two modes within the Italian literary tradition, while Kate Campbell's *Journalism, Literature and Modernity* and Doug Underwood's *Journalism and the Novel* will offer insights of the role of journalism as a literary medium within the Anglophone panorama.¹⁰² My close reading of Buzzati's fantastic news will be built on the methodology defined by Phyllis Frus as 'reflexive reading', which I will clarify more broadly in the first chapter.¹⁰³ In *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives* the American scholar defines this approach to journalistic texts as a new way of reading news by moving away from the distinction among discourses off the factual-fictional question and looking at the differences in 'the process of production [...]' (p. 32). The act of writing and reading in this way are studied as processes rather than qualities: 'we can take properties [...] that have been called signs of fictionality or literariness and restore dynamic qualities to them – show that they are not essential qualities but potentially dual or dialogic ones' (p. 49). The 'reflexive reading' is grounded on the idea, borrowed by Frus from Raymond Williams' *Marxism and Literature*, that there is not an essential quality that defines literature, but literature 'is a socially constructed category of works that developed its current meaning at the end of the nineteenth century: a privileged realm of works embodying timeless truth and transcendent values' (p. X).¹⁰⁴ The definition of narratives as literary or journalistic affects and misleads our perception of these works: 'the result is [...] to render literary narrative something we regard as 'neither true nor false'' (p. X), that is to say something universal and superior, and, as a consequence,

¹⁰² See Clotilde Bertoni, *Letteratura e giornalismo* (Rome: Carocci, 2009); *Journalism, Literature and Modernity. From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); and Doug Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel: Truth and Fiction, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁰³ Phyllis Frus, *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives, The Timely and the Timeless* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Further references to this article are given in the text.

¹⁰⁴ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

daily journalism something aesthetically inferior. I chose to read Buzzati's journalism, as Frus suggests, with attention to the text's production: the 'historical [...], social, and political context of the writing and the writer [are] viewed as inseparable from the text and available to some extent to readers of any period' (p. 32). It is no coincidence that the reading by Frus of the piece *The Open Boat* written by the novelist Stephen Crane, once conducted by following the 'reflexive reading', brought the American scholar to a conclusion which I argue could be applied to Buzzati as well: 'He is an example of the persistence of both realistic and romantic attitudes towards writing. The correspondent regards his profession involving both work and art, although these don't separate into clear categories of journalistic work and fiction writer's art' (p. 45).

Chapter 1: ‘Fantastic News’: a Theory

*L'equivalenza del giornalismo con la letteratura
costituisce [...] una sorta di paradosso istruttivo:
è un'arringa in favore dell'arte di raccontare storie,
che la letteratura contemporanea sembra aver smarrito [...].*¹⁰⁵
Stefano Lazzarin

*[...] it is the fantastic elements
which allow literature to convey most
of its varied sense of meaning.*¹⁰⁶
Kathryne Hume

*[...] no production of knowledge in the human sciences
can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement
as a human subject in his own circumstances.*¹⁰⁷
Edward W. Said

The aim of this chapter – which constitutes the first part of my research – is to draw the theoretical and methodological map on which the close reading of the second part of the thesis will be grounded. I will explain the main consequences of Buzzati's re-interpretation of the role of journalism and how he gave it a literary status. I will conduct a twofold argument: on the one hand I will try to show the modes of representation which Buzzati borrowed from fiction in order to enrich his journalism; and, on the other, I will explain what are the most original aspects of the decision to merge fantasy and reportage, also with regard to the European and Italian modernist framework.

1.1 What ‘Fantastic News’ is

1.1.1 A ‘Fantastic’ Dialogue

It seems so obvious to talk about fantastic literature when talking about Dino Buzzati that the connection between this author and the fantastic genre is almost taken for granted. However, on further analysis, this relationship reveals itself to be more than

¹⁰⁵ Stefano Lazzarin, *Il Buzzati ‘secondo’*. *Saggio sui fattori di letterarietà nell'opera buzzatiana* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2008), p. 24.

¹⁰⁶ Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis. Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), p. 28.

¹⁰⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 11.

problematic, especially if we ask ourselves: what kind of fantastic genre are we talking about?

Neuro Bonifazi in *Teoria del fantastico e il racconto fantastico in Italia: Tarchetti, Pirandello, Buzzati* used Buzzati as a paradigmatic example of the fantastic genre by building his definition on Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic*.¹⁰⁸ By using as his main reference Northrop Frye's theory of literary genres in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Todorov analyzed all the elements of a literary work as manifestations of an abstract system.¹⁰⁹ The Bulgarian structuralist identified the main characteristic of the fantastic in what he called 'hesitation': a sort of impasse, which involves both the reader and the protagonist of the story and prevents them from deciding if what is narrated is something which can be explained with rational arguments or not. The fantastic is considered by Todorov a sort of passage, a border which is usually crossed throughout the story. If the 'hesitation' is resolved by a rational explanation to the narrated events, then the story will be labelled as 'strange'. If, on the other hand, no explanation is provided to justify the lack of realism of the plot, then the fiction will be labelled as 'marvellous'.

Neuro Bonifazi, in order to present Buzzati's fiction, enriched Todorov's scheme with two new theoretical categories: 'verisimilitude' and 'motivation'. The former is the most important for my argument, because it gives a central role to the idea that the more a fantastic story is realistic, the more it is also effective: 'La stranezza [...] del *fantastico*, è sempre [...] sostenuta e difesa dal racconto come di fatti veramente avvenuti [...]'.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, 'motivation' is explained by Bonifazi as an ideological category: 'Alla verosimiglianza va poi aggiunto un elemento contiguo [...], la *motivazione*. Se la verosimiglianza è la legge tipica di una scrittura che vuol essere coerente con se stessa [...] la motivazione è [...] l'elemento ideologico introdotto nell'azione [...] per sostenerne la veridicità'.¹¹¹ Bonifazi looks at the strong connection between Buzzati's fantasy and reality in order to explain his original role within the twentieth-century Italian fantastic tradition. What is interesting for me is that Buzzati

¹⁰⁸ See Neuro Bonifazi, *Teoria del fantastico e il racconto fantastico in Italia: Tarchetti, Pirandello, Buzzati* (Ravenna: Longo, 1982), and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic, a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973 [1970]).

¹⁰⁹ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957).

¹¹⁰ Neuro Bonifazi, 'I mantelli di Buzzati e il "fantastico"', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvis Fontanella (Florence: Olschi), p. 233.

¹¹¹ Bonifazi, 'I mantelli di Buzzati e il "fantastico"', pp. 234, 235.

seems not only to have enriched his fiction with realistic elements in order to strengthen the impact of his prose on the reader, but also to have found a role for the fantastic within his work of reportage. In Buzzati, fantasy is allowed to enter the narrative toolbox of the journalist: the merging of different modes of representation becomes part of the author's poetics and enriches his aesthetic research. The dialogue between journalism and fiction in Buzzati's work expands the boundaries of the originality of Buzzati's production identified by Bonifazi and proves wrong the critics who found the role of journalism in Buzzati's oeuvre to be a limit for its literariness. The importance of the journalistic practice for Buzzati's narrative style is underlined by Stefano Lazzarin in his book *Il Buzzati secondo*:

Ho menzionato in precedenza l'opinione secondo cui 'giornalismo e letteratura [...] sono la stessa cosa'; una parte della critica si è impadronita di questo argomento allo scopo di screditare la produzione narrativa buzzatiana. Buzzati scriverebbe come un giornalista, il suo stile coinciderebbe con il non-stile dei mass media [...]. Ora, a ben vedere, la tendenziale coincidenza della pratica letteraria con quella giornalistica ha, in Buzzati, una funzione polemica [...] il giornalismo è, prima di tutto, un antidoto alle scritture lambiccate e al cerebralismo [...].¹¹²

Nonetheless, Lazzarin's opinion risks putting journalism in an ancillary position when compared to Buzzati's fantastic production, when the scholar states that 'la parte più strettamente legata alla cronaca della sua narrativa è anche la più caduca'.¹¹³ Lazzarin argues that too much importance has been given in the past to Buzzati's declarations about the verisimilitude of his fiction and its close relationship with news. Yet, he quotes Buzzati's letters to Arturo Brambilla to demonstrate the idea of the aesthetic inferiority of the journalistic production within the writer's work.¹¹⁴ I agree with Lazzarin when, by quoting Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, he writes about 'l'inessenzialità dell'informazione biografica ai fini della comprensione dell'opera d'arte':¹¹⁵ it is the text that counts and the centrality of the text will be the core of the close reading chapters of my thesis. Finally, the high literary value of Buzzati's

¹¹² Lazzarin, *Il Buzzati 'secondo'*, pp. 23, 24.

¹¹³ Lazzarin, *Il Buzzati 'secondo'*, p. 25.

¹¹⁴ This is the passage from Buzzati's *Lettere a Brambilla* quoted by Lazzarin: 'È assolutamente impossibile che io possa scrivere qualcosa [...]. [A] forza di scrivere per il giornale, si è formato in me uno stile che, privatamente, mi farebbe orrore [...] 15 Agosto 1930', in Lazzarin, *Il Buzzati secondo*, pp. 28, 29.

¹¹⁵ Lazzarin, *Il Buzzati 'secondo'*, p. 29.

journalistic work has been evidenced also by the recent publication and success, both among the public and scholarship, of several collections of articles from the *Corriere della Sera*, edited for Mondadori by Lorenzo Viganò.¹¹⁶

As I anticipated in my introduction, in order to broaden to journalism Bonifazi's conclusions about Buzzati's fiction, I will not use terms such as 'fantasy' or 'the fantastic' to indicate a literary genre: as suggested by Rosemary Jackson, the category of genre is too narrow to include all the possible narrative outcomes of the fantastic.¹¹⁷ It will be more useful to intend the fantastic as a mode, parallel to and as vast as the journalistic mode, in order to show how Buzzati put them in constant dialogue. Jackson's Marxist and Freudian approach helps us to see the fantastic mode as the dialogical result of the opposition between 'mimetic' and 'marvellous' narrative: by merging the imitation of external reality and the world of magic and supernaturalism, the fantastic asserts that what it is telling 'is real [...] and [it] proceeds to break that assumption of realism by introducing what [...] is manifestly unreal [...]' (p. 34); moreover, it pulls 'the reader from the apparent familiarity and security of the known [...] world into something more strange [...]' (p. 34). I argue that this idea of the fantastic is perfect to describe Buzzati's work, in particular if one reads it next to the passage in which Jackson underlines how fantastic literature 'enters in dialogue with the "real" and incorporates that dialogue as part of its essential structure [...] with the result that the 'real' is a notion which is under constant interrogation' (p. 36). What Buzzati's journalism does is precisely to dialogue with the fantastic in order to express some doubts to the reader: this dialogue is 'part of the essential structure' of a narrative which questions the intelligibility of our world. Reality is not only what we can see with our eyes, but something more, something that we can see only through the eyes of the imagination.

1.1.2 A Different Way to Look at the World

Buzzati's fantasy is a way to look at the world with a gaze that admits the presence of something beyond what is visible, and, because of its inevitable connection

¹¹⁶ See in particular: *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2002); *Le cronache fantastiche* ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2003); *I fuorilegge della montagna. Uomini, cime, imprese*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2010).

¹¹⁷ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 13-60. Further references to this book will be given in the text.

with reality, fantasy will be more effective when inserted in a narrative context which is supposed to be the most objective and detached one: the journalistic article. ‘Fantastic news’ is a definition which could not exist without Lawrence Venuti’s idea of Buzzati’s ‘fantastic journalism’:¹¹⁸ in 1982, Venuti used this term because he realized, after the publication of *Cronache terrestri*, that it was impossible not to take into account Buzzati’s journalism to study his way of elaborating the heritage of the nineteenth-century fantastic tradition.¹¹⁹ However, the word ‘journalism’ means not only news but also literary journalism – especially in the form of *elzeviri* – short stories published in the newspaper, comments, and reviews. I chose the word ‘news’ because it expresses better the idea that Buzzati was looking for fantasy within everyday experience, and his intention was to use it also while he was reporting on a crime or conducting an inquiry. I decided to use the term ‘fantastic news’ in order to express how fantasy, in Buzzati’s journalism, does not represent only a literary tradition used to raise the cultural status of his non-fiction, but is a method by which to look for the hidden aspects of the real.

In Kathryn Hume’s words, Bonifazi, Todorov and Jackson’s ‘exclusive definitions’ of fantasy do not allow us to cross the boundaries of fiction and to show the central role of imagination within Buzzati’s pieces of news.¹²⁰ Whereas ‘exclusive definitions’ narrow the field of fantasy by rendering hard to justify a category such as ‘fantastic news’, Hume’s attempt at an ‘inclusive definition’ is particularly suitable for describing Buzzati’s aim of putting journalism and fantasy in dialogue (pp. 20-25). Hume includes in her definition all the possible fantastic modes of representation: literature is seen as ‘the product of two impulses. There is mimesis, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events [...] with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and fantasy [...]. We need not to try to claim a work as a fantasy any more than we identify a work as a mimesis. Rather, we have many genres and forms, each with a characteristic blend [...] of the two impulses’ (p. 20). The most important of Hume’s statements for the identification of the role of fantasy within Buzzati’s journalistic production is that ‘fantasy helps activate whatever it is in our minds that gives us the sense that something is meaningful’ (p. 20). In Buzzati’s prose ‘meaningful’ means pedagogical: examples of morality are rarely absent in his narrative and the aim of conveying a useful message to his reader may be hidden behind an

¹¹⁸ Lawrence Venuti, ‘Dino Buzzati’s Fantastic Journalism’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 28 (1982), 79-91.

¹¹⁹ Dino Buzzati, *Cronache terrestri*, ed. by Domenico Porzio (Milan: Mondadori, 1972).

¹²⁰ Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, pp. 8-20. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

allegory or may be more explicit, with the journalist addressing his readership either to stimulate or provoke it. An example of this latter case can be read in one of the articles that Buzzati wrote after the tragedy caused by the Vajont Dam in the towns of Longarone, Castellavazzo, Erto and Casso. On 9 October 1963 a landslide from the Monte Toc, on the southern side of the basin, caused the overtopping of the dam and around 2,000 deaths. Buzzati went back to the place of the tragedy and wrote a piece for the *Corriere d'Informazione* which was published between 10 and 11 October 1964.¹²¹ The journalist, who was born in San Pellegrino, a small town near Belluno, knew very well the area where the dam was built, and his article reflects the personal involvement of the writer: the result is a very dark piece of journalism, which towards the end adopts the tone of a ghost story. The article is built as a parable, with an explicit didactic aim. Buzzati, by narrating a story which cannot be recognized immediately as true or fantastic, activates in the readers the sense that what they are reading is not only meaningful, but even important for their consciousness as citizens. The point is that whether the story is true or not does not really matter: what does matter is that the content of the narration, even though it might be invented, can communicate a moral lesson by being grounded in the strong context of a real, national tragedy.

The article tells the story of Ester Londomini, a rich, bourgeois woman who keeps in her house a doll which she found near the Vajont Dam. Buzzati, who is interviewing Ester, recognizes the toy and Ester admits to having found it among the personal effects of a child who died in the tragedy, a child whose name Ester does not even remember. The critique by the journalist of the superficiality and selfishness of the woman – far from being objective or detached from the event – explodes explicitly halfway through the article:

Per il gusto stupido di avere un ricordo, per il gusto del cimelio rarità documento, per il gusto di sbalordire gli amici forse, per il gusto snobistico di sfidare le cose più sacre, la signora Ester Londomini rubò l'agosto scorso la bambola in una cappelletta costruita ai lembi della frana del Vajont dove con nome, cognome e data di nascita sono appesi i ritratti degli abitanti di Erto che non sono più stati ritrovati (p. 164).

¹²¹ Dino Buzzati, 'La bambolina del Vajont', in *Corriere d'Informazione*, 10-11 October 1964. Further references to this article will refer to the volume *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 161-168, and will be given in the text.

For Buzzati, within the ‘scenario sconvolto da finimondo’ of the tragedy, Ester committed an immoral act. The journalist addresses his readership with a story which is fantastic only in order to communicate a moral message, and he concludes with a touch of dark irony which makes the narrative tend even more towards fantasy:

‘Ma lo sa che fra pochi giorni è l’anniversario?’ [...] ‘E con questo?’ fece la signora Ester. ‘Be’, non si sa mai’. ‘Al suo posto, con questa bambola in casa, io...io avrei una certa paura’. Si divertiva all’idea. Rise [...]

Ma io mi divertivo a provocare la signora Ester, e le dicevo: ‘Se l’immagina lei se al momento buono, fra una ventina di minuti diciamo, quella bambina si presentasse qui per riprendersi la bambola?’. ‘Ma non faccia il menagramo per carità!’, diceva lei. Però io non scherzavo (pp. 165, 166).

With a progression which makes the text move from a journalistic beginning to an end which would be suitable for a ghost story written by Poe, Buzzati describes the appearance of a giant doll at the doorstep of the rich woman’s house:

Affacciatomi a una finestra, guardando giù nel piccolo giardino retrostante, mi parve di intravedere qualcosa che si muovesse, qualcosa di biancastro, di tenue, di fosforescente, il minuscolo fantasma della bambina forse che timidamente aspettava di poter entrare. [...]

Senonché a un certo punto, quando il momento fatidico scoccò, i vaghi rumori che sentivo divennero di colpo uno strepito rovinoso che tutti furono costretti a sentire [...].

Si spalancò da sola la porta d’ingresso e, come nei classici racconti dello spavento, una ventata d’aria gelida irruppe nella sala [...]

In quel momento mi accorsi che sulla soglia [...] giaceva una grande [...] bambola [...] (pp. 167, 168).

It is no coincidence that Buzzati uses here representations which every reader of fantastic stories knows very well: the ghost of the child is white and fluorescent; it makes noises and knocks at the door. It is Buzzati himself who renders the reference to fantasy explicit by placing the scene in relation to the ‘classici racconti dello spavento’. Buzzati’s literary decision to be the narrative voice of the story involves a double viewpoint: he is both a participant who has been harmed by the tragedy and by the insensitivity of Ester, and a moralizer who relates the facts, enriching his work with didactic purpose as one of his duties both as journalist and witness. The two perspectives are merged throughout the entire non-fictional production of Dino Buzzati:

journalism gives fantasy the formal substance of a piece of news, which has the effect of enlightening the reader's view of the real.

Kathryn Hume states: 'A literary work can offer readers four basic approaches to reality, namely, what I am calling illusion, vision, revision, and disillusion' (p. 55). Buzzati's 'fantastic news', with its mixture of journalism, fantasy and moral commitment, seems to fit the 'literary revision' category: its effect is an 'engagement' with the narrated scenario (p. 57). Hume describes this kind of work also as 'didactic literature', by specifying that it 'affirms absolutes [...] founded on a kind of fantasy, for not even the laws of nature [...] are traceable to ultimate fixities' (p. 56). Buzzati's use of fantasy within journalism seems to confirm the importance of the fantastic element in order to communicate moral advice and judgments on the accounted reality: '[...] such [...] literature strives to engage us [...], the aim is not so much to disturb us as to offer the eventual comfort of order, of a program, of decisions made and rules laid down' (p. 56). Hume's words are particularly interesting since Buzzati, as I stated in my introduction, was always obsessed by rules and order.¹²² I have already written about the problem of the comparison between Buzzati's use of fantasy and Kafka's narrative, by underlining the different ways the two authors have of perceiving and writing about reality. Neither Buzzati's fiction nor his non-fiction deal with meaningless worlds, where human existence becomes pointless and art is self-referential: on the contrary, fantasy has the goal of providing a new kind of meaning and a new sense of commitment to our world. It is no coincidence that Hume chose Kafka as the exemplary figure of what she defined as 'literature of vision': a literature which tries to provide a 'new sense of reality', the aim of which is to 'disturb' the reader by an effect of 'disengagement' (p. 56).¹²³ Buzzati practises 'the paradox of using fantasy to comment on the nature of reality' (p. 84). Again in Hume's words: '[...] it seems odd that fantasy should be seen as a valid or useful enrichment [of our sense of reality]', however, 'fantasy lets an author assert the importance of things which cannot be measured, seen, or numbered' (pp. 89, 90). These statements about the function of fantasy within reality

¹²² However, it must be noted that, in contrast with what is argued by Hume, Buzzati's narrative does not have the aim of comforting. The consolation provided by rules and order is only temporary and illusory. As argued by Alvaro Biondi, '[...] la drammaticità buzzatiana [è] [...] tutt'altro che consolatoria, anzi "apocalittica"'. See Alvaro Biondi, 'Una lunga fedeltà. Dino Buzzati e l'Italia magica', in *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent'anni di promozione di studi dell'Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010), pp. 139-156 (p. 147).

¹²³ At page 96 Hume, while talking about Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, states: 'We want to be able to pass judgment, to be able to state that the reality of the situation is thus-and-such. Kafka denies us this release'.

seem to be written to describe what Buzzati did when he tried to enrich the sense of the real by providing a new kind of journalism built on the insertion of fantasy within works of reportage. Instead of ‘La bambolina del Vajont’, Buzzati could have written an article with a similar didactic aim – and with the same kind of polemic against public insensitivity to the tragedy of the Vajont Dam. But a comment article operates on a mass level by addressing a non-specific readership. Buzzati’s concern, on the contrary, is with the motives of individuals: the narration of such a particular story – which deals with a minimal object such as a doll – addresses every reader directly and endows the article with both literary and journalistic meaningfulness.

1.1.3 Buzzati’s ‘Uncanny’

There is a further aspect which needs to be taken into account when discussing the nature of Buzzati’s ‘fantastic news’: the role within it of the Freudian theory of the ‘uncanny’. Rosemary Jackson notices the absence of any psychoanalytical approach in Todorov’s analysis of fantastic literature: she defines fantasy as the ‘literature of subversion’, and suggests that Freud must be taken into consideration because it is ‘in the unconscious that social structures and ‘norms’ are reproduced [...]’ (p. 6). Literary fantasies reveal themselves to be ‘open to psychoanalytic readings and [...] show a tension between the ‘laws of human society’ and the resistance of the unconscious mind [...]’ (p. 6). Buzzati’s ‘fantastic news’ has of course a strong connection with society and its laws – be these laws more or less repressed in the human unconscious – but what makes this form of narrative particularly interesting in relation to the essay on the ‘uncanny’ is the Freudian idea that ‘fantasy is not to do with inventing non-human worlds: it is not transcendental. It has to do with inverting elements of this world, [and] re-combining its features in new relations [...]’ (p. 8). According to Freud ‘fantasy lies alongside the axis of the real’, and what is perceived as ‘uncanny’, frightening, and unfamiliar is ‘nothing but an unconscious *projection* [...] which the subject refuses to recognize’ (pp. 65, 66). Nevertheless, Buzzati’s fantastic literature rarely has the aim of frightening or revealing something disturbing: on the contrary, the fantastic element which Buzzati inserts within reality has a less ‘uncanny’ property than reality itself. As ‘La bambolina del Vajont’ demonstrates, it is human actions that make the ‘uncanny’

possible: it is Ester's selfishness and miserable insensitivity which cause the appearance of the giant, frightening doll.

Human responsibility for the monstrosities of our time is always clear in Buzzati's fiction, and one of the ways in which the 'uncanny' reveals itself is by taking the shape of strange monsters and animals. Fantastic creatures and anthropomorphic animals are dangerous and frightening when they inhabit short stories the aim of which is to present the fallacy and negativity of men's creations. In 'La macchina', for example, a giant black spider – killed by a kid with a stone – depicts both the threat and the weakness of Communism.¹²⁴ When, on the other hand, the creatures invented by the narrator are not linked to the consequences of men's actions they are harmless, like the Colombre or the Babau in the homonymous short stories, but also the bears of *La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia*.¹²⁵ The presence of characters such as the doll in 'La bambolina del Vajont' within journalistic pieces is evidence of the absence of boundaries between the modes of fiction and journalism in Buzzati's poetics: it is no coincidence that in 1991, when Mondadori published *Bestiario* – a volume which was dedicated to the vast range of non-human creatures which populate Buzzati's imagery – the book contained both works of fiction and articles published in the *Corriere*.¹²⁶ What resides of Freudian theory in Buzzati's 'fantastic news', more than the link between the fantastic and the unconscious, is the idea that fantasy – in the form of creatures such as the Colombre or the giant doll – is part of reality: as Jackson explains, for both Freud and Buzzati 'the fantastic does not proceed by analogy – it is not based upon simile and comparison (like, as, as if) but upon equation (this *did* happen). [...] the fantastic does not introduce scenes *as if* they were real [...]: it insists upon the *actuality* of the transformation [...]' (pp. 84, 85). Once the importance of reality in Buzzati's narrative is acknowledged, it becomes necessary to look at his production within his historical context, in order to really understand his use of fantasy and journalism.

¹²⁴ See Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1973), pp. 101, 102.

¹²⁵ Dino Buzzati, 'Il Colombre', in Dino Buzzati, *Il Colombre* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966), pp. 27-36; Dino Buzzati, 'Il Babau', in Dino Buzzati, *Le notti difficili* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971), pp. 3-8; Dino Buzzati, *La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1945).

¹²⁶ Dino Buzzati, *Bestiario* (Milan: Mondadori, 1991).

1.2 A World Around the Writer

1.2.1 Buzzati's Decades: the Work of Yves Panafieu

In *The Long Revolution*, Raymond Williams wrote: 'It was certainly an error to suppose that values or art-works could be adequately studied without reference to the particular society within which they were expressed, but it is equally an error to suppose that the social explanation is determining, or that values and works are mere by-products'.¹²⁷ Despite the importance, acknowledged today by literary scholarship, of taking into account the historical, sociological, and cultural context when analyzing a work of art, the only existing study to my knowledge which is dedicated to an inquiry of the social and ideological implications of Dino Buzzati's oeuvre is Yves Panafieu's *Janus*, written in 1989.¹²⁸ If we consider the progress of literary theory during the last twenty years – from cultural studies to new historicism and postcolonial studies – Williams' words do not seem to have taken much hold on the attention of Buzzati's critics. Panafieu's work had a ground-breaking importance, but it was not translated into Italian, and the only scholars who have tried to broaden the discussion about Buzzati's relationship with his time – and with Fascism in particular – were Marie-Hélène Caspar, Emmanuel Mattiato, and Paul D'Agostino.

Buzzati's career can be divided into three decades, each one with its ideological and historical issues. The first period, which goes from the 1930s to the end of the Second World War, was marked by the rise and fall of Fascism. Buzzati, like any other journalist during the *ventennio*, had to live with the restrictions imposed by censorship, but worked also as a correspondent from Italian colonies and on the front line aboard Italian Navy ships, during the war in the Mediterranean Sea. During the 1950s, Buzzati watched from the particular Italian perspective the evolution of the global struggle between Communism and the powers of the western world, even though he rarely entered either into national or international political debates. This role was undertaken with fiercer passion at the *Corriere* by Indro Montanelli, with whom Buzzati became a close friend during those years. The 1960s saw Buzzati engaging with the social issues of the time with much more attention and constancy, and those years represented also

¹²⁷ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001 [1961]), p. 61.

¹²⁸ Yves, Panafieu, *Janus: Propositions pour un décryptage sociologique et idéologique de l'oeuvre de Dino Buzzati* (Paris: Laffont, 1989).

the most prolific period of the writer's artistic production: between 1950 and 1960 alone, Buzzati published two novels, three collections of short stories and *Poema a fumetti*.

It is from the last two decades of Buzzati's career that Panafieu began his argument, in order to underline the fact that history entered Buzzati's poetics and modified his narrative techniques – not exclusively, but mainly and more explicitly – after the end of Fascism and the Second World War. In the 1950s, with *Il crollo della Baliverna* and *Sessanta racconti*, Buzzati's fiction broke the silence on the topical subjects of the time. The attention of the novelist was directed above all towards the consequences of technological progress: atomic explosions, scientific achievements, and the fear that these achievements could revolt against men. Panafieu talked about an obsession with catastrophes hidden behind narrative devices typical of fantastic literature, such as a-temporality, allegory and myths.¹²⁹ Despite the importance of Panafieu's conclusions about the sociological and ideological implications of Buzzati's fictional production, journalism is absent from the analysis of the French scholar. During the 1950s and until 1963, Buzzati edited the *Domenica del Corriere*, bringing the newspaper to the highest circulation ever achieved. The 1960s were characterized by a series of important trips around the world as special correspondent which took him to the United States, India, Japan, and Israel. Such a wide work experience for the *Corriere* cannot be underestimated, and it had consequences of seminal importance for the increasing role of history and sociology within Buzzati's production.

As suggested by Panafieu, and as I argued by addressing Buzzati's fantasy with Hume's category of 'didactic literature', ethics and morality were at the core of the journalist's confrontation with the reality which surrounded him:¹³⁰ literature had to be 'meaningful' in the sense that it must convey a moral lesson of which the writer was the bearer. Buzzati, who defined man as a 'creatura sbagliata',¹³¹ denounced the selfishness and greed of modern society, but what annoyed him the most was the betrayal of what he considered to be the fundamental human values as summarized in his reference to the

¹²⁹ Panafieu, *Janus*, pp. 22-32.

¹³⁰ Panafieu, *Janus*, pp. 33-53.

¹³¹ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 5. 'Per te, l'uomo, cos'è? È una malformazione della natura. Più vivo e più me ne convinco. [...] È una creatura sbagliata [...]?'.

Kantian ‘categorical imperative’ as a lifelong lesson.¹³² Ethics guided Buzzati’s view of history as well: in his view, the paradoxical aberration of modern ideologies such as Fascism and Marxism was that they arrived at the subjection and hatred of other human beings in the name of an abstract model.¹³³ If when reading Buzzati’s fictional texts, the references to history and society are hidden behind fantasy, then when analyzing his journalism, the role of fantasy becomes one of giving metaphorical depths to the critique which Buzzati directed towards a world which in its anxiety for enrichment contained the seed of its own failure. It will be fundamental then to take into consideration what Williams suggested again in *The Long Revolution*: ‘We see most past work through our own experience, without even making the effort to see it in something like its original terms. What analysis can do is not so much to reverse this [...], as to make the interpretation conscious [...]; to relate the interpretation to the particular contemporary values on which it rests [...]’.¹³⁴

The close reading of the second part of my thesis will try to demonstrate the suitability of Buzzati’s journalism to the theses expressed by Panafieu with reference to the author’s novels and short stories. The mixture of journalism and fantasy became a means to address moral, social, and economical issues of modern society. What Buzzati questioned was the widespread conformity that old and new ideologies caused, especially within the young generations. His argument was that even supposedly revolutionary ideas ended by being only a means of homologation rather than a means of participation and communion. In talking about the 1960s and Buzzati’s positions towards mass culture, Lorenzo Viganò wrote:

Il Sessantotto è arrivato anche in Italia, e con esso le contestazioni giovanili, il mutamento dei valori, la trasformazione della società. Buzzati assiste a questa ‘rivoluzione’ dei costumi con indifferenza; si irrigidisce, ma non cambia, non si adegua, anzi, se possibile accentua ancora di più [...] i suoi caratteri di uomo di stampo ottocentesco. Quel che è accaduto, e che sta accadendo, non gli piace e non lo nasconde.¹³⁵

¹³² Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p 94: ‘Accetto l’imperativo Kantiano. Vale a dire: ‘Comportati come se il principio della tua azione dovesse diventare norma generale’. Mi pare sia l’optimum. Se uno si comporta così, si comporta sempre bene’.

¹³³ One of the examples quoted by Panafieu is the short story ‘Moderni mostri’– in *Le notti difficili* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971), pp. 96-101 – in which Buzzati’s polemic is directed against Marxism.

¹³⁴ Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 69.

¹³⁵ *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), pp. 349, 350.

More than indifference, I would speak of a theoretical critique that the journalist proposed to the young generations of his time:

Che vuole, in fondo, la contestazione giovanile – nelle sue forme più attendibili – quando dice di voler sbaraccare il sistema dell’attuale vita occidentale [...]? Vorrebbe non cambiare sistema politico e sociale [...] ma vorrebbe riformare l’uomo con tutte le sue miserie [...]. Impresa affascinante, non c’è dubbio, a cui già si accinse duemila anni fa Gesù Cristo, coi risultati che tutti sappiamo. E con che mezzi i contestatori di oggi vorrebbero riuscirci? Con l’odio [...].¹³⁶

The critique is of the conformism of the supposed new-ideals which guided the protest: ‘[...] tutte queste contestazioni [...] sono una manifestazione di conformismo abbastanza ebete’.¹³⁷ What is interesting today is the evidence in the texts of a social and ideological engagement. This should not be confused with Buzzati’s idea that the artistic decision of touching contemporary history and politics only through the use of fantasy – without addressing directly the ideological debate – did not have to constitute a bias towards the writer: ‘Padronissimi [gli scrittori] di essere impegnati. Ma ritenere che un artista necessariamente oggi debba essere impegnato politicamente, per me è un’idiozia. [...] Il conformismo, l’opportunismo e l’arrivismo filo-marxista dei miei colleghi mi fa semplicemente venire il vomito, e come primo impulso mi fa diventare assertore della monarchia assoluta’.¹³⁸

1.2.2 The Legend of Buzzati’s Isolation

Buzzati did not use his status as a famous and successful writer to engage the political debate explicitly: his preferred space in which to talk about his time was within the pages of the *Corriere*. Two examples of ‘fantastic news’ will give an idea of how the image of Buzzati as an ‘isolated’ writer is a myth: morality, ethics, sense of duty,

¹³⁶ Claudio Quarantotto, ‘Il mio diavolo esiste’, in *Il Giornale d’Italia*, 4-5 November 1971, quoted by Lorenzo Viganò in *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Viganò, p. 350.

¹³⁷ *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Viganò, p. 350.

¹³⁸ Gianfranco De Turreis, ‘Nostro fantastico quotidiano (incontro con Dino Buzzati)’, in *Il Conciliatore*, 15 December 1970, quoted in *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Viganò, p. 352, and Mirella Delfini, ‘Dino Buzzati o il mistero della ‘decapottabile’’, in *Il Tempo*, 8 September 1962, quoted in *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Viganò, p. 353.

and respect for rules are the principles which informed his personal and public life.¹³⁹ The first example is an article published in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera* the day after the tragedy of Marcinelle, in Belgium. In the coal mine of Bois du Cazier, near Charleroi, 262 workmen died in a fire. In ‘Tragedia nostra’, Buzzati focused on the opposition between the tragedy and the almost contemporary moment of *ferragosto* (the midsummer Italian holiday).¹⁴⁰ The journalist emphasized the fact that, despite the distance, what happened in Belgium was also an Italian tragedy, because of the 139 Italian emigrants who died in the disaster. The detachment from the ‘real’ and the introduction of fantasy were announced by Buzzati directly, while addressing his readership. The use of the word ‘immaginazione’ invited the reader explicitly to use fantasy in order to understand better the extent of the tragedy: ‘Provate, con l’immaginazione, a figurarvi quei 139 minatori italiani tutti in fila e dietro a loro le 139 famiglie [...]. È come un paese intero [...] È come se un terremoto, o un’esplosione, o una bufera avesse raso al suolo un centro abitato qui da noi’.¹⁴¹ The end of the article fused together the use of imagination and the reference to the social implications of the tragedy: Buzzati imagined the miners who were going to die while they were thinking about their native land. They were all emigrants who left the country looking for new job opportunities. Lorenzo Viganò explained: ‘Il disastro [...] segnerà l’inizio della fine dell’emigrazione italiana in Belgio, promossa nell’immediato dopoguerra in cambio del carbone. Attirati dalla possibilità di avere un impiego, cinquantamila lavoratori italiani avevano lasciato il paese e si erano ritrovati a vivere e a lavorare per pochi soldi, in condizioni disumane [...]’.¹⁴² Buzzati, with a single sentence, demonstrated ‘fantastic news’ to be a new way of enriching the record of the ‘real’, without renouncing sociological observations: ‘[...] è [...] comprensibile che noi si pensi soprattutto ai 139 partiti dall’Italia per farsi una minuscola faticatissima fortuna e imprigionati per l’eternità dalla terra straniera che doveva dar loro, a costo di incredibili calvari, un modestissimo avvenire’.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ ‘Io sono sempre stato un tipo zelante e scrupoloso. Se in una giornata riesco a realizzare bene un lavoro sto meglio, persino fisicamente, provo una specie di liberazione. Mi definirei un doverista. Da ragazzo soltanto l’idea di poter bigiare la scuola mi metteva addosso il terrore’. In *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), p. 332.

¹⁴⁰ Dino Buzzati, ‘Tragedia nostra’, in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 9 August 1956. In *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, pp. 93-96.

¹⁴¹ *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, p. 94.

¹⁴² *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, p. 92.

¹⁴³ *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, p. 95.

Another example of a journalistic article in which Buzzati reflected upon his time is ‘Il male dentro noi’.¹⁴⁴ Here the political tensions of the 1960s are central to the news report which Buzzati wrote after the explosion of a bomb in Piazza Fontana in December 1969 in Milan and the strange events which followed this terrorist attack.¹⁴⁵ Buzzati did not write either about the death of Giuseppe Pinelli – an anarchist railway man who mysteriously fell from a window of the police headquarters three days after the tragedy – or about the arrest of another anarchist, Pietro Valpreda. The article is built on an imaginary dialogue between a journalist and a police superintendent in which the latter forms the hypothesis that the instigator of the attack did not exist: the culprit would be a sort of fantastic, evil creature, born from the hatred of people for their enemies, competitors, and rivals. It is contemporary society itself, with its selfishness and anxiety for success, which caused the tragedy, by intensifying a feeling of hatred day by day, to the point that that feeling overwhelmed its creators:

‘Ma nessuno [...] ha finora considerata un’altra ipotesi. Nel cuore della città [...] sono state ammazzate selvaggiamente quattordici persone [...] e altre decine sono state colpite e ferite [...]. Subito tutti: chi è stato? [...] E ciascuno ha subito pensato ai suoi nemici [...]. Ma può darsi che tutto questo sia una corsa dietro al vento’ diceva il vecchio e saggio commissario ‘forse [...] i criminali non esistono [...]. Il maledetto, i maledetti sono soltanto creature del male concepite, generate [...] da noi. Io, augurando la malora a chi la pensava al contrario di me, costruivo, di quel demonio, qualche migliaia di cellule, tu, gettando la maledizione su chi ti offendeva o umiliava costruivi del demonio un dito [...] e a poco a poco, odiando, lo abbiamo messo al mondo [...] Dopodiché [...] si è messo a fabbricare la morte’.¹⁴⁶

Buzzati, through the figure of the ‘vecchio e saggio commissario’, went beyond the political justifications of terrorism and blamed the absence, within society, of those values summarized by the ‘Kantian imperative’, which according to him should have ruled the community. The massacre of Piazza Fontana is still remembered in Italy as one of the darkest moments of recent Italian history and as the beginning of the strategy of tension which gripped Italy during the so-called ‘Leaden Years’ in the late 1960s and

¹⁴⁴ Dino Buzzati, ‘Il male dentro di noi’, in *Corriere della Sera*, 16 December 1969, In *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 355, 356.

¹⁴⁵ The Piazza Fontana Bombing was a terrorist attack that occurred on 12 December 1969 at 16:37: a bomb exploded at the headquarters of *Banca Nazionale dell’Agricoltura* (National Agrarian Bank) in Piazza Fontana, in Milan. 17 people were killed and 88 wounded.

¹⁴⁶ *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 355, 356.

1970s. Buzzati's decision to use the pages of the newspaper to cause the episode to shift from an ideological ground to a moral one stresses the direct involvement that he felt with what was happening in the country. Buzzati's apparent political disengagement was grounded on the strong belief that the role of the intellectual was to offer a broader and deeper interpretation of events than the one allowed to those who were too implicated with the political struggle.

1.2.3 Buzzati and the Fascist Regime

The hardest period to study and to place in relation to Buzzati is that of Fascism. Several scholars have tried to claim either a passive complicity of the writer with the regime or a critique which was hidden under fantastic metaphors, both in Buzzati's journalistic and fictional production.¹⁴⁷ I agree with Paul D'Agostino when he states that Buzzati's decision not to be engaged with his contemporary political debate constitutes a political choice, and that it is, in some sense, a forerunner of the only apparent political disengagement that characterized postmodernism in the 1960s.¹⁴⁸ However, I argue that a certain degree of accommodation to Fascism is undeniable if we look at the texts, at least during the 1930s and 1940s. My view is that Buzzati's ideology does not arise from a political reflection upon the choice between Fascism and anti-Fascism, but rather from an unavoidable assimilation of certain cultural and social influences which dominated Italy during those two decades. If one thinks that Buzzati was a bourgeois man, conscious of his social status and very hostile to the politics of the

¹⁴⁷ Panafieu, first in *Janus* and then in the article 'Aspetti storici, morali e politici del discorso sull'impotenza' (in *Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Fontanella, pp. 23-43), asserts strongly that Buzzati denounced all the possible forms of dictatorship and, in particular, their use of strength and violence. The critique would be in particular to the conformism and homologation that dictatorships bring within society. According to Emmanuel Mattiato, on the other hand, the use of military metaphors would be a consequence of the similarity between some metaphors and symbols, which Fascism propaganda and Buzzati's poetics had in common. In Emmanuel Mattiato, *Ecrivains-journalistes sous le fascisme. Le cas de Dino Buzzati et du 'Corriere della Sera'*, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 6 (2001), 172-174. The French scholar analyses in particular Buzzati's interest for the aesthetic beauty of war and the decision – such as in the case of *Il deserto dei Tartari* – to set many stories in a military context. His conclusion is that is not always possible to decide whether the intention of the writer is aesthetic or ideological, even though many articles written from Italian colonies reflect an undeniably Fascist viewpoint on the world.

¹⁴⁸ Paul D'Agostino, 'L'ideologia anacronistica: Buzzati e la politica apolitica', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 193-201. For a broader discussion on the relationship between political ideologies and Italian Postmodernism see *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*, ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009): in this volume there is an effective attempt of denying the assumption according to which 'Postmodernism' would be a synonym of political and ideological *disimpegno*.

left-wing, it is not hard to imagine why he decided not to take a clear-cut position between the dominant regime and a strong anti-Fascist commitment.

Whereas independent intellectuals such as Benedetto Croce and Eugenio Montale clarified their ideas with explicit political actions such as signing the manifesto of the anti-Fascist intellectuals, Buzzati was fully engaged in his work at the *Corriere della Sera*. His strong ethical commitment to his employer and to the newspaper could not allow an attitude of rebellion. In order to understand how he considered his role within and his affection for the *Corriere* it will be enough to read part of a letter to Andrea Rizzoli, quoted by Lorenzo Viganò, in which Buzzati declined the offer to edit a new weekly magazine: ‘Io sono entrato al Corriere nel lontano 1928, posso quindi dire di aver passato qui in via Solferino tutta la mia vita. Sono cose che contano. Staccarmi da tutto questo, di mia iniziativa, mi costerebbe moltissimo [...]’.¹⁴⁹ Whether conscious or not, Buzzati’s ambiguous political credo was the deciding factor which allowed him, after 25 April 1945 and the liberation of Italy from Fascism by the Allies, to maintain his job at the *Corriere*, despite being considered by many colleagues a collaborationist of the regime.¹⁵⁰ The increasing number of Buzzati’s references to the political situation of the country after the end of the war confirms the difficulty he experienced in putting himself outside an historical and ideological setting in which he was so much involved, both professionally and personally. I argue that it cannot be forgotten what D. G. Myers declared to be the main principles of the New Historical critical method, and which I consider to be an inescapable basis for a study which aims to take into account the ‘world around the author’ and the texts the author produced: ‘[...] literature is historical, which means [...] that a literary work is [...] a social and cultural construct shaped by more than one consciousness. The proper way to understand it [...] is through the culture and society that produced it’.¹⁵¹

Buzzati’s references to the negative aspects of dictatorships and to the horrors of war are mostly present in the fictional productions published during the 1960s. The journalist seems to have taken only belatedly a clear-cut position towards any form of totalitarianism, but it cannot be excluded that Buzzati’s aim during the *ventennio* was also to use his familiarity with fantastic literature to get around the problem of facing

¹⁴⁹ *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Viganò, p. 249.

¹⁵⁰ *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 198, 199.

¹⁵¹ David Gersham Myers, ‘The New Historicism in Literary Study’, *Academic Questions* 2, Winter 1988-89, 27-36.

the regime's ideology. Besides, it must be taken into account that when the ambiguity of Buzzati's political positions is found in the articles written from the Fascist colonies and from the war in the Mediterranean Sea, it is due also to the strong pressure which was exercised by censorship on writers and journalists. The relationship with censorship is one of the most problematic aspects of Buzzati's journalistic production between the 1930s and 1940s. *Il Buttafuoco* and *L'Africa di Buzzati* cannot be read without taking into consideration that everything Buzzati published in those years needed to be approved by the regime. Maurizio Cesari used the documents of the Italian Archivio Generale dello Stato to demonstrate that from 1940 on, the alliance between Italy and Hitler's Nazi Germany, and the first signs of a decrease in the popularity of Fascism amongst the population, made Mussolini decide to increase the control over what could be published in the country.¹⁵² Alessandro Pavolini, Minister of Popular Culture, started to meet the directors of the main Italian newspapers every week, and from February 1940 the Commissione per la Bonifica Libreria withdrew from the market all the books which were considered dangerous. Correspondence from the front was checked with particular attention, and several of Buzzati's articles written from Libya and Ethiopia, and during the naval battles, were censored. A proper and updated study of the relationship between journalism and Fascist censorship still needs to be undertaken, and one of the reasons for this fact is the difficulty of access to Italian archives and documents of the time. As argued by Guido Bonsaver, Italian historians seem to have accepted for long and with resignation the impossibility of having access to archives which could tell the story of the evolution of censorship during the regime.¹⁵³ This gap started to be filled by Bonsaver's seminal study on censorship and literature, which underlined the importance but also the many limitations of Cesari's book by revealing the complexity of the relation between Mussolini's regime and the most important Italian publishing houses.¹⁵⁴ Some of them, such as Mondadori, tried to maintain fruitful links with the Ministry of Popular Culture and Mussolini himself, in order not to see their businesses damaged by the national political situation.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Bonsaver

¹⁵² Maurizio Cesari, *La censura nel periodo fascista* (Naples: Liguori, 1978), pp. 79-99.

¹⁵³ 'Too often episodes of literary censorship have been passed on from critic to critic without a through analysis of existing archival documentation', in Guido Bonsaver, *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ Bonsaver quotes as important contributions also David Forgacs, *Italian Culture in the Industrial Era, 1880-1980* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) and Philip V. Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso: Fascismo e Mass-media* (Bari and Rome: Laterza, 1975).

¹⁵⁵ Bonsaver, *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*, pp. 43-53.

concentrated on literature, and a similar reconstruction with journalism as the main focus is still due.¹⁵⁶

1.2.4 ‘Servants’ and ‘Exiles’

I started this section with Raymond Williams’ words because of a paradox. On the one hand Williams’ work gives me a sound theoretical background for a study which aims to put into practice the idea of considering the historical and social context of a work of art as being crucial. On the other hand, Williams’ theory is ideologically charged by Marxism, and Buzzati’s negative opinion of Marxism is very well-known. Nevertheless, this approach seems not only justifiable but even necessary as soon as we try to go beyond the ideological arguments which lie behind both theory and artistic production, in order to look for patterns which might serve the quest for the deep meaning of the texts. The symbolic depth, literariness, and social value that Buzzati’s news acquired through the insertion within it of fantasy may be acknowledged by borrowing from Williams two definitions we find in *The Long Revolution*: those of ‘servant’ and ‘exile’.¹⁵⁷

By starting from the assumption that ‘individuals could not survive and grow except within a social process of some kind’ (p. 104), Williams identifies six different categories to classify the relationships between individuals and their societies: ‘member’, ‘subject’, ‘servant’, ‘rebel’, ‘exile’, and ‘vagrant’ (p. 104). A ‘servant’ is defined as an individual to whom ‘is given the illusion of choice, and is invited to identify himself with the way of life in which his place is defined [...]. [...] the illusion is important, for it allows him to pretend to an identification with the society, as if the choice had been real’ (p. 105). I would like to focus on two protagonists of two different texts written by Buzzati: one is factual and the other is fictional, the former being a piece of news, the latter a fantastic short story. Both of the characters fit Williams’

¹⁵⁶ To my knowledge, the more relevant (but isolated and now dated) exceptions to this situation are represented by Nicola Tranfaglia, Paolo Murialdi and Massimo Legnani, *La stampa Italiana nell’età fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1980); Paolo Murialdi, *La stampa del regime fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1986) and, more recently, Romain Rainero, *Propaganda e ordini alla stampa: da Badoglio alla repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007). In 2005 Nicola Tranfaglia edited the publication of the records of the meetings between Fascist Ministers of Popular Culture (Alfieri, Pavolini and Polverelli) and the editors of the most important Italian newspaper between 1939 and 1943: *Ministri e giornalisti: la guerra e il Minculpop*, ed. by Nicola Tranfaglia (Turin: Einaudi, 2005).

¹⁵⁷ Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 104. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

definition of ‘servant’, but shift progressively, during the narrative, to the category of ‘exile’, the human being described as an ‘absolute [...] in rejecting the way of life of his society’, but that ‘instead of fighting [...] goes away’ (p. 107).

The first character is Rina Fort, a woman who, in Milan in 1946, murdered her lover’s wife and three children. Between 1946 and 1950 Buzzati wrote fourteen articles dedicated to the ‘belva di via San Gregorio’, by following not only the arrest but even the trial of the murderer. Buzzati’s reportage became one of the most famous pieces of crime reporting of the postwar period, but my attention is addressed to the last article of the series in particular: ‘Forse, non ha capito’.¹⁵⁸ Published on 21 January 1950, the first part of the text is dedicated to the reading of the sentence of Fort’s life imprisonment by the president of the Court of Assizes (*Corte d’Assise*) Luigi Marantonio. The second part, by contrast, is a piece of ‘fantastic news’ in which Buzzati imagined Rina Fort’s future, after she had been released. Buzzati could not have known that on 12 December 1975 Fort would actually be pardoned by the President of the Republic Giovanni Leone, and this fact gives the piece of news even more the aura of a fantastic story.

Rina Fort saw her father die in front of her eyes while he was helping her to pass a dangerous point during a hike; she lost her fiancé right before the wedding through tuberculosis, and separated from her husband, who had been admitted to a mental hospital, before arriving in Milan, where she worked as a shop assistant for Giuseppe Ricciardi, the man who became her lover. She was the archetype of Williams’ ‘servant’, trapped by the tragedy of a society she did not choose but did not have the means to fight or change. Buzzati, by imagining Fort’s future after prison, conveys the isolation the woman found in a world which had banished her:

[...] un giorno, chissà quando [...] tornerà? Nella miseria suprema degli ergastoli [...] palpita [...] il miraggio della grazia. [...] E può darsi che in un tempo futuro [...] una vecchietta dalla faccia spenta avanzi a passi strascicati per corso Buenos Aires. [...] I passanti [...] la scansano. [...] Si avvicina a una ragazza: ‘Per favore, signorina, la via San Gregorio?’. [...] Ecco il numero 40! [...]. Vede una donna uscire dalla casa. ‘Scusi,’ le chiede ‘scusi la domanda: ma è qui che tanti anni fa è successo un delitto?’ ‘Qui? ... Ma sì ... è vero ... un fatto del genere l’ho già sentito [...] Ma sarà una storia, sa? ... Io non ci

¹⁵⁸ Dino Buzzati, ‘Forse, non ha capito’, in *Corriere della Sera*, 21 January 1950, in *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 95-97.

credo a queste favole!'. 'Grazie' dice la vecchia. E resta là, sola, sopravvissuto miserando rudere [...].¹⁵⁹

Rita's tragedy is not only to have been exiled by society for her crime, but, above all, to have been left alone and behind: she is a sort of survivor from a prehistoric era, who does not belong anymore to the society of human beings. Time changed her story from the factual to the fantastic realm of 'favole', but her fairytale is without a happy ending. If one reads Fort's declarations after the hearing during the 1950 trial, then Buzzati's 'fantastic news' acquires the 'uncanny' effect of a premonition: 'Potrei dire che non ho paura della sentenza. Faranno i giudici. Mi diano cinque anni o l'ergastolo, a che può servire? Ormai sono la Fort!'.¹⁶⁰

The same passage from the role of 'servant' to the role of 'exile' undergone by Rina Fort is suffered by Cristoforo Shroder, the protagonist of 'Una cosa che comincia per elle'. In this short story Shroder is a dealer who is banished from the town of Sisto and the rest of the realm because he contracted leprosy. Don Melito, joined by the doctor of the town, forces the dealer to use a bell to signal his presence and addresses him with ferocious words: 'Uscirete immediatamente di qui e continuerete a suonarla, fino a che sarete uscito fuori del paese, e poi ancora, fino a che non sarete uscito dal regno'.¹⁶¹ The tragedy of being exiled is emphasized by the narrator more than the disease: the 'servant' – who was well placed within the commercial mechanisms of a society to which he believed he belonged – finds himself thrown out of the community: 'Lo Shroder [...] si avviò lentamente attraverso la piazza. Decine e decine di persone facevano ala al suo passaggio, ritraendosi indietro man mano che lui si avvicinava'.¹⁶²

In both the article and the short story the readership is addressed as a community in which the violation of the rules brings an unavoidable punishment, which is not imprisonment but the alienation from a society which has strict rules and no mercy: 'tutto si paga nella vita'. Both Shroder and Fort are 'servants' who become 'exiles', and there is no redemption for them: society is either unwilling to offer a second chance or to forget the alienated subject as time passes by. Hence the difference between the two texts is that the short story begins and ends as a work of fiction, whereas the article

¹⁵⁹ *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 95-97.

¹⁶⁰ Luigi Cecchini, *Dieci grandi processi di amore e di morte* (Milan: De Vecchi, 1965).

¹⁶¹ Dino Buzzati, 'Una cosa che comincia per elle', in *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), p. 171.

¹⁶² Buzzati, 'Una cosa che comincia per elle', p. 174.

crosses the boundaries between fantasy and journalism: ‘fantastic news’ gives Buzzati the chance to communicate a socially useful meaning by reporting crime news and, at the same time, by giving to the reported fact a metaphorical depth.

1.3 A Modernist Writer?

1.3.1 Buzzati and Italian Modernism

Too old for modernism and too young for postmodernism: this is perhaps a simple statement of Buzzati’s position within Italian literary canon. By establishing the cultural and historical framework of Italian modernism, Luca Somigli and Mario Moroni mark out a clear-cut period which goes from 1861 – ‘when the question of the political formation of the nation gave way to that of the creation of a national culture and identity’ – to the mid-1930s, when the Fascist regime consolidated its power.¹⁶³ Buzzati, who was born in 1906 and made his literary debut in 1933 with the novel *Barnabo delle montagne*, was touched by modernist culture only at the end of its trajectory, when it had already passed the stage which Somigli and Moroni called the ‘return to order’ (p. 22). Before the First World War, the crucial moment of avant-gardism had challenged in Italy the centrality of institutionalized literary figures such as Carducci, Pascoli, and D’Annunzio, and had called for ‘a new mediation between [aesthetic] and praxis’ (p. 19); *Crepuscolarismo* and Futurism had faced, from different viewpoints, the novelties of the modern world: the former by reflecting upon the distance between art and contemporary reality, the latter by accepting the features of modern civilization unconditionally (p. 18); *La Voce* (1908-1916) and *Lacerba* (1913-1915) had shaped the evolution of literary journals; but with the ‘return to order’, after the end of the First World War, none of these experiences survived.

It was in the aftermath of this crisis that Buzzati took his first literary steps within a cultural context in which – as Somigli and Moroni state – ‘[...] intellectuals were forced to abandon their autonomous space and to side with one or the other of the two antagonistic political solutions which would characterize Italian society until the

¹⁶³ Luca Somigli and Mario Moroni, ‘Modernism in Italy: an Introduction’, in *Italian Modernism: Italian Culture between Decadentism and Avant-Garde*, ed. by Luca Somigli and Mario Moroni (London, Buffalo, and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p.13. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

consolidation of the Fascist regime. [...] it was [...] a question of choosing between socialism and bourgeois reaction [...]’ (p. 21). There is no doubt that Buzzati chose the second option.¹⁶⁴ Buzzati’s attempt of keeping himself distant from the political debate and the only apparent absence of ideological implications in the fictional production of his early career can be considered an effort in the direction of that ‘institutionalization of the separation between art and literature and politics’ (p. 21) which marked the defeat of avant-garde ideals. Moreover, Somigli and Moroni’s definition of a ‘traditionalist modernism’ (p. 22) to describe Italian culture in the 1920s is consistent with Buzzati’s choice of finding forms of compromise with the regime in order to survive and to save his work at the *Corriere*.¹⁶⁵ Fantasy in fiction and ‘fantastic news’ in journalism gave Buzzati the opportunity to concentrate his poetics on the contrast between the external reality of contemporary society and the quest for a space in which human dreams, feelings and the relationship with nature could still have a meaning. By maintaining the ethical drive as his guideline and the longing for an ideal balance between individuals’ needs and common necessities, Buzzati – in the second part of his life and in his last production in particular – hypothesized a mental and cultural rebellion which denied the use of violence and condemned conformism.¹⁶⁶ Even though many fictional examples of this rebellion can be found in Panafieu’s *Janus*, there are also pieces of ‘fantastic news’ which demonstrate how Buzzati’s belonging to the bourgeoisie did not prevent him from being very critical towards it and feeling empathy for the working class and all those people whom conformist society was leaving behind.

In ‘Una tragedia della città’, Buzzati wrote about Giuseppe De Blasi, a 36 year old night security guard who in 1963 killed his three children before committing suicide.¹⁶⁷ Buzzati started the article by focusing on De Blasi’s house. Even though he did not see it, imagination was enough for an experienced columnist like Buzzati:

¹⁶⁴ See Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 78: ‘Sono un borghese tipico’, and p. 97: ‘È chiaro che in un paese la borghesia e il popolo appartengono alla stessa categoria umana [...] E, ovviamente [...] la borghesia sarà meglio del popolo, perché la borghesia è più educata e più colta [...] non è che ci sia un merito...Ma immaginare che il popolo sia meglio della borghesia è [...] cretino....! Poi, [...] devo dire che nel popolo alle volte si trova della bravissima gente [...]. Ma che sia meglio di noi, no’.

¹⁶⁵ See also Somigli and Moroni, ‘Modernism in Italy: an Introduction’, p. 11: ‘The work of reconstruction characterizing the postwar *ritorno all’ordine* can be understood as a response to the Futurist challenge to the aesthetic and as an attempt to translate the Futurist destructive *élan* into a constructive program’.

¹⁶⁶ Panafieu, *Janus*, pp. 99-136.

¹⁶⁷ Dino Buzzati, ‘Una tragedia della città’, in *Cronache terrestri*, ed. by Domenico Porzio (Milan: Mondadori, 1972), pp. 168-170. Further references to this article will be given in the text.

Pazzia, si dice. [...] Non basta, però. [...] come è scaturita? [...] La prima e lontanissima causa della strage non può essere per caso ricercata [...] in Milano [...] ?

[...] Non sono stato a vedere l'appartamento del fu Giuseppe De Blasi [...] ma lo immagino. Come cronista [...] ne ho visti a decine di questi piccoli appartamenti popolari [...]. C'è la modernità, c'è l'igiene, c'è un senso di metropoli, di industria, di lavoro e perfino un barlume di benessere formale; eppure regna potente [...] l'arido squallore dei falansteri funzionali [...] (pp. 168, 169).

Buzzati used crime news to engage with the problem of migration from southern Italy, first from the narrow perspective of the protagonist of the story, then enlarging the issue to the multitude of migrants who left the south to look for fortune in the north during the 1960s. As in the passage quoted above, comfort is only formal for these people:

Ma le due o tre stanze di via Vespri Siciliani viste dalla lontana Puglia erano una minuscola reggia, un nido di [...] possibilità [...] la capitale dell'industria [...], la vera vita fatta di febbre, di desideri, di successi [...].

Ed ecco che, alla conquista della grande città, parte un altro dal sud. E poi un altro. [...] le case si ingorgano, la promiscuità si fa più densa e fastidiosa, gli animi [...] si riempiono a poco a poco di veleno.

E la città intorno? [...] essa appare nuda, scabra e ostile, una immensa prigione di cemento e asfalto, impassibile di fronte alla solitudine dell'uomo (p. 169).

In the choice of words that Buzzati makes there is a clear condemnation of the injustice that dominated the society of the modern metropolis: the supposed 'true life' is composed of a feverish desire for success; and the lust for money poisons men and their souls. The city is hostile: it is a prison which does not concern itself with its inmates. 'Fantastic news' allowed Buzzati to present the external reality as an enemy of disadvantaged people of the lower classes, which the journalist took into account, nevertheless maintaining his distanced position of a privileged bourgeois. While he proudly never neglected his social status, articles such as 'Una tragedia della città' show Buzzati's strong sensitivity to the incoherence and alienation of modernity, and his attention to ordinary people that will be present also in his work of reportage from the Fascist colonies and Italian Navy ships. With the usual shifting from news to fantasy Buzzati imagined what might have happened inside De Blasi's mind: a series of questions are addressed by the journalist to his readership, in order to elicit a reflection

upon what lies below the surface of the arid piece of news. Buzzati asked his readers for a change of attitude, even though he retained a pessimistic view of the reality which surrounded him:

Chissà, se qualcuno [...] gli avesse rivolto una parola gentile [...]. Forse sarebbe stato salvo. Ma la vita ci porta purtroppo chi da una parte e chi dall'altra, e tutti si corre a perdifiato con gli sguardi fissi innanzi, e non si trova mai tempo di guardarci negli occhi (p. 170).

However, Buzzati's social critique resided at a theoretical and literary level: the absence of a practical engagement with political and ideological movements of his time, the combination of journalism with literature, and the refusal to deny an important role of the bourgeoisie within modern society constitute the main differences between Buzzati and the writers of the modernist movement. Paolo Valesio wrote that modernism separated 'industrial literature [...] from high art, which finds in the rejection of the norms of bourgeois society its own validation. It is this critical and at times radically anti-bourgeois thrust that defines [...] modernist literature'.¹⁶⁸ Buzzati never denied his bourgeois identity.¹⁶⁹ Besides, in his work, political issues are discussed, but without an active participation, which he refused because, in his view, politics was part of that thirst for power which was killing society.¹⁷⁰ From a poetical point of view, Buzzati's 'fantastic news' cannot be connected to the modernist 'rhetoric of fragmentation' – as Valesio defined the most experimental linguistic outcomes of the movement – and did not fit the ideas of a literature which was supposed to remain separated from the forms of art that were within the reach of everyone.¹⁷¹ However – as

¹⁶⁸ Paolo Valesio, 'Foreword: After 'The Conquest of the Stars'', in *Italian Modernism*, ed. by Somigli and Moroni, p. XI.

¹⁶⁹ See Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, pp. 91, 92: '[...] il marxismo non mi piace perché in pratica è una morale basata sull'odio [...]. Questo messaggio di umanità, di amare il prossimo ha per primo risultato l'odio [...]. Quindi a me non piace. Domani uno potrà dire: 'È necessario [...]''. E va bene, sarà necessario...! Ma non abbiate la pretesa che sia una cosa nobile. [...] È una cosa di carattere utilitaristico basata su un sentimento abietto. Quindi a me non piace... Tant'è vero che la base di tutto quanto [...] è l'odio di classe, che dal punto di vista filosofico, oltre il resto, è una coglionata assoluta... Che senso ha, una classe che 'odia'?... Perché deve odiare? [...] Perché un povero deve odiarmi?... Io cosa ho fatto di male?... Io personalmente come borghese non ho il minimo rimorso'.

¹⁷⁰ See Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, pp. 76, 77: '*E quali avvenimenti sociali e politici hanno lasciato in te un ricordo doloroso?* [...] Tutta la faccenda della guerra, [...] Perché a Milano la prima guerra mondiale è stata sentita moltissimo. [...] in quanto concerne altri avvenimenti, come quelli per esempio della vita politica, io ne sono stato fuori, completamente. Quando è venuto su Mussolini non l'ho saputo neanche. Non mi interessava affatto'.

¹⁷¹ Valesio, 'Foreword: After 'The Conquest of the Stars'', p. XVII.

‘Una tragedia della città’ demonstrates – Buzzati shared with late modernism the wish to bring ‘into focus the contradictions of modernity’.¹⁷² If we agree with Somigli and Moroni in considering modernism not as ‘a monolithic notion’, but as an ‘open [...] epistemological category to access the constellation of cultural phenomena which reflect [...] on the experience of modernity in Italy’, then Buzzati can be seen as a product of his own culture and society.¹⁷³

Modernist cultural, historical and social contexts cannot be said to be absent in Buzzati’s fantasy: they are concealed behind the blending of reality and fantastic features. Buzzati merged journalism and literature in order to represent a world in which fact and fiction were two sides of the same coin: ‘fantastic news’ allowed him to depict the trauma of modern society by the insertion of metaphors and symbols within journalistic narrative, while remaining detached from ideology. The utopianism of a society guided by an ethical drive and free from injustice is rarely introduced with aggressive tones:¹⁷⁴ Buzzati preferred the ‘uncanny’ forms of fantastic literature and the use of irony and sarcasm to express his disdain for conformism, the use of violence, and the positivist faith in technology and progress of capitalistic society. In Buzzati, the modernist rejection of realism is not interpreted as a negation of ‘the reification of language in bourgeois literature and the institutional roles constructed by the conventions of literary communications’.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, Buzzati’s poetical experience cannot be classified either as cut off from the nineteenth-century literary tradition or as a return to traditional forms of narrative. Rather than assuming one of these extreme positions, I argue that – by taking its starting point from the ashes of modernism, before it was merged into the unique context of Fascism, and ending at the threshold of postmodernism – Buzzati’s poetics is rich in contradictions and ambivalences: starting from the premise that even modernism and postmodernism are problematic categories with reference to Italian canon, ‘fantastic news’, by putting in dialogue fantastic narrative and the practice of journalistic reportage, portrays at best the experience of an author who came to intellectual maturity during the Fascist regime and

¹⁷² Somigli and Moroni, ‘Modernism in Italy: an Introduction’, p. 4.

¹⁷³ Somigli and Moroni, ‘Modernism in Italy: an Introduction’, p. 4.

¹⁷⁴ See Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 103: ‘[...] io spero di esserlo sempre moralista! [...] Ma non moralista nel senso di imporre, di fare il professore di morale...Ma come uno che racconta delle cose, e delle storie pulite, in cui ci sia un senso di moralità’.

¹⁷⁵ Somigli and Moroni, ‘Modernism in Italy: an Introduction’, p. 9.

whose loose association with any kind of ‘-isms’ determined his place at the margins of the Italian national literary culture.

1.3.2 At the Edge of Different Trends

The ambivalence of Buzzati’s fantastic poetics in relation to modernism is effectively illustrated by Stefano Lazzarin in the section entitled ‘Buzzati modernista’ of his volume *Fantasmî antichi e moderni*: after having explained why Buzzati approached fantasy with a nostalgia, either explicit or ideological, which is peculiar to the twentieth-century fantastic discourse,¹⁷⁶ Lazzarin argues that ‘come la maggior parte degli scrittori nostalgici [...] Buzzati dà voce anche all’istanza modernista’.¹⁷⁷ The example which Lazzarin provides is from ‘Fatterelli di città’ and ‘Spiriti’, the latter being one of the five sections which compose the former:

[...] se il narratore di *Spiriti* [...] è costretto ad ammettere che ‘nel cuore della città non c’è spirito [...] il quale possa resistere a lungo’, il narratore di *Fatterelli di città* la pensa in modo diametralmente opposto: nella grande città moderna le epifanie dello strano, del soprannaturale, del perturbante si moltiplicano esponenzialmente. [...] E il bello è che Buzzati mette in bocca a quest’ultimo esattamente lo stesso argomento: [...] ‘da una pressione d’interessi così complessi’, quale si verifica [...] nelle metropoli contemporanee, ‘devono nascere infallibilmente’ [...] ‘le strane avventure’.¹⁷⁸

Lazzarin argues that, while the meta-diegetic narrator of ‘Spiriti’ gives voice to a nostalgia for the nineteenth-century fantastic tradition, still free from the influences exerted on modernity by the progress of science and technology, the diegetic narrator of ‘Fatterelli di città’ is modernist, for he argues that ‘questi fantasmî, queste coincidenze strane [...] sarebbero [...] inconcepibili al di fuori della moderna ‘città avventurosa’’.¹⁷⁹ The ambiguity and difficulty of being labelled within a precise cultural movement is not confined to the relation between Buzzati and modernism. It may be said that Buzzati’s

¹⁷⁶ Stefano Lazzarin, *Fantasmî antichi e moderni. Tecnologia e perturbante in Buzzati e nella letteratura fantastica otto-novecentesca* (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2008), pp. 33-42.

¹⁷⁷ Lazzarin, *Fantasmî antichi e moderni*, p. 43. Lazzarin also divides Buzzati’s fantastic in four different categories. As I explained above, one is nostalgia; then there are irony, the ‘fantastico letterarizzato’, and allegory (see Lazzarin, *Fantasmî antichi e moderni*, pp. 25-31).

¹⁷⁸ Dino Buzzati, ‘Fatterelli di città’, in Dino Buzzati, *Le notti difficili* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971), p. 202, quoted in Lazzarin, *Fantasmî antichi e moderni*, p. 43.

¹⁷⁹ Lazzarin, *Fantasmî antichi e moderni*, p. 43.

production is hardly inscribable within any strict categorization for being at the edge of different literary trends, with which he dialogued in order to create his own poetics. This unwillingness to be labeled appears to be manifest if one thinks that, on the one hand, there are scholars such as Lazzarin who talk about the way in which Buzzati engaged with modernism, and on the other, there are critics such as Fausto Gianfranceschi who talk about a *Buzzati postmoderno*.¹⁸⁰

Another example is given by the numerous attempts to connect Buzzati with the surrealist avant-garde, which is fascinating but not completely justifiable, principally for two reasons. The first one is historical: if we want to describe an Italian surrealism, we cannot go further than the 1940s, whereas Buzzati published only a third of his oeuvre before the 1950s. The problem is that Buzzati was considered a canonical Italian author only for the success of *Il deserto dei Tartari*, while the rest of his production was being ignored.¹⁸¹ More often than not, Buzzati's name was mentioned in relation to surrealism as being not completely successful, in order to argue the minor importance of Buzzati's poetical experience within the twentieth-century Italian framework.¹⁸² The second

¹⁸⁰ See Fausto Gianfranceschi, 'Buzzati postmoderno', in Dino Buzzati, *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984 [1942]), p. 6: 'Buzzati era in anticipo sui tempi: lo si può definire adesso uno scrittore 'postmoderno', un termine che indica la fine delle ipoteche ideologiche sulla cultura e la riconquista di una nuova libertà espressiva'.

¹⁸¹ One of the most evident cases of the difficulty to classify Buzzati's oeuvre as surrealist is the absence of any reference to his production within the seminal selection compiled in Gianfranco Contini, *Italia Magica, racconti surreali moderni scelti da Gianfranco Contini* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), trans. of Gianfranco Contini, *Italie Magique, contes surréels modernes choisis par Gianfranco Contini* (Paris: Aux Portes de France, 1946). The authors included within Contini's anthology are Aldo Palazzeschi, Antonio Baldini, Nicola Lisi, Cesare Zavattini, Enrico Morovich, Alberto Moravia, Tommaso Landolfi, and Massimo Bontempelli.

¹⁸² See for example Cesare Segre and Clelia Martignoni, *Testi nella storia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 840-844. For the debate on the significance of Buzzati's literary production see Cinzia Mares, 'Il punto su Buzzati (1990-2001)', *Bollettino '900, Electronic Newsletter of '900 Italian Literature*, Dipartimento di Italianistica dell'Università di Bologna, 2001 n. 2, <<http://www3.unibo.it/boll900/numeri/2001-ii/w-bol/Mares/Mares.html>> [accessed 20 October 2010]; Nella Giannetto, *Il Coraggio della Fantasia. Studi e Ricerche Intorno a Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Arcipelago, 1989), pp. 93-101; and Giuseppe Fanelli, 'Saggio Introduttivo', in *Dino Buzzati. Bibliografia della critica (1933-1989)* (Urbino: Quattroventi, 1990), pp. 7. Fanelli discusses the history of Buzzatian criticism and explains the reasons for Buzzati's marginalization by part of the Italian scholarship: 'La tradizione alla quale Buzzati vuole riallacciarsi [the fantastic narrative] non annovera in Italia molti proseliti, in quanto trascurata fin dal secolo scorso [the nineteenth century], a partire dalla polemica tra classici e romantici, poiché da più parti ritenuta inadatta alla letteratura Italiana. Ad esempio lo stesso Manzoni, nella famosissima lettera sul Romanticismo del 1823, aveva operato una netta distinzione fra quanto del Romanticismo era da accettare, e quanto da rifiutare: in pratica, egli diceva sì al realismo e al romanzo storico; no al Romanticismo di Hoffmann e del *Gothic Romance*, [...] una via italiana al fantastico si sviluppa [...] soltanto nella seconda metà del secolo scorso, soprattutto come sperimentazione dell'avanguardia scapigliata [...]. Il fantastico, tuttavia, non sembra riuscire a consolidare una tradizione italiana [...]. Questa situazione finisce col ripercuotersi in maniera negativa anche sul fantastico italiano del Novecento, il quale [...] si muove [...] su un terreno molto marginale [...]' (pp. 9-11). Fanelli argues also that 'il 1945 è un anno decisivo per la critica buzzatiana [...]. I critici più vicini alle posizioni della

reason is that if we compare Buzzati to the most relevant surrealist Italian authors, it is evident that his narrative production does not fulfil the psychological quest that is at the core of surrealism. The distance between Buzzati and authors such as Savinio, Loria, Delfini, and Landolfi is effectively explained by Alvaro Biondi: ‘[...] di vero surrealismo sarebbe arbitrario parlare: Buzzati non indaga i segreti del proprio io, ma i misteri della realtà’.¹⁸³ However, ‘il discorso non può dirsi del tutto chiuso: situazioni oniriche ed evocazioni di atmosfere magico-fantastiche non mancano [...] come non mancano [...] agganci [...] che rinviano ad una [...] attenzione nei confronti del surrealismo’ (p. 23). In comparing the short story ‘Di notte in notte’ to *Il deserto dei Tartari*, Giuseppe Sandrini, by building on Biondi’s study, states that ‘Buzzati dà ragione a chi [...] lo assegna ai territori dell’‘Italia magica’’, but underlines the impossibility of the author’s direct affiliation to surrealism.¹⁸⁴ Biondi admits the presence of surrealist elements, but states a crucial difference: ‘Tutti questi elementi esistono nella narrativa buzzatiana, ma dietro a ciascuno di essi l’autore pone un interrogativo di tipo metafisico. Questa è la vera originalità di Buzzati [...]’ (p. 23). It is evident from Biondi’s words that the allegorical construction of the fantastic scenario marks the originality of Buzzati’s experience: Buzzati does not analyze dreams in order to investigate the unconscious, but rather to discover a more profound and metaphysical truth.

More complex is the relationship with Bontempelli’s ‘*realismo magico*’.¹⁸⁵ As we have seen, Buzzati’s fantasy is intrinsically connected with the real, is the other face of the real. The hypothesis of the influence of a narrative which tries to insert fantastic

sinistra prendono le distanze da Buzzati [...] il fantastico appare spesso, ai loro occhi, un vuoto giuoco letterario agli antipodi di quella rigida – e frequentemente malintesa – nozione di ‘realismo’, assunta in quegli anni come esclusiva categoria estetica: l’incomprensione non riguarda quindi solo Buzzati, ma finisce col coinvolgere in blocco l’intero fantastico, rifiutato e condannato dalla critica vetero-marxista che non dispone di adeguati strumenti teorici per interpretarlo’ (pp. 15, 16). Finally, on the problem of the peculiar tradition of fantastic literature within the Italian framework see also Stefano Lazzarin, *Fantasmii antichi e moderni. Tecnologia e perturbante in Buzzati e nella letteratura fantastica otto-novecentesca* (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2008), pp. 24, 25.

¹⁸³ Alvaro Biondi, ‘Metafora e sogno: la narrativa di Buzzati fra ‘Italia magica’ e ‘surrealismo italiano’’, in *Il pianeta Buzzati*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 15-60 (p. 22). Further references to this article are given in the text.

¹⁸⁴ Giuseppe Sandrini, ‘Presenza di Leopardi nel primo Buzzati’, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 6 (2001), 17.

¹⁸⁵ See at least Fulvia Airoidi Namer, *Massimo Bontempelli* (Milan: Mursia, 1979); Antonio Saccone, *Massimo Bontempelli. Il mito del ‘900* (Naples: Liguori, 1979); Simona Storchi, ‘Massimo Bontempelli between De Chirico and Nietzsche: Mannequins, Marionettes and the De-Humanized Subject’, in *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio and Eva ultima, Romance Studies*, 27.4 (2009), 298-310; and Simona Storchi, ‘Realism beyond Mimesis: Massimo Bontempelli’s *Novecentismo*’, *Spunti e Ricerche*, 19 (2006), 107-121.

elements into the common reality, such as Bontempelli's, is more than a fascination. Both the authors' works present supernatural and magical elements; temporal distortions; and inversions of cause-effect relationships. However, the main connection between Buzzati and Bontempelli seems to be the importance of mystery in their oeuvre. Mystery is at the core of Buzzati's attraction to mountains, deserts, and borders that the human eye cannot cross: those barriers between the knowable and the unknowable constitute the source of Buzzati's attraction to and repulsion from death. The contemporary presence of distress and fascination for mystery makes Biondi argue that the two ultimate and central figures of Buzzati's imagery are time and the non-specified event for which most of his characters are waiting (and here it will be sufficient to think about Drogo in *Il deserto*). Hence, the difference between Bontempelli and Buzzati, as Biondi clearly explains, is that:

Bontempelli finge di credere nel mistero; e il suo mistero poi [...] non ha niente a che fare con il trascendente. [...] Ora l'originalità di Buzzati è che egli crede davvero nel mistero. [...] È certo un inventore di miti moderni [...] ma non ha né vuole avere la lucidità razionalistica di Bontempelli (pp. 22, 23).¹⁸⁶

1.3.3 Buzzati and European Modernism

Buzzati's independence not only from ideological but also from cultural affiliations is particularly evident when comparing his 'fantastic news' with the production of contemporary European writers. During the first half of the twentieth century, the general thematic concerns of writers seemed to place a particular emphasis

¹⁸⁶ Another reliable opinion is that of Giulio Carnazzi who, while talking about *Barnabo delle montagne*, writes: 'Non aveva niente a che vedere, quel libro, con l'idea di letteratura teorizzata da 'Solaria', con certe zone di realismo poetico e di letteratura della memoria privilegiate dalla rivista [...]. Difficile anche trovare precise parentele con le alchimie del magico bontempelliano e con gli esperimenti di altri cultori dell'apologo o della fiaba 'surrealista' che operano in ordine sparso negli anni Trenta e Quaranta'. See Dino Buzzati, *Opere scelte*, ed. by Giulio Carnazzi (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), p. X. See also Alvaro Biondi, 'Una lunga fedeltà. Dino Buzzati e l'Italia magica', in *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008*, ed. by Dalla Rosa and Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010), pp. 139-156. Other studies about the relationship between Buzzati and the fantastic tradition still to be mentioned are: Stefano Lazzarin, 'Nani sulle spalle dei giganti. Buzzati e la grande tradizione del fantastico', *Italianistica*, 1 (2002), 103-119; Mario Mignone, *Anormalità e angoscia nella narrativa di Dino Buzzati* (Ravenna: Longo, 1981); Giacinto Spagnoletti, 'Verso il fantastico. Buzzati', in *La letteratura italiana del nostro secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 1985), pp. 557-561; Stefano Lazzarin, 'Il punto sul fantastico italiano: 1980-2007', *Moderna*, IX, 2 (2007), 215-252. For a history of the study of the fantastic in relation to Buzzati's narrative see Alessandro Scarsella, 'Aspetti del 'caso' Buzzati: Premesse storico-critiche e studio del fantastico in Italia', in *Un gigante trascurato?*, ed. by Dalla Rosa and Da Rif, pp. 127-138.

on individualism: the collapse of positivist and animistic illusions, which characterized the aftermath of First World War, caused literature to shake off the bonds of realism and to introduce post-enlightenment tendencies, such as the distortion of time and the introduction of metanarrative techniques. Buzzati's use of a-temporality, personifications and symbolic representations renders his poetic experience modern and coherent with the twentieth-century development of a fantastic tradition, but it also marks its difference from European modernism, because of Buzzati's refusal of a literature which aimed to separate its meaning and sense from the surrounding context. Buzzati never accepted the image of the writer as a superior individual, autonomous in the face of social forces and historical, cultural, and literary heritage. His reaction to industrial city life-style was never driven by the modernist ontology which refused the presence of a deep meaning within language and art as products of life in the metropolis.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Buzzati's journalistic professionalism would have never allowed him to accept the modernist idea of the irrelevancy of factual accuracy in works of fiction.¹⁸⁸ The clearest manifestation of the ideological distance between Buzzati's poetics and European modernism is their opposite view of the journalistic medium.

Modernist literature refused journalism to the point that the term itself was considered a pejorative.¹⁸⁹ This aversion had an authoritative precedent in Matthew Arnold's negative description of the press, which he defined as 'the epitome of the 'provincial spirit' as opposed to the 'exercise of the creative power', which, according to him, was 'the highest function of man'.¹⁹⁰ The exclusive nature that modernism tried

¹⁸⁷ Metropolis plays an ambivalent role within modernist literature: on the one hand it is the symbol of the alienation inherent in the contemporary industrial society; on the other it is a recurrent place in many modernist works such as Joyce's *Ulysses* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. See Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903), in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, tr. and ed. by Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964 [1950]), pp. 409-417, quoted in *Modernism*, ed. by Michael H. Whitworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 182-189: 'The deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence [...]. Thus the metropolitan type of man [...] reacts with his head instead of his heart [...]'.

¹⁸⁸ See Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, *The Mythopoetic Reality. The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 61: '[...] from the Modernist point of view factual accuracy is ultimately not directly relevant to the criticism of fiction [...], when facts are used elementally in a narrative [...] the aesthetic purity of the narrative is reduced [...]. This may explain why naturalistic and realistic novels [...] and the historical novel [...] are held in relatively low aesthetic esteem [by Modernism]. In most of these narratives [...] acknowledge of the facts [...] becomes necessary [...]'.

¹⁸⁹ See Laurel Brake, 'Journalism and Modernism Continued: the Case of W.T. Stead', in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 149-166.

¹⁹⁰ Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in *Selected Poems and Prose*, ed. by Miriam Allot (London: Dent, 1978), pp. 189-202, quoted in Leila Brosnan, 'Monarch on the Drab World:

to give to ‘the ‘literary’ and artistic’ and ‘its advocacy of an economy associated with privilege’ theorized the non-literariness of the daily press:¹⁹¹ ‘the focal narrative genre of the modernist [...] literature was the totalizing novel, which interpreted the experience of the self [...] and shaped that experience into fictional constructions [...]’.¹⁹² John Carey is even more explicit when he defines modernism as a ‘literature of ‘hostile reaction’ and ‘exclusion’, generated through the almost pathological antagonism between the modernist high culture of the intellectuals and ‘the masses’’.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, the idea of the aesthetic inferiority of journalism to literature was not only a modernist concept: in *Il giornalismo e la storia della letteratura*, Benedetto Croce stated that the history of literature should not be interested in journalism, which designates a production of inferior quality,¹⁹⁴ whereas Antonio Gramsci underlined the differences of style between literature and journalism with reference to the size of the readership, which would influence the good outcome of the narrative.¹⁹⁵

Doug Underwood, in *Journalism and the Novel*, offers a survey of all the most important American and English journalist/writers from 1700 to 2000 by showing how journalism and literature have always been in dialogue, even when they denied that they belonged to the same cultural sphere.¹⁹⁶ However, the most important innovation of Buzzati’s ‘fantastic news’ was not only to overcome the boundaries between different genres of prose, but also to open the realism of journalistic narrative to fantasy. Hence

Virginia Woolf’s Figuring of Journalism as Abject’, in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity. From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 191-210.

¹⁹¹ Laurel Brake, ‘Journalism and Modernism Continued’, p. 149.

¹⁹² Mas’ud Zavarzadeh, *The Mythopoeic Reality*, p. 222.

¹⁹³ See John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), quoted in Brosnan, ‘Monarch on the Drab World’, pp. 191-210.

¹⁹⁴ See Ignazio Weiss, *Il Potere di carta* (Turin: Utet, 1965), pp. 25, 26, which quotes Benedetto Croce, ‘Il giornalismo e la storia della letteratura’, in *Problemi di Estetica e Contributi alla Storia dell’Estetica Italiana* (Bari: Laterza, 1919), pp. 130-133: “Che alla storia letteraria non tocchi, direttamente, esaminare il giornalismo [...] è chiaro [...]”. Il Croce osserva che il termine ‘giornalismo’, ‘produzione giornalistica’ si adopera in significato letterario come termine dispregiativo per indicare un gruppo di letterati di qualità inferiore. ‘L’artista deve indugiare nel sogno [...] ma il giornalista non deve, e, alla fine, anche volendo, non può. Perciò artisti, scienziati e storici guardano con diffidenza, e quasi con orrore la produzione giornalistica’.

¹⁹⁵ See Giovanni Costa, ‘Giornalismo e letteratura’, in Giovanni Costa and Neria De Giovanni, *Giornalismo e letteratura* (Alghero: Namapress, 2000), pp. 10, 11, which quotes Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere* (Turin: Einaudi, 2007 [1948-1951]), Vol I, Quaderno 14, Paragraph 72, p. 1737: ‘C’è differenza di stile fra gli scritti dedicati al pubblico e gli altri [...]. Sembra spesso di avere a che fare con due scrittori diversi tanta è la differenza. [...] in tutti gli scritti dedicati a poco pubblico [...] predomina la sobrietà, la semplicità, la immediatezza, mentre negli altri scritti predomina la tronfiezza, lo stile oratorio, l’ipocrisia stilistica’.

¹⁹⁶ Doug Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel: Truth and Fiction, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

the outcome of ‘fantastic news’ is a narrative in which fiction and non-fiction work together at the same level of importance. The originality of the equal treatment of journalism and fantasy in Buzzati is also marked by the fact that the critical debate on the opportunity to consider journalism as literature is still alive and prolific: from the work of scholars such as Doug Underwood and Phyllis Frus, to Kate Campbell and John Hartley, the problem of the importance of journalistic production within literary studies is under constant analysis. In Kate Campbell’s words, the tendency of contemporary scholarship is to remedy the fact that, despite the texts’ showing a constant dialogue between forms of fiction and non-fiction, ‘literary studies have mostly kept apart, neglecting and disparaging journalism’.¹⁹⁷

The tradition of considering journalism as ‘low culture’ is effectively summarized by Clotilde Bertoni in *Giornalismo e letteratura*.¹⁹⁸ The Italian scholar lists a series of quotations about journalism from an impressive number of writers which seem to form a proper critique of the aesthetic paucity of the daily press. In Balzac’s *La muse du département*, a life spent as a journalist deprives Lousteau of any illusion; the protagonist of de Goncourt’s *Charles Demailly* compares the life expectancy of an article to that of a cake. In De Roberto’s *L’Imperio* journalists are defined as ‘banditi, cavalieri di ventura’ and the profession is considered ‘l’occupazione dei disoccupati, la capacità degli inetti’.¹⁹⁹ Bertoni argues that, after the progress made by journalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘l’evoluzione della mentalità inizia a incoraggiare un’ottica più spavalda, ma sempre frenata da convenzioni pervicaci’ (pp. 104, 105). During modernism, journalism remained a substitute for the literary career and was often addressed either with irony or aggressiveness. Bertoni’s example of Joyce’s sarcastic descriptions of the profession in ‘A Little Cloud’ and *Ulysses* presents it as a ‘chiacchiera dispersiva e frastornante che [...] non lascia traccia’ (p.108).²⁰⁰ The alternative to Joyce’s sarcasm is Dickens’s portrait of journalistic opportunism and

¹⁹⁷ Kate Campbell, ‘Introduction’, in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity*, ed. by Campbell, p. 1: Campbell, by quoting works such as those of Lukacs, Adorno, Barthes, Habermas, Bourdieu, and Derrida, argues that ‘often twentieth-century cultural analysts tended to arraign modern journalism and subsumed it in critiques of mass culture’.

¹⁹⁸ Clotilde Bertoni, *Letteratura e giornalismo* (Rome: Carocci, 2009). Further references to this book will be given in the text.

¹⁹⁹ For all the listed writers’ quotations about journalism see Bertoni, *Letteratura e giornalismo*, pp. 87-108.

²⁰⁰ ‘L’approccio Joyciano è stratificato: strappa la letteratura ai vecchi parametri anche accostandosi al giornalismo, [...] d’altro canto, proprio attraverso questo pastiche, riconosce ancora alla letteratura la sua superiorità [...]’ (p. 108).

ability to turn insignificant facts into news: Wilkins Micawber's success in *David Copperfield* is the proof that 'non sono le notizie a contare ma la maniera in cui vengono esposte' (p. 108).²⁰¹

The position most distant from Buzzati's is probably that of Virginia Woolf, who was a journalist herself from 1904 to 1941. Leila Brosnan illustrates Woolf's ideas while analyzing the poem *Fantasy upon a gentleman who converted his impressions of a private house into cash*.²⁰² The representation of a reporter within the poem is grotesque: he is compared to a vampire and described as abject and unscrupulous. Brosnan argues effectively that Woolf's denigration of the press led scholars who studied modernism to a bias towards journalism and its literary value. Moreover, as an icon of modernist culture, Woolf's journalistic production was underrated. However, her poem allows a transgression of the journalism/literature opposition and within it journalism and literature are depicted as antithetical but not separate entities.²⁰³ Woolf seems to have neglected the role of journalism within her production for aesthetic and ideological reasons firmly linked to the modernist view of a separation between high and low cultures. Nevertheless, the actual outcome of this view, as Brosnan writes, manifests a dialogue between journalism and fiction which Buzzati reached with 'fantastic news': 'In writing both high modernist literature and journalism [...] Woolf highlights the confusion of boundaries between high and low culture [...]'.²⁰⁴ If one thinks that, according to Bertoni, 'nella letteratura del secondo Novecento e in quella contemporanea la visione resta pessimista' and that 'l'informazione [...] è raffigurata come potere da un lato strabordante, dall'altro inerte e inerme [...]', then Buzzati's choice to place journalism and fantasy in dialogue appears in all its originality.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ While talking about the use of journalism as a plot-theme within literature of fiction, Bertoni interestingly states that 'la letteratura raffigura il giornalismo tanto come parte del controllo opprimente esercitato dalla società di massa, quanto come proprio doppio negativo' (p. 128) and she concludes that literature 'osteggia da sempre il giornalismo ma da sempre ne è attratta [...]'; i due campi tendono costantemente a ribadire la loro specificità e a confermare la loro lontananza, ma altrettanto costantemente a confrontare le loro dinamiche e a confondere i loro confini' (p. 130).

²⁰² Leila Brosnan, 'Monarch of the Drab World: Virginia Woolf's Figuring of Journalism as Abject', in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity*, ed. by Campbell, pp. 191-210.

²⁰³ Brosnan, 'Monarch of the Drab World', p. 192, 193.

²⁰⁴ Brosnan, 'Monarch of the Drab World', p. 194.

²⁰⁵ See Panafieu, *Janus*, pp. 164, 165: 'Metto insieme giornalismo e narrativa perché sono la stessa identica cosa. E penso effettivamente che dal punto di vista della tecnica letteraria il giornalismo sia un'esemplare scuola. [...] il giornalismo insegna giorno dopo giorno il rispetto per il lettore [...]. E un libro scritto da un giornalista bravo non è noioso. [...] il vero mestiere dello scrivere [...] coincide proprio col mestiere del giornalismo [...]'.

1.4 The Other and the Self: is Conciliation Possible?

1.4.1 Entropy

While analyzing Freud's essay on the 'uncanny', Rosemary Jackson argues that the fantastic mode in literature corresponds to Freud's stage 'of magical and animistic thought mode when primitive man and the young child have no sense of difference between self and other, subject and object worlds'.²⁰⁶ What Jackson is saying is that fantastic literature, by expressing the human longing for a repressed pleasure, translates into narrative a 'desire for undifferentiation' which Freud explains as a 'drive towards a stage of inorganicism' (p. 72). The name that Freud assigns to this state which would represent the highest form of the pleasure principle is 'entropy' and its property is being not only a 'death wish', but 'a tendency [...] to move towards stability, where the organic merges with the inorganic and where separate units fuse together' (p. 80). According to Jackson 'modern fantasy makes explicit this attraction towards an entropic state [...], a zero point [...] [of] absolute blurring of identities' (p. 73).

If, according to Freud and Jackson, fantastic literature brings to the surface what in human minds is repressed by social norms and conventions, then in Buzzati the tension towards 'entropy' is realized with a similar, but not identical goal.²⁰⁷ Buzzati's 'entropy' is a reality in which men, nature and technology live together in a state in which the subject/object opposition does not exist: it is the same ideal world which produces the society guided by ethical drive and the Kantian imperative I presented in the previous section and that Buzzati saw as the best possible ideal. Nevertheless, this undifferentiated balance of existences and stable harmony are impossible to obtain in the real world and this is the reason why, in Buzzati, fantasy never overwhelms reality but lives only in dialogue or in conflict with it. In the modern world, ruled by economy and power, there is no hope for merit and justice: fantasy can offer a glance at what everyday life has neglected and suppressed, a look at what life could be if a complete

²⁰⁶ Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 72. Further references to this book will be given in the text.

²⁰⁷ See also Hugh Haughton, 'Introduction', in Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003 [1899]), p. XLI-LX: 'The uncanny [...] is a [...] mark of modernity. It is associated with moments when an author, fictional character or reader experiences the return of the primitive in a modern and secular context. [...] The uncanny is a survival from the abandoned psychic culture of our own childhood bearing the signature of our own earliest terrors and desires [suppressed in the modern society]'.

conciliation between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ were possible; but it remains only one of the two sides of the real.

The calm which Freud connects to ‘entropy’, according to Buzzati, is reachable only with death. In Buzzati’s poetics, death is the symbol of mystery par excellence and, rather than the final stage of the entropic process, it is a threshold: the moment of revelation, the passage between what is known and what is not. Death is not only the end of humanity’s journey on earth, but also its purpose: ‘[...] l’uomo, istintivamente, tende ad uno stato di massima quiete. Egli si affanna tutta la vita per arricchirsi, per farsi una famiglia, per farsi una casa, per farsi una posizione e poi riposare e raggiungere una quiete assoluta. In un certo senso l’uomo, istintivamente, tende alla morte’.²⁰⁸ *Poema a fumetti* is probably the most obvious example of what death represents within Buzzati’s poetics: the story tells of a modern Orpheus who finds the entrance of hell along the wall of a small street in Milan and visits the afterworld looking for his beloved. Buzzati, who had already depicted hell as a modern metropolis in *Viaggio agli inferni del secolo*, explained: ‘[...] ho cercato di dire che nell’al di là la cosa più bella è la morte. La cosa maggiormente temuta qui è la cosa maggiormente desiderata lì. Di là si capisce che è la morte che dà gusto alle cose della vita. Altrimenti la vita sarebbe la cosa più spaventosa e cretina che ci sia. Quando l’uomo sogna l’immortalità, sogna la propria assoluta e cretina infelicità’.²⁰⁹ Death, by guaranteeing a mystery that will not be revealed until the end of his journey, gives man the illusion that his life has a meaning.

However, if fantasy has a function only when attached to reality and there is no hope of reaching the stability between subject and object theorized by Freudian ‘entropy’, then how can human beings survive within the modern world? Buzzati’s answer is a claim of defeat: only those rules that, according to Freud, suppress our pleasures and wishes within the unconscious, can give men an illusion of control over their lives. According to Buzzati, a world without rules is unthinkable: rules and order are the lesser evil that needs to be accepted. In this way is also explained Buzzati’s attraction to the discipline of military life: ‘La libertà ideale è quella che tutti intendono [...]. Ma di questa libertà sono capaci poche persone, e, per le persone appunto deboli come sono la maggioranza e come sono anch’io, ci sono queste soluzioni. [...] è cretino quel disprezzo che si sente oggi manifestare così apertamente e spesso verso la vita

²⁰⁸ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 49.

²⁰⁹ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 236.

militare [...]'.²¹⁰ Rules and conventions created by society free the weak man from the acceptance of a destiny he cannot change and liberate him from the weight of responsibility. Nevertheless, in Buzzati's work, the reassuring order of rules, the respect of which he saw as a duty, is always in conflict with the demolition of boundaries that fantasy could allow: 'fantastic news' is the result of this dialogic conflict. Buzzati's fantasy never reached what Francesco Orlando, by quoting as examples authors such as Borges and Kafka, called 'sovranaturale di imposizione', that is a fantasy which 'impone la propria deroga dal verosimile con prepotenza', a fantasy in which the everyday world has no role and what is perceived as 'new' is 'assoluto e aggressivo'.²¹¹ Buzzati's fantasy is linked to reality, even though it is a reality which does not believe anymore in ghosts and monsters: again in Orlando's world, fantasy within 'fantastic news' is a 'sovranaturale di trasposizione', that is a supernatural which lives in 'un mondo desacralizzato' and survives because '[si riporta] alla tradizione sostituendo le antiche motivazioni con altre attuali'.²¹²

'Fantastic news' tries to realize a combination of fantasy and reality, at a formal level, by the blurring of journalism and fiction: on the one hand, journalism represents 'the object', the mimetic part of a double-face narrative which is completed by fantasy. On the other hand, the fantastic element reveals the nature of the "subject" which modern society asks us to bury in the unconscious. Thus Buzzati's use of the 'uncanny' is the expression of the author's awareness of the relativity of men's knowledge about life, death, and reality: what is perceived as 'other' is not only confined to the realm of literature, but invades everyday life through the means of news. Journalism and fiction enrich each other in order to portray a world in which the 'real' and the 'fictitious', the 'subject' and the 'object' exchange their roles. It is no coincidence that the roles assigned by Freudian theory to fantasy and reality are often inverted by Buzzati: it is everyday reality which can produce the 'uncanny' by the effects of technological progress and the aberrations which characterize life in the modern metropolis, while fantasy can represent a way to escape from alienation. However, the metropolis and progress, the city and technology are not always negative presences within Buzzati's narrative. It is the case of 'Natura crudele', the first article written about the tragedy of

²¹⁰ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 109.

²¹¹ Francesco Orlando, 'Statuti del soprannaturale nella narrativa', in *Il romanzo*, Vol. 1, ed. by Franco Moretti (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), pp. 195-226, and p. 223.

²¹² Orlando, 'Statuti del soprannaturale nella narrativa', p. 218.

the Vajont Dam, in which the journalist accuses nature of being responsible for the catastrophe and for not having been able to accept men's technological achievements:

La diga del Vajont era ed è un capolavoro perfino dal lato estetico. [...] Intatto, di fronte ai morti del Bellunese, sta ancora il prestigio della scienza, della ingegneria, della tecnica, del lavoro. Ma esso non è bastato. [...]

Ancora una volta la fantasia della natura è stata più grande ed astuta che la fantasia della scienza. Sconfitta in aperta battaglia, la natura si è vendicata attaccando il vincitore alle spalle.²¹³

In *The Female Thermometer*, Terry Castle, while discussing the birth and the effects of the Freudian idea of the 'uncanny', hypothesizes that it arises only if the animistic-transcendental world is denied in favour of the search for a 'sober truth', as in the case of journalistic reportage.²¹⁴ Castle's analysis justifies why in a modern writer such as Dino Buzzati we find a contradictory alternation of narratives in which machines, technology and modernity are either condemned as alienating – till the climax of the identification of the metropolis with hell – or, on the contrary, admired for their aesthetic beauty, as in the case of the Vajont Dam. This contradiction may find its foundations in Buzzati's aesthetic quest for an order of things in which fantasy and reality, the 'subject' and the 'other', are in perfect balance and that is constantly contradicted by empirical experience: from this viewpoint Buzzati's way of looking at military discipline as a sub-form of freedom for weak men is one of the results of the impossible communication between, on the one hand, nature and fantasy, and on the other, science, objectivity and technological progress.²¹⁵

The conflict inherent in Buzzati's 'fantastic news' between 'self' and 'other' happens to be particularly interesting if we consider its coherence with two central

²¹³ Dino Buzzati, 'Natura crudele', in *Corriere della Sera*, 11 ottobre 1963, in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 157-160.

²¹⁴ See Terry Castle, 'Introduction', in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 3-20.

²¹⁵ The dialogical conflict within Buzzati's 'fantastic news' between fantasy and reality, which is reflected in the opposition between nature and technological progress, finds an interesting correspondence in Irène Brassière's theory of fantastic literature. By borrowing from Sartre the definitions of 'thetic' and 'non-thetic', Brassière argues that the fantastic is situated in between the 'thetic', that is a preposition which needs to be taken to be real, and the 'non-thetic', that is what we call unreality. According to Brassière, fantastic narrative cannot belong to the 'non-thetic' because the 'non-thetic', by being unreal, cannot have any adequate linguistic form, whereas the fantastic depends on words to take the narrative form. See for this also Jackson, *Fantasy*, pp. 75, 76 and Remo Ceserani, *Il fantastico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), pp. 65-68.

characteristics of modern society. The first is the myth of unsatisfied wishes, which Rosemary Jackson describes as ‘the hallmark of modernism’:²¹⁶ if, according to Buzzati, calm and peace may be found only in death, while life is that continual succession of achievements and failures that I compared to the Freudian entropic process, then there will be no wish in life satisfactory enough to bring complete happiness. It is Buzzati himself who clarifies this concept: ‘L’uomo ha avuto un’immensa intelligenza, e la paga con l’infelicità [...]. È una creatura sbagliata [...] È una creatura straordinaria, tanto straordinaria, ed un essere sbagliato perché infelice per definizione [...]’.²¹⁷ The second characteristic of modernity that ‘fantastic news’ evidences is what Jackson defined, by borrowing her terminology from physics, the second principle of thermodynamics, which ‘[...] embodies the principle of entropy: it holds that the energy of any system is insufficient to prevent it from running down’.²¹⁸ Buzzati applied this principle by representing a conflict between reality and fantasy in which the factual and the fictitious need each other in order to survive and not to collapse either in a world blind to what is beyond the visible, or in a self-reflexive fantastic detached from empirical experience, dominated by non-signification, and hence meaningless.

1.4.2 ‘Narrative Otherness’ and the Question of Genres

When considering Buzzati’s journalism, his articles can always be connected to a different genre of fiction: within the mixture of journalistic accuracy and use of fantasy which remains the constant of his narrative, here and there Buzzati chooses deliberately to use an image, a metaphor, or a technique which can transmit a specific message to his readers. I argue that Buzzati’s journalism represents a collection of narrative strategies which, by referring to different but long lasting literary traditions, both enriches aesthetically the work of reportage and makes the reader familiar with the chosen modes of representation. My close reading will investigate the dynamics of appropriation of the various generic conventions which Buzzati put into place in his journalism according to the specific context in which he had to work and to the message he wanted to deliver to his readers. The development of this process will cast a light on how what I defined as

²¹⁶ Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 159.

²¹⁷ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 5.

²¹⁸ Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 167.

Buzzati's 'narrative otherness' was articulated, namely on how he realized his 'other world' in which the fantastic came to join the empirical.

In order to study the ways in which fictional and journalistic genres interchange and communicate in Buzzati's narrative it is necessary to accept the idea according to which 'the classification and hierarchical taxonomy of genres is not a neutral and "objective" procedure' but rather that those genres are 'conventional definitions'.²¹⁹ Especially in the case of an author such as Buzzati, in which the literary tradition is re-elaborated, both from a thematic and formal point of view, generic classifications must be intended as 'empirical, not logical [...] assumptions constructed [...] in order to serve communicative and aesthetic purposes'.²²⁰ Buzzati's purpose is to use fictional generic conventions in order to enrich his representation of reality so that the features and specific characteristics of every single genre – which could result in a series of limitations for the author – become, on the contrary, a further set of narrative tools at his disposal.

Even though, as argued by Daniel Chandler, 'from the traditional Romantic perspective, genres are seen as constraining and inhibiting authorial creativity', they also 'can rely on readers already having knowledge and expectations about works within a genre' and 'can thus be seen as a kind of shorthand serving to increase the efficiency of communication'. In short, genres provide 'an important frame of reference which helps readers to identify, select and interpret texts'.²²¹ In Buzzati's journalism literary genres and genre fiction are able to dialogue with news because, as argued by Alastair Fowler, 'genre primarily has to do with communication' and it is seen as 'an instrument not of classification or prescription, but of meaning'.²²² In his book Fowler proposes a taxonomy of literary genres and starts his argument from the premise that 'prescriptive genre rules are indispensable; without them, normative criticism of any sort would be impossible [...]' (p. 29). However, the necessity of these rules is for Fowler that of being overcome by writers: 'prescriptive genres encourage to break new ground' (p. 29). This means that 'the character of genres is that they change' and 'only variations or modifications of convention have literary significance' (p. 18). Genres are

²¹⁹ Daniel Chandler, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory', 1997,

http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf [accessed 12 May 2012].

²²⁰ Ralph Cohen, 'History and Genre', *New Literary Theory. Interpretation and Culture*, 17 (2) Winter 1986, 203-218 (p. 210).

²²¹ Chandler, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory'.

²²² Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature. An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 22. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

hence both necessary and challengeable: '[...] the writer who cares most about originality has a keenest interest in genre' (p. 32). What one realizes by reading Buzzati's articles is that fictional genres are chosen, shaped, adapted and integrated with journalistic ones in a functional way that denies genres to be 'mutually exclusive' (p. 38): they work together to serve the author's argument.

Buzzati's interpretation of literary genres such as crime fiction, noir, gothic, etc. and their combination with journalism is particularly interesting in the light of the directions that genre studies have developed during the last decades. In 1980 Jacques Derrida defined what he called 'the law of genre' as 'precisely a principle of contamination, a law of impurity'.²²³ Derrida articulated the idea according to which every single text does not *belong to* but rather *participates in* a certain genre. In order to sustain this argument the French philosopher demonstrated that the 'mark of genre' itself cannot be assigned to any specific type or genre. Hence the distinctive trait that represents a genre cannot itself be classified. Taxonomy is then something inevitably subjective and influenced by the purpose for which it is created and the time and context in which takes place. Even if he did it in order to question them, Derrida underlined how modern theories of genre, and in particular those of Gerald Genette, were possible only because of the realization that Plato and Aristotle's prescriptions on the topic 'have been subjected to considerable deformation [...]. Following a classical precedent, one has deemed natural structures [...] whose history is hardly natural but, rather, [...] complex and heterogeneous' (pp. 59, 60). Despite arguing that 'a text cannot belong to no genre' and that 'there is no genreless text', the law established by Derrida 'is the law of abounding [...], the law of participation without membership of contamination' (pp. 63, 64): 'none of this can be regulated by objective, natural, or civil law' (p. 76).

Derrida's 'law of genre' gave a new boost to genre studies and scholars began to interpret genres as dynamic instruments for the interpretation of the texts rather than fixed norms according to which to classify works of art. Even though Derrida's work on genres might appear as too radical and revolutionary to be applied to an overall conservative such as Buzzati, his theories are seminal because they allow us to see the mutability of only apparently fixed categories. The work provided by scholars such as Chandler, Cohen, and Fowler would not have been possible without Derrida's intuitions

²²³ Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1) Autumn 1980, 55-81 (p. 59). Further references to this essay will be given in the text.

and they serve the purpose of seeing the interplay between fictional and journalistic genres which is present in Buzzati's 'fantastic news'. As I stated in my introduction, my classification of these genres serves as an orientating tool, a point of departure, which is then constantly put into question and challenged by the texts. Furthermore, the originality of the texts lies precisely in their being able to challenge every kind of possible prescriptive taxonomy, included mine. Ralph Cohen argued that 'genre concepts in theory and practice arise, change, and decline for historical reasons' and 'an author in making a generic choice involves himself in an ideological choice';²²⁴ Fowler saw genre as the most important of 'all the codes of our literary *langue*' and argued them to be 'in a continual state of transmutation';²²⁵ finally, for Hayden White 'changes in genres are the result of both theoretical and practical processes' and 'if the mixed or hybrid genre is subsequently thought of as the norm rather than the exception, it is because the notion of pure genre disappeared with the notion of essences which modern science finally demolished in the course of the nineteenth century'.²²⁶

What Buzzati did with the fantastic mode and journalism was to connect their 'genres' – gothic, science fiction, noir, nineteenth-century fantastic etc. on the one hand and war reportage, crime news, inquiry etc. on the other – and 'kinds' in a way that asks us, as suggested by White, to 'consider the problem of genre by identifying each genre's conceptual 'other' rather than by simply classifying genres according to a principle of similarity and difference. [...] Every work could then be interpreted as an interplay between two or more genres-types or as an amalgam of a number of genres'.²²⁷ The analysis of Buzzati's journalistic 'other world' and of its implications can then make good use of the question of genres: a study of the texts which takes into account the dialogue between the different literary and journalistic genres, the relationship of Buzzati's journalism with his fictional work, and the links between the two will help in tracing the differences and the characteristics of the different journalistic productions I will scrutinize, such as their development throughout Buzzati's career and their implications at the level of aesthetic and poetical meaning.

²²⁴ Cohen, 'History and Genre', pp. 204-210.

²²⁵ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, pp. 22-24.

²²⁶ Hayden White, 'Anomalies of Genre: the Utility of Theory and History for the Study of Literary Genre', *New Literary History*, 34 (3), 2003, 597-615 (p. 600).

²²⁷ White, 'Anomalies of Genre', 610. See also Margherita Ganeri, 'La teoria dei generi letterari dopo gli anni Settanta: il superamento dell'approccio normativo', *Allegoria*, 23 (1996), 25-35.

1.4.3 'Anthropological Otherness'

Apart from a 'narrative otherness', there is also an 'anthropological otherness' that 'fantastic news' implied and that is equally relevant, despite being much less closely studied. Buzzati faced what was 'other' when compared to his culture, his race, and the society in which he lived and grew up, first when he was sent by Aldo Borelli to work from the Italian colonies and then when he had to report the battles in the Mediterranean Sea during the Second World War. Marie-Hélène Caspar's seminal work in *L'Africa di Buzzati* was of groundbreaking importance for the study of this part of Buzzati's journalism:²²⁸ the collection of articles that Buzzati wrote from Libya and Ethiopia, which Caspar completed with an extensive apparatus of information about their publishing history and their relationship with censorship, offers a vivid example of colonial literature. In this journalistic work Buzzati dealt with what he perceived as a real, empirical and historical 'otherness' which I defined as 'anthropological otherness'.

It is no coincidence that the encounter with new civilizations and cultures represented for a fantastic writer such as Buzzati the opportunity of enriching the techniques of representation he used for his fictional and non-fictional production. Marina Warner explained effectively the relation between the dialogue, and often the clash, of different cultures which followed the colonization processes and the acquisition of new forms of representation both by the colonizers and the colonized. By focusing on tales of metamorphosis, she moved away from the bias of a history made in common after the migration caused by empires and slavery and suggested different models of cultures which are not opposed but that coalesce. Warner's historical approach and her definition of it as a 'transmigration of stories' are fundamental in order to understand how the cultural exchange between colonizers and colonized contributed to the formation of a modern fantastic literature no less than Freudian theories and literary tradition.²²⁹ As in the case of the tales of metamorphosis analyzed

²²⁸ *L'Africa di Buzzati*, ed. by Marie Hélène Caspar (Paris: E. Univeristé Paris X, 1997).

²²⁹ See Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 21-24: 'The argument that the contemptuous depiction of savage rites and superstitions gave the oppressor permission to oppress the subaltern as an inferior, a child, a barbarian, does not take into account sufficiently the continuing and ever-increasing fascination above all with stories of metamorphosis and magic in evidence in ethnographic and literary text [...]. The turn towards the uncanny and the supernatural that happened within the Enlightenment might not be satisfactorily diagnosed as [...] an irrational euphoria detonated by the sobriety and limits of empiricism and reasonable inquiry; nor does it need be construed as a return of the repressed [...]. Instead [...] an alternative, politicised interpretation becomes possible'.

by Warner, also Buzzati's fantastic modes of representation were enriched and updated by the encounter with North African colonies and the experience of war. Besides, as I underlined above and as further evidence of the coherence between Warner's argument and Buzzati's work, it is important to remember that the metamorphic process, especially in the particular variant of the 'animation of the inanimate', was a device used very often by Buzzati both in the colonial and in the war context.

However, the encounter with the colonized populations and the 'anthropological otherness' which emerges as perceived by Buzzati towards the natives has also ideological implications which will be scrutinized by the close reading of his collections of articles. The results will strengthen the thesis position that it is impossible to separate these texts – even when they are rich in literary metaphors and features of fantastic literature – from their political context and the Fascist ideology, including its racist drifts, which dominated the years in which Buzzati worked. The ideological implications of the notion of 'anthropological otherness' which informed Buzzati's view of the colonized territories will also reflect the thesis' general argument about the relevance of this part of Buzzati's production not only in aesthetic but also in political and historical terms.

The close analysis of *Il Buttafuoco* and of a selection of texts from those collected by Caspar in *L'Africa di Buzzati* presented in the next chapters will demonstrate in particular that Buzzati's works of reportage from colonies and the front line of war are not exceptional within the body of texts written by western writers in order to describe the East, and which were largely influenced by that cultural phenomenon which Edward Said defined as 'orientalism'.²³⁰ As close reading of Buzzati's articles will show, even when they had as subjects only particular aspects of his African experience, such as the impressions left by the sight of the desert and its silence, the Orient the journalist observed was not only 'one of [Europe's] deepest and most recurring images of the Other' (p. 1), but above all the outcome of 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and [...] 'the Occident'' (pp. 2, 3). As Said effectively explained, this kind of approach towards the East was not peculiar to one or two writers, but was 'a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient' which took place from the late eighteenth century on (p. 3). Even though, as

²³⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978). Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

underlined by Caspar in her introduction to *L'Africa di Buzzati*, Buzzati decided to focus on stories and details often far from battles and political events, in order to avoid being forced to talk about them as the Fascist censorship wished, 'the relationship between Occident and Orient' which emerges from his pages 'is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony [...]' (pp. 5, 6). My close reading will try to apply what Said defined as an 'intellectually serious perspective' which has the aim of not committing the mistake he attributed in *Orientalism* to literary studies: '[...] there is no getting away from the fact that literary studies in general [...] have avoided the effort of seriously bridging the gap between the superstructural and the base level in textual, historical scholarship [...]. Too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent' (pp. 13-27).

The connection between politics and culture needs to be taken into consideration when talking about the production of a bourgeois writer in a colonial context where he was asked to report and glorify the achievements of a dictatorship which was trying to build a new empire. Despite the use of fantastic modes of representation within his journalism and the coherence of these articles with the style of 'fantastic news', the works of reportage which Buzzati wrote from Libya and Ethiopia present a twofold challenge: on the one hand they were either influenced or hindered by Fascist censorship, while on the other they were the result of the merging of Buzzati's poetics with all those prejudices, projections and expectations Africa represented for Italian people during the *ventennio*. As we are reminded by Angelo Del Boca, while talking about Fascist projects regarding Libya, 'di pari passo con la conquista militare [...], il regime compie un notevole sforzo propagandistico per illustrare agli italiani le risorse e le attrattive della 'quarta sponda''.²³¹ At least until 1940 and Mussolini's decision to enter the war, the image of colonies received by the Italian population is one of a new frontier full of opportunities, of a 'terra promessa'.²³² Buzzati was plunged into the national atmosphere of enthusiasm for the conquests of the regime: '[...] l'occupazione di Addis Abeba [...] suscita in Italia [...] un entusiasmo senza precedenti, mai avvertito nella penisola, e realmente autentico'. The end of the campaign in Ethiopia, in 1936, only three years before Buzzati's return in Africa, was, according to Del Boca, the climax of Italian Fascism: 'in piazza [il 9 maggio ad ascoltare Mussolini] ci sono

²³¹ Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Vol. 2: dal fascismo a Gheddafi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), p. 167.

²³² Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Vol. 2*, p. 126.

intellettuali come Gioacchino Volpe e Chabod, Marconi definisce il duce ‘genio infallibile’ e Pirandello dichiara: ‘l’autore di questa grande opera in atto è anch’egli un Poeta che sa bene il fatto suo’ [...]. Per tutto il 1936 [...] gli italiani si sentono soddisfatti [...]. Non si può assolutamente negare che fra il 5 e il 9 maggio 1936 il popolo italiano abbia vissuto uno dei periodi di maggiore unità [...]’.²³³ The situation described by Del Boca must be taken into account when analyzing Buzzati’s work in *Il Buttafuoco* and *L’Africa di Buzzati*: in both of the collections the ‘anthropological otherness’ which informed his ‘fantastic news’ reveals how Buzzati’s representation of the colonies was often coherent with the ideology of the regime. The recognition of this coherence is seminal to a more detailed study of this journalism’s political implications that need to be addressed if one wants to overcome the limit that Fabrizio De Donno and Neelam Srivastava effectively described as the ‘[...] Italian academy’s reluctance to engage with postcolonial theory or see its relevance to the contemporary Italian context [...]’.²³⁴

1.5 Realities

1.5.1 Reality and Fantasy on the Same Page

The dialogue between journalism and literature on which Buzzati’s ‘fantastic news’ is built raises a series of problems linked to the role and importance of objectivity. If for a fantastic writer mimesis can be only a relative issue, then for a journalist the responsibility of describing facts as they happened is still a duty. I will try to answer, here and in my close reading chapters, a series of questions in particular: what does this journalism say about the relationship between news and the reported reality? What is the role of concepts such as objectivity and subjectivity when talking about a work of reportage? Finally, does Buzzati’s journalism offer an original contribution to the history of the profession, and to the discussion about the problematic relationship between journalism and literature?

Before starting it will be important to clarify what I mean when using terms such as ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’ in the discussion about the issues I intend to address.

²³³ Del Boca, *La guerra d’Etiopia*, pp. 58, 61, and p. 243.

²³⁴ Fabrizio De Donno and Neelam Srivastava, ‘Editorial’, *Interventions. International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8 (3), 2006, 372-379.

My main reference is the definition of ‘subjective’ provided by Raymond Williams in *Keywords*.²³⁵ According to Williams, ‘in mC 19 [...] there was talk of a ‘subjective’ style in painting and literature [...]’ and ‘[...] the distinction between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ kinds of art, or kinds of thinking [...] supposes that there can be a kind of art or kind of thinking in which the active subject is not present’.²³⁶ What is most relevant to my argument is what Williams writes about the negative connotation that was given to the word ‘subjective’ under the influence of the procedures of ‘positivist science [...] and from the associated social, political and administrative senses of ‘impartial and ‘neutral’ judgment’.²³⁷

What has really to be looked for is the strengthening sense of ‘objective’ as factual, fair-minded (neutral) and hence reliable, as distinct from the sense of ‘subjective’ as based on impressions rather than facts, and hence as influenced by personal feelings and relatively unreliable. [...] it is perhaps only from IC19 [...] that the conventional contrast has settled. [...] In judgments and reports we are positively required to be ‘objective’: looking only at facts, setting aside personal preference or interest.²³⁸

Williams’ words imply the acceptance of the fact that, after the circulation of Freudian theories on the division of the self between conscious and unconscious, it became impossible not to renegotiate the metaphysical certainties about the integrity of the human mind and hence our ideas of ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’. Jacques Derrida in ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’ connects the need for integrity and rationality in human beings to the idea of structure, and in particular to the figure of the centre, which represents the solid core of the structure.²³⁹ The idea of a structure with a balanced centre guarantees that human existence has a meaning and that this meaning is governed by a plan, whether divine or natural. Derrida challenges the integrity of the centre of the structure by connecting it to the desire of human beings for logical answers to questions regarding their existence. In order to support his argument he calls into question a triad of thinkers who demolished the metaphysical system that dominated western culture until the end of the nineteenth century:

²³⁵ Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana, 1976 [1988]), pp. 311, 312.

²³⁶ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 311.

²³⁷ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 311.

²³⁸ Williams, *Keywords*, pp. 311, 312.

²³⁹ Jacques Derrida, ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1981 [1978]), pp. 278-293.

[...] when [...] it became necessary to think both the law which somehow governed the desire for a centre [...] and the process of signification which orders the displacements and substitutions for this law of central presence [...] it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre [...].

Where and how does this decentering [...] occur? [...] we doubtless would have to cite the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concept of Being and Truth [...]; the Freudian critique of self-presence, that is, the critique of consciousness, of the subject, of self-identity [...]; and [...] the Heideggerian destruction of metaphysics [...], of the determination of Being as presence.²⁴⁰

Derrida will then connect this need of a stable centre and in particular the idea of ‘being as presence’ to what he defined as ‘Logocentrism’ in his major work *Of Grammatology*.²⁴¹ His points of departure are Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger: this is the triad he proposes as a reference for the beginning of a revolution in the way western men see themselves and their role within the world around them. But what does all this have to do with journalism and with Dino Buzzati? The beginning of the answer to this question lies in the expression ‘being as presence’ itself: Buzzati’s journalism has precisely the aim of casting doubt upon the idea that only what we can see, touch, and experience directly with our senses has a right to enter the realm of ‘reality’. Given Buzzati’s reluctance to acknowledge influence it might seem unjustified to call into question references to thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, Freud etc. to study his work. Some of the philosophers and theorists discussed in this chapter, such as Nietzsche, even when not mentioned by Buzzati, were however important mediators for his work by simply being an inescapable influence for the entire cultural and artistic western world of the twentieth century. Others are significant in demonstrating the effects of Buzzati’s work in terms of the problematization regarding the representation of reality in both fiction and journalism. If one goes beyond the actual familiarity Buzzati had with the texts of these thinkers and the simply philological and empirical presence of other authors’ aesthetics within his work, general theory can help us understand

²⁴⁰ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 280.

²⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997 [1974, 1st edition in French: 1964]), p. 12: ‘We already have a foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of the being as *presence*, with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence [...]. Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity as presence’.

Buzzati's blending of fantasy and journalism as coherently inserted within its cultural and historical context. In other terms, even going beyond his programmatic expectations, Buzzati – throughout a production which has often been oversimplified as traditionalist – might be seen under a different light, namely as more modern than what he has been given credit for. At this stage this kind of reflection needs to be nuanced enough so as to not risk betraying the author's intentions, but the problematic representation of reality that Buzzati's 'fantastic news' provides is so original that an attempt to study its connections with the work of the major thinkers of his time seems to be worthwhile.

If the imaginary/fantastic element of Buzzati's journalism is intended as a way to go beyond the strict division between 'subject' and 'object' in order to refuse the possibility of representing the world 'as it is', then his narrative seems to be coherent with the debate established by the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century – from the 1960s and poststructuralism on – which questioned the idea of an actual and unified subjectivity: realistic representation loses its purpose and is no longer something to be considered either natural or unambiguous. Furthermore, it is worth giving emphasis to the fact that questions and analyses which concern the problem of representation and that are brought to light by a narrative such as that practised by Buzzati, cannot leave aside the influence that, as underlined also by Derrida, Nietzschean philosophy had on the twentieth century. After the revolution created by Freudian theories on the unconscious, Nietzsche dismantled the rationalism of Hegelian thinking which dominated western society during the nineteenth century and questioned the very existence of an objective reality inhabited by the subject. Buzzati's overturning of reality appears to be coherent with the developments of the philosophical debate established by Nietzsche: in particular, they seem to share the idea according to which human beings consider as unchangeable and objective what, in fact, is a reality they organize in order to justify the order of things which suit their interests. In *The Will to Power* this concept is expressed clearly: 'There are no facts, everything is in flux, incomprehensible, elusive; what is relatively most enduring is – our opinions [...]. Ultimately, man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them: the finding is called science [...]. *In summa*, science is preparing a sovereign ignorance, a

feeling that there is no such thing as ‘knowing’”.²⁴² Buzzati’s refusal of representing reality objectively in his ‘fantastic news’ must be connected with the diffused sensation that, in a post-Nietzschean world and especially after the end of the Second World War, it was impossible to speak again of absolute truths and that things as they seemed to be were rather a projection of what men wanted them to be.

In a modernity in which the idea of the existence of only one fixed reality has been called into question, the willingness to record facts objectively seems to be at the very least anachronistic, especially when confronted with the developments of modern and postmodern fantastic literature: a-temporality, the multiplication of viewpoints, parody of the narrative forms of literary tradition and self-signification distinguish all the most important poetical experiences of the twentieth century. What are then the originality and the contribution to modernity of a prose which still has the aim of creating a comparison between different orders of reality? And what is the point of choosing journalism as the mode in which to realize that comparison? Buzzati did not try to avoid these problems by keeping journalism separate from literature and by considering it only a secondary occupation which had nothing to do with the ‘higher’ cultural and philosophical issues which the modern world was facing during the postwar crisis. On the contrary, Buzzati accepted the challenge of finding a cultural place and a reason to exist for journalism even within a reality which could not be considered unitary anymore and that needed new modes of representation to be described. The opposition between objectivity and subjectivity is not only challenged by the practice of Buzzati’s ‘fantastic journalism’: after the loss of impact that the procedures of positivist sciences suffered in the twentieth century, it is also necessary to read Buzzati’s articles by following Williams’ suggestion according to which ‘[...] at the current level, ‘subjective’, and a newly derived ‘subjectivism’, have to be reintroduced in a different critique of ‘objectivism’, seeing it as a wrong kind of concern with the ‘external’ world to the neglect of the ‘inner’ or ‘personal’ world’.²⁴³

The idea of thinking about fiction and fantasy as elements of the inquiry into the ‘real’ is what marks the originality of Buzzati’s journalism when compared to that of other figures of journalist/writers of the twentieth century: whereas from the end of the nineteenth century the work of reporters who tried to put themselves to the test of

²⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 327, 328.

²⁴³ Williams, *Keywords*, pp. 311, 312.

fiction (and in particular the novel) was focused on the ambition of realizing a narrative as realist as possible, Buzzati refused realism. From Rudyard Kipling on, much of the production of reporters as novelist ‘was constructed upon an edifice of journalistic research [...]. The following novels and short stories [...] are examples [...] of how the journalist-literary figures used their journalistic research skills to create a solid, factual underpinning of their literary themes [...]’.²⁴⁴ Also for novelists with vast experience as reporters such as Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck, the quality that journalism could bring to their fiction was ‘the hunger for real-life’ and their constant looking for experiences as correspondents was connected to the idea of using journalism ‘as a means to explore the world and to continue to keep open to new life situations [...] real people and real emotions’.²⁴⁵ The constant reiteration in Underwood’s words of the term ‘real’ is clear proof of the role that journalism has always played when associated with literary narrative: that of conferring plausibility. Notwithstanding this strong tradition, Buzzati’s journalism investigates the complexity of the ‘real’ by using fiction to bring into question the idea that of this ‘real’ there exists only one possible interpretation, namely that which is tangible and evident for everyone. As stated by Sharon Wood in her introduction to the work of Dino Buzzati, ‘it is obvious that Buzzati wants to face his reader with a truth, a reality as stark and perturbing as any that a Neo-realist writer might have in mind. He is merely going about it in a totally different way’.²⁴⁶ I would add to this provocative but interesting statement that Buzzati is not trying to present his reader only with one ‘truth’, one ‘reality’, but with a multiplicity and a complexity of aspects of reality which are searchable only through the means of fantasy and imagination.

1.5.2 The *Fait-Divers* beyond Causality

It is particularly interesting to notice that such a questioning of the unity of the ‘real’ comes from an author such as Buzzati. On the one hand he can be inserted in a long lasting tradition of journalists-writers that goes from Daniel Defoe to the American New Journalists and beyond. On the other hand, he represents an exception within this

²⁴⁴ See Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, p. 142.

²⁴⁵ See Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, p. 160.

²⁴⁶ Sharon Wood, ‘Dino Buzzati’, in *Italian Novelists since World War II, 1945-1965*, ed. by Augustus Pallotta (Detroit and Milan: Thomson Gale, 1977), pp.75-84 (pp. 195, 196).

very tradition. If it is true that from the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century the line of separation between literature and journalism, objectivity and fiction was very indistinct,²⁴⁷ then it is also true that Buzzati lived at a time in which the transformations journalism underwent were, in terms of its cultural status, still very resilient: positivist ideas were hard to overcome, and questions about the existence of a real ‘factuality’, when allowed, came under the jurisdiction of philosophy and literature, which were considered culturally higher disciplines.²⁴⁸

Exactly in the years in which Buzzati was conducting an inquiry about the diffusion and popularity of the belief in paranormal phenomena in Italy, a journalism made of news, the aim of which was to be as impartial as possible, was claimed by Ignazio Weiss to be necessarily separated not only from fiction, but also from ‘opinions’. Weiss’ *Il potere di carta*, despite appearing today as a dated manual on the history and functions of journalism, helps to understand how Buzzati’s ‘fantastic news’ represented a ground breaking moment in the years in which it was produced. Weiss, in portraying the situation of the journalistic profession in the 1960s, claims that ‘[...] fatti di cronaca nera [...] ben raramente possono servirci di guida per la nostra lotta per l’esistenza o avere un valore [...] utile al destinatario’.²⁴⁹ As chapter four will demonstrate, Buzzati’s crime news is much more challenging and problematic than this, but above all, its main aim is precisely that of raising existential questions of general interest. In particular, the division proposed by Weiss between ‘straight news’ and ‘opinionated writing’ is refuted by Buzzati’s articles. The former would be ‘un rapporto su qualcosa che è avvenuto, riportato così realisticamente e accuratamente, come solo un reporter [...] può fare’ (p. 121) and, even though the distinction is referred by Weiss in American journalism in particular, nonetheless he highlights how, in general, ‘il corrispondente imbocca assai malvolentieri la strada delle ipotesi [...] da lui si richiedono dati di fatto [...]’ (p. 125). If the originality of Buzzatian journalism is

²⁴⁷ See Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, p. 34: ‘In looking back to the eighteenth century as the birthplace of both the modern novel and modern journalism, one has to imagine a time when the line between the real and the imagined was very much blurred and when notions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘factuality’ were in a fluid and largely undefined state’.

²⁴⁸ See Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, p. 94: ‘[...] the emphasis upon writing efficiency and practical forms of communication slowly won out over long, discursive narratives and journalism written with rhetorical flourishes. This transformation of the nineteenth-century newspaper from a forum that incorporated elements of literary expression to a nuts-and-bolts vehicle for the practical conveyance of information helped to set the stage for the twentieth century’s view of journalism and literature as two distinct writing categories’.

²⁴⁹ Ignazio Weiss, *Il potere di carta* (Tourin: Utet, 1965), p. 120. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

evident, for what I have been arguing so far, when compared to this view of the profession, then it lies at least partially within the form that the history of journalism has taken in the European context and more particularly in the Italian one. As explained by Weiss, ‘[...] in Europa [...] per tradizione storica e per temperamento [...] si preferisce ancora il pezzo [...] con carattere quasi letterario’ (p. 126). However, Buzzati fits only in part into this type of analysis because in his ‘fantastic news’ the inclusion of fictional elements in the reportage has also a moralistic and didactic intent that clearly disproves the rule set out by Weiss according to which ‘l’opinione [...] del giornalista dovrebbe essere teoricamente sempre tenuta distinta dalla notizia [...]’ (p. 126). Buzzati’s overcoming of the standardized journalistic prose of his time is achieved through the use of different literary genres, journalistic devices, the refusal of objective realism, and the re-use of romantic and neo-romantic themes.

Yet the aesthetic impact of this production challenges not only an analysis such as that of Weiss, which today appears as being inevitably anachronistic, but also the structure of a piece of news as it is described by Roland Barthes in ‘Structure of the *Fait-Divers*’.²⁵⁰ Barthes proposes a distinction between ‘news’ and *fait-divers*, intending with this term what might be defined as ‘filler’ or ‘general information’. The former is a piece of news that ‘can be defined only in relation to a knowledge external to the event [...]’: in the case of a murder with a political motive, for example, it would be a matter of ‘political knowledge’ (p. 186). Whereas, according to Barthes, ‘[...] this is true for all news proceeding from a named horizon’ (p. 186), ‘the *fait-divers*, on the contrary, is total news [...]; it contains all its knowledge in itself; no need to know anything about the world in order to consume a *fait-divers*’ (p. 186). The essay, written in 1964, talks about the ‘extraordinary promotion of the *fait-divers* in today’s press’ (p. 185) and argues that when a journalist composes a piece of general information ‘[...] on the level of reading, everything is given [...] it constitutes an immediate, total being which refers [...] to nothing implicit [...]’ and defines it as ‘a closed structure’ (pp. 186, 187). This rigid conception of the piece of information is belied by the Buzzatian use of journalism. Series of articles apparently devoted to episodes not linked to any type of speculation that either concern contexts of general interest or suppose a prior knowledge can be transformed into small serial novels. The single episode is broadened in order to

²⁵⁰ Roland Barthes, ‘Structure of the *Fait-Divers*’, in *Critical Essays*, trans. by Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972 [1st edition in French: 1964]), pp. 185-195. Further references to this essay will be given in the text.

involve more general issues and, through the use of fantasy, challenges the reader with questions of social importance. Moreover, the ethical and moral drive of Buzzatian journalism enlarges the *fait-divers* beyond the boundaries of the text, with a movement from the particular to the general, with reference not only to political but also to existential issues. Buzzati's 'fantastic news' challenges Barthes' idea that, in a piece of general information, 'the articulation is internal to the immediate narrative, whereas in political news, for example, it is transferred outside the discourse to an implicit context' (p. 187). For Barthes, in the *fait-divers*, 'whenever causality is more or less normal [...] the emphasis shifts to what might be called the *dramatis personae* [...]' (p. 188): Buzzati evades the 'relation of causality' immanent in the piece of news – 'a crime and its motive, an incident and its circumstance' (p. 188) – and makes 'prodigies' and 'crimes' not two distinct 'categories of phenomena', but two interwoven aspects of the real. The inexplicability of certain facts, the lack of evidence related to specific pieces of information such as murders, and the fact that journalism narrates by recurring to what Barthes defines as 'the peculiar, the uncanny, the curious [...]' (p. 192), are, on the contrary, constant elements of Buzzati's representation and active presences in the life of his *dramatis personae*. As Barthes himself claims, the use of imagination 'inevitably institutionalizes an interrogation' (p. 192). What in a common piece of news might remain a single, isolated episode of the use of imagination that is applied in order to resolve the absence of a rational explanation of the reported fact, in Buzzati's journalism becomes an institutionalized question of the relation of causality which governs reality:

on the one hand [...] the *fait-divers* tells us that man is always linked to something else, that nature is full of echoes, relations, and movements; but on the other hand [...] causality is constantly undermined by forces which escape it; disturbed but not disappearing, causality remains 'suspended' between the rational and the unknown [...] (p. 191).

Coincidences are never only coincidences, they are signs 'at once indecipherable and intelligent' and 'this intelligent [...] fatality' informs the relationship between causality and coincidences: they both 'refer to an ambiguous zone where the event is experienced as a sign whose content is nonetheless uncertain' (pp. 193, 194). Here Barthes' reference to the dialogue between the rational and the unknown is close to what might be an ideal definition of Buzzati's journalism, and the two also share the

idea of the importance for men of being able to link their existence to nature despite living within modernity.²⁵¹ However, if, according to Barthes, movements, variations of causalities, paradoxes, and the use of ‘the peculiar’ serve to explain the structural functioning of a piece of information and the reasons that make it interesting to the reader, then in Buzzati they represent the complexity of the representation of reality through the practice of journalism. The real is never something which can be taken for granted or reported only through the use of logic: by transferring to his journalism what Mario Mignone states about his fiction, it can be argued then that ‘la vera novità di Buzzati [...] consiste nel fatto che egli alla trascrizione del reale preferisce la trascrizione dell’al di là delle cose’.²⁵²

1.5.3 Beyond the Barriers: Phyllis Frus’ ‘Reflexive Reading’

The milestone by which my analysis of Buzzati’s journalism may be measured is the practice of what Phyllis Frus defines as ‘reflexive reading’ in her volume *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives*.²⁵³ Frus’ aim is to demonstrate the necessity of finding a new terminology and new critical categories in order to approach texts which have been underestimated by scholarship because of their non-fictional origin. The American scholar develops a wide argument built on the idea, borrowed from Raymond Williams, that the distinction between journalism and fiction is socially constructed. Frus programmatically refuses to use definitions such as ‘literary journalism’ and ‘literary non-fiction’ in her work, for they are derived from the idea of the existence of barriers between these different modes of narrative that she wants to cross. By focusing on the so-called ‘realism/naturalism’ in twentieth-century fiction, and in particular on the work of Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway, Frus’ goal is to demonstrate the necessity of analyzing these works of art without being influenced by labels such as ‘fiction’ or ‘non-fiction’, in order to focus on the diversity, pluralism, and

²⁵¹ See Barthes, ‘Structure of the *Fait-Divers*’, pp. 194, 195: ‘[...] its role [of the fait-divers] is [...] to preserve at the very heart of contemporary society an ambiguity of the rational and the irrational, of the intelligible and the unfathomable; and its ambiguity is historically necessary insofar as man still must have signs [...], but also insofar as these signs must be of uncertain content [...]: he can then be supported through the fait-divers by a certain culture [...]; but at the same time, he can in extremis fill this closure with nature [...]’.

²⁵² Mario Mignone, *Anormalità e angoscia nella narrativa di Dino Buzzati* (Ravenna: Longo, 1981), p. 17.

²⁵³ Phyllis Frus, *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives, The Timely and the Timeless* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

historical and political issues raised by texts.²⁵⁴ Frus' methodology aims to underline the role of the writer as a 'co-creator' of the text, which is a product of its time, rather than focusing on rhetorical and stylistic strategies. The result is what she calls 'reflexivity', which takes into account the text as a document of a historically identified period by placing particular attention on the question of the relation between the work of art and the problem of the existence of a sole, objective reality (p. XIX).

Even though Frus' aim, which is different from mine, is to engage with the problem of the juxtaposition of fiction and journalism in order to deny it, her argument demonstrates the modernity and depth of the effects produced by Buzzati's 'fantastic news'. In particular, I will try to follow the principle behind Frus' 'reflexive reading', which states the necessity of avoiding 'formalism' in order to 'historicize what are usually figured as the universal/transcendent properties of narrative' and to pay attention to the process of production of the text (pp. 4, 5). To read a text 'reflexively' means above all to deny its independence from the historical, political, and social context which was practised by new criticism and structuralism: I will try to ground my close reading on new historicist ideas of approaching texts by considering their circulation and talking about them without rejecting their historical and political background.²⁵⁵ When reading in particular Buzzati's work collected in *Il Buttafuoco*, *L'Africa di Buzzati*, and *La 'Nera'*, Frus' words gain the status of a guideline: 'narratives about crime, war, countercultures, and politics get significant attention, but not necessarily of the literary-critical sort, and so they do not become 'literary' under the usual definition. By virtue of the fact that these narratives remain on the border between literary and non-literary discourses [...] we can account for our interest while not assuming their permanence, which tends to imply the jettisoning of their politics' (p. 191).

Another interesting idea that emerges from Frus' volume is that 'the problem of fiction's mixture of invented and historical referents has led to the claim that fictional narratives are not propositional, because judgements of truth or falsity are suspended' (p. 8). According to Frus, this claim has the effect of 'making [the] referential level [represented by journalism] secondary'. Buzzati's journalism is both propositional and

²⁵⁴ Frus, *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives*, pp. IX-XXI. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

²⁵⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Towards a Poetics of Culture', in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veveser (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1-14.

subjective; it claims to address issues of ‘high’ and ‘universal’ interests but does not claim that this is the sole possible interpretation of reality. The entropic and unsolved process depicted by ‘fantastic news’ testifies exactly to the presence within reality of the hidden marks of other worlds, none of which is secondary to the others. Buzzati’s articles confirm Frus’ idea that we must set aside the contradiction according to which ‘works that start out as ‘nonfiction’, purporting to tell the truth about the world, no longer can be said to make truthful claims once they have been classified as literature [...] because nonfiction is thought of as the realm of discourse where true and false are important distinctions, and literature is thought of as the realm where [...] its truth or falsity is irrelevant’ (pp. 8, 9). Buzzati’s journalism challenges this bold distinction and makes both fiction and non-fiction part of a unique realm of representation in which the notions of truth and falsehood are relative but from which a useful and ‘universal’ message can nevertheless be gathered by the reader. Separating the categories of fiction/non-fiction, literature/others (p. 14) may be a good strategy in order to see how ‘fantastic journalism’ implies an original way of looking at the problem of the description of reality.

At this point it may be said that the issues of ‘otherness’ raised by Buzzati’s work which I discussed in section three of this chapter have as their consequences issues regarding the representation not only of a defined reality, but rather of different ‘realities’. As Frus underlines, ‘as readers we order events as they ‘must have happened’ [...], but it is always after the fact. [...] The process is equally creative if the text is a journalistic narrative [...], or imaginary [...]; or a mixture’ (p. 36). In the light of this relation which involves the work of art and the representation of the real, Andrea Oppo, one of the few scholars who have tried to deepen the connections between Buzzati’s production and Nietzsche’s philosophy, argues that the dichotomy of reality-fiction and, more generally, contrasts such as that between the ideas of truth and falsehood, are enough to justify at least an attempt to read Buzzati’s texts by taking into account Nietzschean theorizations.²⁵⁶ Oppo argues that ‘Nietzsche, dalla scoperta dell’enigmaticità dell’essere, della sua mancanza di fondamento, deduce anche la natura liberamente inventiva, ‘poietica’, del reale stesso, e arriva infine a far coincidere tragico ed estetico, realtà e favola. L’unica cosa davvero irreal, si potrebbe aggiungere a

²⁵⁶ Andrea Oppo, ‘‘Qualcosa era successo..’. Per una lettura filosofica del giornalismo di Buzzati’, in *XÁOS. Giornale di confine*, 1 (June 2005, 2006), <http://www.giornalediconfine.net/n_4/11.htm> [accessed 15 June 2012].

questo punto, è quella barriera che le tiene separate'.²⁵⁷ Hence the originality of Buzzati's journalism is not merely aesthetic and does not concern only his insertion of fiction within reportage: his narrative speaks also of problems regarding the way of representing reality not as a domain of men, but as an unknown territory which men struggle to manage and which can often reveal itself as hostile. This purpose refuses what Nietzsche calls 'the usual view [...] that our present highly disagreeable reality is the only one in any way possible'.²⁵⁸

The most empirical evidence of the productive interchange between journalism and fantasy in Buzzati's 'fantastic news', and of its aim to depict different 'realities', is that when we read pieces such as 'La bambolina del Vajont' and 'Il male dentro noi' it is impossible to recognize their fictional or journalistic origin without knowing whether they were written as news for the *Corriere* or as fantastic short stories. It is no coincidence that an authoritative precedent of Buzzati's experience is found by Frus in Hemingway. Frus mentions the presence of 'many observations about the handicaps that journalism imposes on the creative writers [...]' (p. 55) which are in fact denied, because, on the one hand, Hemingway 'is an exemplary site to consider the results [...] of narrating the influence of journalism on fiction [...]' (p. 57), and, on the other, 'despite the novelist's denigration of his own journalism [...] Hemingway [not only used] the very same material for both news accounts and short stories: he took pieces he first filed with magazines and newspapers and published them with virtually no change in his own books as short stories' (p. 60).²⁵⁹

1.5.4 Narrative Discourses, Reality, and History

Inevitably, an interrogation about the relation between narrative, either fictional or not, and reality calls into question Michel Foucault's idea according to which different kinds of discourse codify what people tend to perceive as unquestionable truths and realities. Every society has its own *episteme* which influences the way it experiences the world. Thus, every discourse, including that on objectivity and representation, is subject to a superimposed organization. The question Foucault asks, in particular in *The Order*

²⁵⁷ Oppo, "Qualcosa era successo...".

²⁵⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1873-1879]), pp. 57-123 (p. 118).

²⁵⁹ In this passage Frus quotes Ernest Hemingway, *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*, ed. by William White (New York: Scribner's, 1967), p. XI.

of Things, is: ‘When we establish a considered classification [...] what is the ground on which we are able to establish the validity of this classification with complete certainty?’²⁶⁰ The answer is that ‘the fundamental codes of a culture [...] establish for every man [...] the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home’.²⁶¹ As argued by Frus, ‘the relationship between journalism and realistic fiction’ appears to be ‘experiential and biographical rather than stylistic’ (p. 57). This means that there is no intrinsic law either within journalism or fantastic literature which denies Buzzati’s method of making fantasy speak through the journalistic mode. The problem is rather to understand the impact of this choice when compared to the development of the history of journalism.

Between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, reporters and fiction writers were subject to the ‘domination of knowledge and intellectual inquiry by empirical science [...], both were responding to the positivism of the world view prevalent at that time [...], [and to the] ideology of developing industrial capitalism’ (p. 58). After this, the experiences of Freudian psychoanalysis and poststructuralism caused these concepts to lose their power, and it was possible for Buzzati to build a new relationship between fantasy – in the place of realism – and journalism. Differing from the belief which dominates realistic fictional productions, Buzzati presumes that objects are not a sort of simulacrum which needs to be read in order to convey ‘the proper sequence of [...] recorded experience that would trigger the equivalent motion in the reader’ (p. 75). They are on the contrary a vehicle which hides the fantastic dimension of reality: behind the most common objects – doors, hidden corners of an old house, passages and bends – lies the other face of our world which is visible only through imagination. Buzzati avoids the ‘fatalism expressed by the technique of detachment’ assumed by realist writers (p. 88): he takes responsibility and uses the first person narrator so as to represent a world which is not aestheticised and made of objects meaningful in themselves. Objects do not simply wait to be portrayed and facts to be recorded: they become meaningful when we make the effort to feel part of that same reality we are representing. Buzzati is not a detached observer but a subjective narrator who tries not to neglect history and ‘how things come to be the way

²⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock, 1970) [1st Edition in French: 1966], p. IX.

²⁶¹ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. XX.

they are' (p. 84). Thus, 'fantastic news' represents an interesting and original point within the *episteme* which dominates our perception of journalistic objectivity.

After all, the 'goal of objectivity' (p. 91) in journalism, despite being taken for granted and 'by now [...] ingrained in our consciousness' (p. 100) is a relatively recent truism: Lennard J. Davis, in 'A Social History of Fact and Fiction', for example, states that 'the 'news' in the sixteenth and seventeenth century were interchangeable with fiction ballads [...]' (p. 100) and 'the earliest characteristics of journalism, which began appearing regularly in England in the 1620s were its recentness and regularity, not its truthfulness' (p. 100).²⁶² Objectivity is then 'the arbitrary imposition of a set of conventions by which we agree to accept narrative about recent events as factual' (p. 100). Moreover, as argued by several scholars such as Anthony Smith in 'The Long Road to Objectivity and Back Again' and Dan Schiller in *Objectivity and News*, the idea of objectivity in the works of reportage started to be established with the appearance of cheap daily papers, and then this concept was reinforced in the idea of the 'watch-dog' press 'which itself goes in and out of fashion depending on the people's [...] approval of established institutions' (p. 102).²⁶³ The perception of objectivity and journalism as intrinsically linked is then strictly connected to an *episteme* in which, in Roland Barthes' terms, 'scientific [...] objectivity is characterized by impersonal narration, emphasis on the visual, and the positivistic assertion of the world as it appears to be' (p. 102).²⁶⁴ Buzzati's 'fantastic news' is original because it does not have the goal of giving a faithful picture of reality as it is, but to 'acknowledge the existence of competing representations' (p. 91), and to challenge the 'reification of modern consciousness' which makes us 'accustomed to news as information [...] rather than as the exchange of ideas (p. 91)'.

²⁶² Lennard J. Davis, 'A Social History of Fact and Fiction', in *Literature and Society*, ed. by Edward W. Said (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1980), pp. 120-147.

²⁶³ See Anthony Smith, 'The Long Road to Objectivity and Back Again', in *Newspaper History: From the 17th Century to the Present Day*, ed. by George Boyce, James Curren, and Pauline Wingate (London: Constable, 1978), pp. 153-171, and Dan Schiller, *Objectivity and News: the Public Rise of Commercial Journalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

²⁶⁴ See Roland Barthes, 'Science versus Literature', in *Introduction to Structuralism*, ed. by Michael Lane (New York: Basic, 1970), pp. 410-416. There are other numerous works mentioned by Frus which reinforce the argument according to which objective representation is a construction which is not natural, but rather an imposition which 'reinforces the relations we think of as naturally existing between words and things' (p. 107). Particularly relevant to the analysis of the political implications of this idea are Gaye Tuchman, 'Objectivity as Strategic Ritual', *American Journal of Sociology*, 77 (1973), 660-679, and Christopher Lasch, 'Journalism, Publicity, and the Lost Art of Argument', *Gannet Center Journal*, Spring 1990, 1-11 in which it appears evident how journalism changed through time in order to adapt itself to the requirements of political power and, in particular, used the 'mask' of objectivity in order to sustain partisan viewpoints on the reported facts while claiming to be an impartial and disinterested third party.

The impossibility of realizing a neutral observation of the world, when broadened to social and political issues, touches the question of the impossibility of having an unambiguous idea of the diachronic representation of the events, that is of history. Frus states that ‘because narrative history is a process, historians continually revise the accepted or dominant interpretations of events’ and that ‘historical and journalistic narratives are not ‘the truth’, they are simply partial reports of what seems to have happened’ (pp. 175, 176). Foucault’s premises to *The Archeology of Knowledge* had already explained how a stable objectivity in historical representation was not possible, especially in modern life, when, again in Frus’ words, ‘our experience of history and actuality is predominantly textual’; hence the ‘perception of modern life as incredible’ (p. 176). Foucault argued that whereas for long ‘[...] historians have preferred to turn their attention to long periods, as if [...] they were trying to reveal the stable [...] system of checks and balances [...]’,²⁶⁵ ‘the old questions of the traditional analysis (what links should be made between disparate events? [...]) are now being replaced by questions of another type: which strata should be isolated from others?’ (p. 4). Foucault proceeded then by solving an apparent contradiction: ‘[...] the history of thought, of knowledge, of philosophy, of literature seems to be seeking [...] more and more discontinuities, whereas history itself appears to be abandoning the irruption of events in favour of stable structures. But [...] [d]espite appearances [...] the same problems are being posed in either case [...]. These problems may be summoned up in a word: the questioning of the document’ (p. 6). Buzzati’s journalism puts into question the nature of the ‘document’, that is the observable reality of facts as they appear to the eye of the witness: it is not something that needs simply to be interpreted, but rather something that offers both the journalist and the historian the task of changing their ‘position in relation to the document: [...] to work on it from within and to develop it [...]. The document [...] is no longer for history an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said [...]’ (p. 7) and the idea of a ‘total history’ loses its effectiveness. The loss of both the ‘sovereignty of consciousness [and] the sovereignty of the subject’ which characterizes modernity does not allow us anymore to believe in the ‘privileged shelter’ of a history made of ‘uninterrupted continuities’ (pp. 13, 14): hence, Buzzati’s ‘fantastic news’ does not present the reader with a narrative

²⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1st Edition in French: 1969]), p. 3. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

which has only to be recorded and passively accepted, but with a problematic and challenging interpretation of the ‘discontinuities’ which inform ‘the relation of the subject to the object and the formal rules that govern it’ – which Foucault called ‘*connaissance*’ – and ‘the conditions that are necessary in a particular period for this or that type of object to be given to ‘*connaissances*’’, which Foucault defined as ‘*savoir*’ (pp. 16, 17). In Buzzati neither *connaissance* nor *savoir* can inform a representation if the representation is deprived of the element of imagination: if reality is not something which proceeds rationally and continuously, then the mysteries that cannot be understood rationally find their place in the discontinuities of our own history. The paranormal and the fantastic are lived as hidden discontinuities within reality and act as links between the visible and the invisible: modernity is not meaningless or absurd, but comprehensible only by going beyond rationality and objectivity.

I stated at the beginning of my work that I intend to demonstrate the importance of Buzzati’s literary interpretation of journalism by analyzing the modes of representation that he borrowed from fiction and that the most relevant characteristic of Buzzati’s journalism is that it forces us to challenge our idea of what objectivity and reality are: the second part of my thesis and the close reading of the texts will be built on these ideas. Each of the four Buzzatian journalistic productions I will take into account is different not only in genre but also in historical context, and they will all contribute in different ways to the development of the argument that the fictional element of Buzzati’s journalistic representation provides a further option to scrutinize the real and its ambivalence. Hence the articles from the colonies, the war reportage, the crime news, and the articles dedicated to the paranormal will offer different examples of Buzzati’s ‘other world’: that ideal dimension in which fantasy and reality live together and that is never fully realized, but always longed for. I will trace the history of this ‘other world’, the different ways in which the entropic process which should lead to it is developed and the intellectual, cultural and aesthetic implications of the route throughout which it is articulated.

Chapter 2: Colonized ‘Otherness’ – Correspondence from Libya and Ethiopia (1933, 1939, 1940)

*Certi articoli possono effettivamente essere considerati come una presentazione dell’Impero [...]. Ma vi è anche di più perché chi scrive non è un giornalista qualsiasi: è un giornalista-scrittore [...], le cronache buzzatiane dell’al di là dei mari hanno sempre un doppio risvolto: cronachistico e letterario-narrativo.*²⁶⁶

Marie Hélène Caspar

The following chapter opens the second part of my thesis and is focused on the close reading of a selection of journalistic articles which Buzzati wrote for the *Corriere della Sera* from the Italian colonies. I will analyze in particular *L’Africa di Buzzati* in order to understand the themes on which Buzzati concentrated his attention while working as a special correspondent in Libya and Ethiopia.²⁶⁷ Particular attention will be given to the form that ‘fantastic news’ assumed in this specific group of articles and to the modes of representation used by the journalist. I will study the way in which Buzzati borrowed metaphors, settings, and style from the fantastic literary tradition in order to individuate the characteristics of his first attempt at merging news with fictional genres. The colonial environment was the first scenario in which Buzzati could practise his ‘fantastic news’: the encounter with the ‘other’ represented by the natives elicited the use of features typical of the fantastic, whereas the peculiar geography of the desert served to illustrate the problem of the relationship between reality and fantasy.

By placing Buzzati’s work in a precise historical framework and discussing the problem of his ‘orientalism’, I hope to show how this journalism helped in building Buzzati’s ‘other world’. My intention is to demonstrate that Buzzati’s work from Africa can be read as a historical document of Italian colonialism and that it confirmed, in terms of stereotypes and prejudices, not only the attitude of ‘the West’ towards North African peoples, but also his bias against cultural and social realities which were both geographically and anthropologically distant from the ones he was familiar with. I will also highlight the contradictory and problematic relationship between the journalist and

²⁶⁶ *L’Africa di Buzzati*, ed. by Marie-Hélène Caspar (Paris: E. Univeristé Paris X, 1997), pp. 39, 40.

²⁶⁷ The milestone and most important source on which the close reading of the articles that Buzzati wrote from North Africa is the work that Marie-Hélène Caspar did when editing *L’Africa di Buzzati*. I will often refer to this study throughout this chapter and in particular to Caspar’s comments on Buzzati’s correspondence based on his diaries and the letters he sent from Africa to Aldo Borelli (editor of *Corriere della Sera* between September 1929 and July 1943).

the ideology of Fascism:²⁶⁸ such an approach will explain the political meaning, on the one hand, of Buzzati's choice to privilege in his articles ordinary figures and anti-heroes rather than the official personalities of the regime, and, on the other, the similarities between some of Buzzati's modes of representation and the themes which characterized Fascist propaganda. The contradictory relationship between Buzzati's aesthetics and the ideology of political power informs the analysis of his only apparent distance from the social and political debate of his time and his attention to the readership, in contradiction to the isolation of the arts from life and the public professed by modernism.

2.1 'Fantastic News' in the Age of Colonialism: Aesthetics and Politics

Buzzati's experience in Africa may be considered to be representative of the Italian colonial experience: from initial great expectations to final disappointment and disillusion. When Dino Buzzati left for Ethiopia in 1939 he was only thirty-two, but he had been working for the *Corriere della Sera* for eleven years, he had already published two novels,²⁶⁹ his first *elzeviro*,²⁷⁰ and had worked as a special correspondent from Libya and Palestine.²⁷¹ In Ethiopia, Buzzati was going to confront his 'grande occasione', the chance he had been waiting for when he might use his skills as a writer in order to participate actively in an event of historical relevance. This was to become the main theme of *Il deserto dei Tartari*. The novel, which was published in 1940, told the story of a soldier who wasted his entire adult life waiting for the invasion of the enemy, trapped in a fortress by rigid military regulations and an almost masochistic sense of duty, on the borders of the realm he was meant to protect.²⁷² Buzzati saw in his expedition in Ethiopia the chance to make a sharp change in his career and life and to

²⁶⁸ My intention is to extend Yves Panafieu's work on this topic within Buzzati's fictional production to the writer's journalistic articles. I will build my argument by moving in particular from the conclusions that the French scholar drew from the close reading of *Barnabo delle Montagne*, *Il Segreto del Bosco Vecchio* and *Il Deserto dei Tartari* in the chapters 6 and 7 of Yves Panafieu, *Janus: Propositions pour un décryptage sociologique et idéologique de l'oeuvre de Dino Buzzati* (Paris: Laffont, 1989), pp. 137-238.

²⁶⁹ *Barnabo delle montagne* (Milan and Rome: Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1933) and *Il segreto del bosco vecchio* (Milan and Rome: Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1935).

²⁷⁰ Dino Buzzati, 'Vita e amori del cavalier rospo. Il Falstaff della fauna', in *Corriere della Sera*, 27 March 1933.

²⁷¹ See *Album Buzzati*, ed by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), p. 139.

²⁷² See *Album Buzzati*, ed by Viganò, p. 155, which quotes a Buzzati's interview with Alberico Sala: '[...] mi chiedo se sarebbe andata avanti sempre così, se le speranze, i sogni inevitabili quando si è giovani, si sarebbero atrofizzati a poco a poco, se la grande occasione sarebbe venuta o no'.

work within the military world that had always attracted him.²⁷³ However, in 1939, his idea of being finally at the centre of the historical stage, and of having the opportunity to write something of historical relevance, quickly faded.²⁷⁴ The Tartars had arrived too late not only for Drogo, the protagonist of *Il deserto dei Turchi*, but also for the journalist who had been sent to visit the colonial empire not when it was at its apogee, but during its sunset.²⁷⁵ The similarity between the distress of the most well-known fictional character of Buzzati's production and his existential anxiety during the experience as a special correspondent confirms the theory according to which the border between imagination and objectivity is always blurred in Buzzati's narrative: 'fantastic news' in Africa found the first actual opportunity to depict this ambiguity between fact and fiction.

The obsession with the 'grande occasione' and the opportunity of doing something remarkable was an issue, during those years, not only for Dino Buzzati, but for an entire country. As stated by Fabrizio De Donno and Naeelem Srivastava, 'Italian colonialism [...] began with the hope that the new nation would play an active role in international relations [...]. Above all, it was hoped that colonial Italy would restore Italy's traditional centrality in Europe and [...] fascism exacerbated these preoccupations and ambitions'.²⁷⁶ The chance to avenge the defeat of Adua of 1896, which marked the end of the first Italian colonial enterprise, the longing for a new 'promised land' in which to find a solution to the problems of unemployment and emigration, and the massive propagandistic effort of the regime, made Libya and Ethiopia more than simply two military and political objectives.²⁷⁷ As explained by Angelo Del Boca and Marco Mozzati, with the invasion of Ethiopia Mussolini achieved

²⁷³ See *Album Buzzati*, ed by Viganò, p. 156: '[...] la vita militare corrispondeva alla mia natura. Mi era bastato il normale servizio di allievo ufficiale e sottotenente [...] per sentirmi attratto profondamente, e per assimilare, credo, fino in fondo, lo spirito di quel mondo che oggi sembra così screditato'.

²⁷⁴ Already by 13 April 1939, Buzzati had to deal with doubts and fears: '[...] vorrei tornare indietro, ricominciare la vita di redazione. Parto per un'impresa a me ingrata, in mezzo a gente estranea, solo come mai ho provato'. See *L'Africa di Buzzati*, ed. by Caspar, p. 37 which quotes from Buzzati's diary, 13 April 1939.

²⁷⁵ See *L'Africa di Buzzati*, ed. by Caspar, p. 37 which quotes from Buzzati's diary, 15 April 1939: 'Tardi, di molto tardi dunque io comincio la vita, parto con un grande distacco, dieci quindici anni di ritardo sugli altri' and *Album Buzzati*, ed. by Viganò, p. 166: 'Come Giovanni Drogo [...] anche Buzzati attendeva la grande occasione, quella che avrebbe potuto riscattarlo da una vita monotona e mediocre. Ma ora che questa occasione è arrivata [...] Buzzati non è più così sicuro di volerlo; non si sente pronto, non crede nelle proprie capacità [...]'.

²⁷⁶ Fabrizio De Donno and Neelam Srivastava, 'Editorial', *Interventions. International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8 (3), 2006, 376.

²⁷⁷ See for this also the chapter 'La terra promessa', in Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale. Vol. 3: La caduta dell'impero* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996 [1976]), pp. 193-217.

(with the support of many intellectuals) the climax of Fascist consensus in Italy.²⁷⁸ A strong sense of unity was shared by the entire population of the peninsula: Italian people were ‘soddisfatti di occupare un nuovo e ben più rilevante posto nel mondo. Soddisfatti di aver affidato il loro destino a un uomo che ha vinto su tutti i fronti’.²⁷⁹ In 1936, Italy had its best opportunity of becoming a respected and feared empire, and the time of mediocrity seemed to be finally over. However, only four years later, with Mussolini’s decision to enter the war, the Fascist empire came to an end, without having solved any of the country’s problems: ‘il persistere della guerriglia in quasi tutti i territori dell’impero, impedisce [...] il trasferimento massiccio di Italiani in Etiopia. [...] la creazione delle infrastrutture, senza le quali l’impero non potrà mai diventare produttivo, procede con estrema lentezza [...]. La decisione di Mussolini di scendere in guerra, il 10 giugno 1940 [...] decreterà in sostanza la fine dell’impero’.²⁸⁰ Buzzati managed to become absorbed in the African environment: by merging the techniques of objective journalism, as required by a regime which did not tolerate excursions into the realm of fiction, and his typically imaginative way of looking at the real, Buzzati covered all the aspects of the colonial reality. From the descriptions of the great public works – the road which crossed the Dancalia desert, the modernization of the cities, and the foundation of new ones such as Bari d’Etiopia – to geography, flora and fauna, but also sociology, climatic conditions and local culture, Buzzati tried not to omit anything from his work of reportage. What is most relevant is that in Africa Buzzati’s ‘fantastic news’ had to portray the encounter between a European bourgeois writer of the twentieth century and the completely new world expressed by the ‘anthropological otherness’ which for Buzzati was represented by the African peoples. This clash set up the premises for the first real experiments in the use of fiction as a large literary toolbox in which Buzzati could find the instruments to enrich his journalism and the representation of his ‘other world’. Moreover, it charged his work with ideological and political implications.

The theoretical premise of giving journalism a literary status was effectively developed when Buzzati tried to insert fantastic elements and atmospheres into his

²⁷⁸ See Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale. Vol. 2: La conquista dell’impero* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996 [1976]), pp. 320-350 and Marco Mozzati, ‘Gli intellettuali e la propaganda coloniale del regime’, in *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 99-111.

²⁷⁹ Angelo Del Boca, *La guerra d’Etiopia. L’ultima impresa del colonialismo* (Milan: Longanesi, 2010), p. 61.

²⁸⁰ Del Boca, *La guerra d’Etiopia*, p. 247-250.

factual representation of the colonies in order to give symbolic depth to his prose. For example, Buzzati's representation of the work done in Ethiopia by Italian workmen and engineers tended as much as possible to give a sense of animation to the most technical operations, such as the disembarkation of ships, the construction of roads, buildings and bridges, and the rural development of the conquered regions. The building of the road through Dancalia is described as workmen and constructors' 'lotta contro l'inferno' ('La strada della Dancalia. Vittoria sull'inferno', pp. 123-129). Both the road and the desert are presented as animated figures, the former going 'diritta verso il cuore del deserto' (p. 124) and being compared to a 'linea confinaria del mistero, piccolo graffio enigmatico sulla superficie della Dancalia [...], strada [...] del mistero africano' (p. 69).²⁸¹ The features of mystery and the comparison with hell enrich the narrative of an eerie element and sometimes the censored passages are the most thoughtful and poetical. Once they are reinserted in the narrative they lend it a literariness which comes close to that of the short story:

[...] qualche cosa riaffiorava a dire [...] che questa era Africa, che la Patria distava sempre migliaia di chilometri: voce indefinibile e oscura, derivante forse dal cielo troppo puro, forse nata dalle morte pietre dell'altopiano e ondeggiante sopra i tetti delle città, giorno e notte, a trasmettere messaggi dalle profondità del continente [...].²⁸²

This process is what I defined as the 'animation of the inanimate', and concerns not only machines and weapons, but the natural and urban environment as well: a clear instance is the comparison Buzzati made on 12 February 1940 between the development of the city of Gondar and the growth of a bean plant, in order to underline the rapidity of the urbanization:

La Gondar che il ministro Teruzzi ha visto nei giorni scorsi ci ha fatto venire in mente [...] un vecchio corto metraggio scientifico sulla pianta del fagiolo. Si vedeva sullo schermo, in sezione, un fagiolo piantato entro la terra; dopo qualche istante gli nasceva una specie di codino che si sviluppava in radice; poi un'altra propaggine si spingeva in alto a cercare il

²⁸¹ Caspar confirms the literariness and fantasy of the articles on the road through Dancalia: 'Perché Buzzati ha descritto in questo modo la Dancalia? Certamente per mettere in rilievo il fatto che costruire una strada di quasi 500 km attraverso un deserto ostilissimo [...] era stato un lavoro titanico [...]. Ma Buzzati [...] non poteva non dare un altro significato a questa 'strada della vittoria', un significato poetico'.

²⁸² This passage was cut by the censorship from 'Col ministro Teruzzi in A.O.I. Adunata di pionieri su una gloriosa via' (p. 157).

sole, spuntava fuori dal terreno, diventava pianta, fioriva, fruttificava, tutto nello spazio di due o tre minuti [...]. Chi vive a Gondar [...] gode di uno spettacolo simile [...] (p. 165).

The reader loses himself within the rarefied atmosphere created by Buzzati, often without realizing the political implications of what he wrote: this is precisely what happens in ‘Gibuti in letargo’ (pp. 112-116). As explained by Del Boca, and recalled by Caspar (p. 112), Mussolini accused the French government of restricting Italian trade in Gibuti by a punitive tax system and by making disembarkation difficult by keeping the harbour and the railway in bad condition.²⁸³ Buzzati subtly described this situation by summoning ‘un ostile incantesimo’, which transformed the city ‘in un bieco dedalo di bicocche slabbrate’ (p. 113). The landscape contributes to articulate the ‘uncanny’ scenario in which the story is set: the sun ‘fa il suo regolare cammino’, the shadows ‘cominciano timidamente a guadagnare terreno [...]’ (p. 113). At the end of the article Buzzati talks about ‘una barriera di gelo fra Italiani e Francesi’ and lets fall a provocation: ‘eppure le cose dovranno cambiare, questo è nell’animo di tutti’ (p. 115). Elsewhere Buzzati chooses fantastic metaphors to represent the protagonists of his news, such as in the case of the officer Bertoglio, ‘residente’ of the town of Gildessa,²⁸⁴ who is depicted as a hero at the threshold of the city, waiting for the support of his government to rebuild it.²⁸⁵

From these first examples is already evident the use of narrative elements which are unfamiliar to the genre of journalistic reportage: animation, mystery and spells are summoned to confer an added interest to the description of the Italian colonial enterprise. However, the insertion of the fantastic element in the news still has severe limitations if compared to the more complex results Buzzati will obtain in the following years of his career, and which I will take into account in the following chapters. In Africa, Buzzati’s ‘other world’ can only be foreseen in its potential, but it is still too closely bound by censorship and political influences to be revealed in its entirety. Between 1933, the year of Buzzati’s first correspondence from Libya, and 1940, when he came back from Ethiopia, Buzzati had to write under the constant control of Fascist censorship. If it is true that Mussolini strengthened the control over publications from

²⁸³ Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale. Vol. 3: La caduta dell’impero* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996 [1976]), p. 300.

²⁸⁴ ‘Residente’ is a technical term: at p. 171 Caspar explains that they were ‘in genere ufficiali che avevano partecipato alla conquista e avevano scelto di rimanere in Africa’.

²⁸⁵ Here, one again, there is an echo of the waiting and the loneliness of Drogo in *Il Deserto dei Tartari*.

1940, then it is important to remember that also before that date, and in particular as far as the correspondence from the colonies was concerned, the regime imposed precise limits to the reporters' work. In this particular cultural and historical context Buzzati's 'other world' sometimes becomes hard to see in its full capability of blending the characteristics of fictional genres and journalism. The loans from the genres of fiction which characterize the articles of *L'Africa di Buzzati*, despite being clearly recognizable by the reader, take the form of sporadic insertions of images and references to a potential 'otherness' which lives behind the world the journalist is describing and gives the impression that there is more than meets the eye. Yet the absence of a programmatic choice by the author in the use and administration of the themes and metaphors of the various fictional genres at his disposal gives the impression that Buzzati is using elements of fantastic literature without any kind of structured plan. The cluster of elements placed in the articles which the reader perceives as being borrowed from a literary context cannot be linked to single specific genres which, in Daniel Chandler words, 'tend to be easy to recognize but difficult (if not impossible) to define'.²⁸⁶ Buzzati's operation of merging facts and fiction is there but is also suffocated by the imposition established by the regime of writing only about specific and concrete facts while avoiding poetic and imaginative speculations. The result is that Buzzati's 'other world' can find a way to escape the coercion imposed by the regime only in the didactic and moralistic side of his journalism and in the descriptions of the landscape. Digressions are often dedicated to the reflections upon the stoic effort of the common men committed to the building of the colonial empire who left Italy to find on the 'fourth shore' an opportunity to build themselves a new life. By approaching this theme Buzzati can release his imagination. The same may be said when the protagonist of the piece of news is the African landscape, to which Buzzati is able to confer a metaphorical meaning through the particular role that the desert plays within it.

While talking about the unique way Buzzati used the fantastic literary tradition in order to produce a 'meaningful' narrative, I stated that his production could fit Hume's category of 'didactic literature' (see chapter one). The articles written from the colonies exasperate the aim of offering Italian citizens not only a useful knowledge of the life in North Africa, but also a moral lesson on the commitment of those involved in the

²⁸⁶ Daniel Chandler, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory', 1997, http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf [accessed 12 May 2012].

colonial enterprise, the way they dealt with the natives, and their so-called ‘civilizing mission’. The ‘grandi opere’ that Fascism wanted on African soil had as one of their main objectives that of ‘portare la civiltà in luoghi incivili’ and ‘ricostruire a migliaia di chilometri dalla madre patria [...] un altro pezzo di Italia’.²⁸⁷ As stated by Caspar, the idea of the ‘civilizing mission’ was one of the themes that the censors asked journalists to cover, and Buzzati was no exception. Buzzati dedicated two articles in particular to the idea that African people were barbarians who needed to be educated, while preferring in the rest of his texts to concentrate his attention on the practical aspects of the Italian presence in both Libya and Ethiopia by focusing on issues of social order, justice and the construction of streets and cities (p. 57). The fact that Buzzati wrote explicitly about the ‘civilizing mission’ only in two articles lets us think that his work might be distinguished from that of other writers of his time who were eager to praise the Fascist enterprise in North Africa. His references to the supposed superiority of the colonizers and to the legitimacy of Fascist operations are much subtler than those made by his colleagues and his judgments are often contradictory. On the one hand, it is then true that a distinction needs to be made: the correspondence of the vast majority of Italian journalists in those years was completely bent to the regime’s will and this was true in particular at the *Corriere della Sera*, under Aldo Borelli’s editorship. It would be unfair to make of Buzzati one among the group of journalists who transformed the *Corriere* into an enthusiast spokesman of the regime. On the other hand however, the content of these two articles and the way Buzzati addresses the natives in these texts has undeniable points of contact with Fascist racism and the idea that North African populations were ‘inferior’ to the Italian people.

In the first of these two articles, ‘Presidi italiani della civiltà’ (15 November 1933), even though Buzzati’s reportage is detailed and detached, there are several passages in which fantasy emerges. The protagonist, Major Rolle, has the paternalistic duty of ‘sorvegliare le oasi, ispezionare i presidi [...], risolvere i litigi [...], istruire i bimbi’ (p. 88), more as a father than as a soldier, and he is portrayed as the sentry of a magical realm which needs to be preserved: ‘Pare che l’aria del deserto spazzi via dagli uomini le ombre mediocri, lasci soltanto l’essenza buona [...] qui [...] rimane sospesa nell’aria una vaga sensazione di inquietudine e d’avventura’ (pp. 87, 88). Buzzati could not use fantasy too explicitly because of the clear preference of the regime to refer only

²⁸⁷ *L’Africa di Buzzati*, ed. Caspar, p. 51. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

to ‘fatti precisi’ (p. 45), but he did not give up his ‘fantastic news’, as when he concealed a reference to fantasy behind the description of an indigenous ritual (p. 88) or by giving space to imagination at the end of the article: he imagines the melancholy of those who came to visit Rolle, leaving him ‘fermo sulla soglia del suo solitario regno’ (p. 89) and their being suddenly taken by ‘un’immaginazione da ragazzi’ (p. 89). However, despite the use of fantasy, a certain level of condescension towards the customs of the indigenous people is undeniable: ‘Le vertenze tra indigeni sono più noiose che le tavole dei logaritmi’ (p. 87). Both of these two articles in which Buzzati addressed the theme of the colonizers’ superiority – the second is ‘Notti di sabba nel Galla e Sidama’ (23 August 1939) – present an explicit mockery of the colonized culture. The point in which this mockery is more evident is where Buzzati states that for African people it seems to be ‘istintivo il bisogno di trovare un oggetto, un simbolo materiale [...] che possa fare da intermediario, raccogliere le preghiere e trasmetterle alla divinità superiore, troppo lontana e impersonale per poter essere concepita da quelle selvatiche menti’ (p. 259). The customs and beliefs of the natives are alternatively defined as ‘bizzarri’, ‘singolari’, ‘barbari’. With these premises, even the moralistic and pedagogical basis of Buzzati’s journalism might be read from a political and ideological point of view: the aim of communicating a lesson in the professional ethics of those working on the ‘grandi opere’ developed in the colonies – which suits Hume’s category of ‘didactic literature’ – is influenced by the paternalistic view of the natives. The manifestation of empathy for the engineers and workmen who had to bear the sun of the desert is biased by the suspicion that in Buzzati’s empathy lies an exaltation of the colonial enterprise which would be coherent with Fascist propaganda.

And it is the desert, where he described this enterprise, which offered Buzzati the real topic around which building a narrative that could move from the cold reportage to existential speculations by making a good use of literary themes and metaphors. As I claimed in chapter one, the conflict between nature and technology is one of the most recurrent themes within Buzzati’s oeuvre, and it mirrors that between fantasy and reality, objectivity and subjectivity: it is a conflict in which the roles of good and evil restlessly exchange and that ends only with the ‘massima quiete’ represented by death. In North Africa ‘nature’ meant ‘desert’ for Buzzati, while the progress and the supposed ‘civilization’ brought by the empire were represented not only by the ‘grandi opere’

developed on the colonized soil but also by the Italian Army with its weapons and its military superiority. While talking with Panafieu, Buzzati explained:²⁸⁸

[...] Per me i paesaggi del deserto sono la cosa più bella del mondo. Più bella ancora delle montagne, almeno come potenza spirituale [...].

Secondo me quello che soprattutto fa impressione nel deserto è il senso dell'attesa. Uno ha la sensazione che debba succedere qualche cosa, da un momento all'altro.

Spiritual power and, above all, the expectation that something remarkable is going to happen: these sensations are not only at the core of all the descriptions of the desert in *L'Africa di Buzzati*, but are among the most relevant outcomes of *Il deserto dei Tartari*. Between Buzzati's fictional masterpiece and his African articles there is not only a correspondence of geographical setting (the desert), but also the feeling that this particular landscape contains the potential for sudden and radical change to everyday routine.²⁸⁹ The great variety of Ethiopian landscape offered Buzzati the chance to merge journalistic descriptions with a fantasy inspired by the power of a nature he thought he was seeing at its most primordial and powerful peak. The idea of the inaccessibility, mystery and eternity of the desert is a source of happiness and inspiration:

Si cavalcava alle falde di una specie di vulcano, in un paesaggio meraviglioso, meraviglioso nel senso africano, cioè di mistero e di solitudine [...] in Africa subentra [...] questo senso – non dico di eternità, che è un'espressione assolutamente esagerata – ma di come se l'uomo avesse meno importanza nel mondo, di fronte a questa grandezza della natura, anzi, più che grandezza, solitudine e antichità...²⁹⁰

This description of the desert is also coherent with the author's poetics of space as extensively analyzed both by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Felix Siddell. As I explained in the introduction, Dalla Rosa studied the representation of geographical 'otherness' in Buzzati as a symbol of the mystery the author saw hidden within everyday reality, while Siddell focused on the nature of space as either a subjective construction of the viewer's

²⁸⁸ Yves Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1973), p. 48.

²⁸⁹ Other correspondences between Buzzati's non-fictional work in Africa and his fictional production are analyzed by Caspar with particular references to the novels *Barnabo delle montagne* and *Il segreto del bosco vecchio* (pp. 64-72).

²⁹⁰ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 51.

mind or an objective map of reality.²⁹¹ The mysterious duplicity of the natural space within Buzzati's oeuvre, in particular as opposed to technology and progress, is confirmed by his correspondence from Italian colonies: the desert is not only a source of fascination, but also a hostile environment, ferocious and merciless, which obliges men to fight against loneliness and the oppressive presence of a boiling sun.²⁹² On Buzzati's first trip to Libya in 1933, the air of the desert is described as 'cocente', while the 'montagne divorate perennemente dal sole [...] inesorabile sole' appear within a 'paesaggio [...] tremendamente antico'.²⁹³ In the article 'Colori di guerra shariana' Buzzati mentions 'rupi riarse' and gives to an entire paragraph the emblematic title of 'Sete' (pp. 77-81), whereas in 'Piccola cronaca del deserto', with reference to the bones of dead animals lying on the arid surface of the desert, the landscape is described as a living creature with an evil face: 'Tutto butterato da quei mucchietti di ossa, il volto del Sahara conserva, malgrado tutto, il suo feroce sogghigno' (p. 84). An exhaustive series of examples of the ambivalent representations of the African space is offered by Caspar in the section 'La poetica buzzatiana dello spazio' of her introduction to *L'Africa di Buzzati* (pp. 61-72). What is more relevant to me here is to highlight the fact that this ambivalence is an important proof of the literary richness of this part of Buzzati's journalistic work: nature, in the shape of the African desert, is depicted coherently with the characteristics it has in his fantastic short stories, and the journalistic context does not imply a renunciation by the author of practising the association between nature and fantasy as opposed to technology and progress which gives his work metaphorical and philosophical depth.

2.2 Desert and Heroes: History in *L'Africa di Buzzati*

The metaphorical role assigned to the desert in the articles from the colonized territories is also important because it represents the framework of a narrative which

²⁹¹ See Patrizia Dalla Rosa, "Al di sopra dei lucernari e delle guglie": gli 'altrove' intravisti da Dino Buzzati', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 127-143; Patrizia Dalla Rosa, *Dove qualcosa sfugge: lingue e luoghi di Buzzati* (Pisa: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2004), and Felix Siddell, *Death or Deception: Sense of Place in Buzzati e Morante* (Leicester: Trobadour, 2006).

²⁹² It is important here to underline another correspondence Casper noticed between Buzzati's fiction and the journalistic work from Africa. While comparing the short stories 'L'inaugurazione della strada' and 'Il Re a Horm-el-Hagar' with the articles from Ethiopia Caspar writes: '[...] in questi articoli si conferma, dopo la prima rivelazione del deserto libico e la stesura del *Deserto dei Tartari*, la mitologia che circonda questo luogo affascinante nella sua vastità e durezza' (pp. 69, 70).

²⁹³ See 'Deserti tra Damasco e Baalbek', 31 August 1933 (pp. 73-76).

aimed to explore and account for the experience of the new imperial reality. The ambiguous characterization of the desert – fascinating and dreadful, threatening and a source of happiness – cannot be ascribed only to Buzzati's dislike of technology and progress and his love of the power of uncontaminated nature. In Charles Burdett's words, 'the consciousness of the author is inseparable from the system that it exposes':²⁹⁴ hence, the 'system of elements', as it was defined by Michel Foucault, which informs Buzzati's representation of the colonized environment is built on a perception of reality imposed from above. Buzzati cannot separate himself from the reality he observes and of which he, as a correspondent of an Italian newspaper, is an integral part. As explained by Foucault, 'a 'system of elements' [...] the threshold above which there is a difference and below which there is a similitude is indispensable for the establishment of even the simplest form of order'.²⁹⁵ The description of the desert as the natural locus of the colonial experience and its major role in the articles written for the *Corriere* are then both the consequence of the fact that North Africa, in its natural conformation, was ideal to stimulate Buzzati's reflection on concepts such as mystery and eternity, but also that the commonly accepted image of those territories was that of a new frontier of the empire to be explored and conquered.

Buzzati's viewpoint was that of a journalist who deliberately decided to mix factuality and fictional devices, but came from a precise idea of history: in *The Order of Things* Foucault explains how 'it is on the basis of [a] perceived order [...] that general theories as to the ordering of things [...] will be constructed' (p. XXI) and that it is 'on the basis of [a] historical a priori [that] ideas could appear' (p. XXII). This 'historical a priori' which must be taken into account when analyzing the work of a reporter who was embedded in the dynamics of the same reality he was writing about is of fundamental relevance to understanding the ideas behind his modes of representation. As, according to Foucault, it happens in the case of *Don Quixote*, also the Buzzatian representation of the colonial world is a process in which 'resemblances and signs have dissolved their former alliance; similitudes have become deceptive [...]' (pp. 47, 48). The difference is that, while in *Don Quixote* 'things [...] are no longer anything but what they are' and 'words [...] are no longer the marks of things [...]' (pp. 47, 48), in

²⁹⁴ Charles Burdett, 'Nomos, Identity, and Otherness: Ciro Poggiali's *Diario AOI 1936-1937* and the Representation of the Italian Colonial World', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 79 (2011), 329-349 (p. 347).

²⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock, 1970) [1st Edition in French: 1966]), p. XX. Further reference to this volume will be given in the text.

Buzzati this separation between signifier and signified is not total yet. Nevertheless, signification has become blurred, enigmatic, and ambiguous: the weapons used by Italian conquerors are the symbol of strength, power, and superiority of the regime, but also the symptom of the pain caused by the use of violence; rebels need to be fought in the name of progress, but their fellow country-men who accept submission are allowed to be a part of the new frontier of the empire, with a clear contradiction with the presumed racial and civil superiority of Italians. Again in Foucault's words, Buzzati acts as a poet 'who constantly [...] rediscovers the buried kinship between things [...]. Beneath the established signs [...] he hears another, deeper, discourse [...]' (pp. 48, 49).

The new 'deeper discourse' Buzzati 'hears' buried under the metaphor of the desert is the possibility of redemption: the chance, somehow, of starting again, out of the horror of the present time. It is not a religious redemption but an ethical one, and here it will be useful to read *L'Africa di Buzzati* in the light of Buzzati's 'ethical view of history' which I theorized in chapter one, while explaining his resentment against modern ideologies. Buzzati's aim is to see history not in political or ideological, but in ethical terms: with its large unspoiled areas the desert is a metaphor for a new beginning. To paraphrase Foucault, the desert represents the possibility of establishing a new 'order of things' and a new relationship between the objects that make up the world of men and words which are the main vehicle of the representation. The desert, away from areas colonized by the empire, is neither war nor retaliation, neither infrastructure nor modernity: it is the opportunity, at least in appearance, of imagining a new harmonious reality. It is here then that Buzzati sees the peace and serenity which only death can give, the 'massima quiete' reached when the mystery about the meaning of existence will be revealed. From within the historical mechanism of which Buzzati himself is a part, the desert allows us metaphorically to go outside the mechanism and capture the timelessness of a new history yet to be written. It is therefore something more intangible than real, is a state of mind which, as in fantastic literature, merges visible and invisible, selfhood and otherness.

However, the colonial world as narrated by Buzzati required a return to the historical and journalistic reality of the Fascist enterprise in North Africa, which was necessary in order to justify his presence as a correspondent from Libya and Ethiopia. Hence Buzzati, between the uncritical exaltation of the colonial endeavour and the refusal of participating in it, chose the lesser of two evils: he chose to give the role of

protagonists of his pieces of reportage to anti-heroes. That of the hero is one of the most recurrent figures both in Buzzati's narrative and in Fascist propaganda. The ambivalent space of North Africa offered the journalist the chance to portray soldiers and patriots who were fighting to bring civilization to the colonized people. However, the relationship between Buzzati and militarism was not that simple. As stated by Caspar, 'esaltare sistematicamente gli 'eroi' passati o presenti e il governo stesso non era certo l'ambizione e lo scopo principali di Buzzati [...]. [Buzzati] dedica pochi articoli a personaggi ufficiali del Regime. Quando lo fa [...] è perché si tratta di circostanze eccezionali' (p. 46). If Fascist heroes find space within Buzzati's reportage only when he cannot avoid it, then the people who crowd *L'Africa di Buzzati* are anti-heroes: 'Figure più anonime si delineano anche sotto la penna di Buzzati. Questi ritratti, spesso brevi, sono generalmente riusciti bene [...]' (p. 50). Buzzati's choice is not surprising if one thinks of his fictional production: from Barnabo to Drogo, from Gaspare Planetta to Cristoforo Shroeder, to mention only a few, Buzzati's fantastic oeuvre swarms with stories of common, often marginalized people or with powerful figures who have lost their power. In *Janus*, Panafieu, while analyzing the first three novels published by Buzzati, argues that the decision to privilege anti-heroic characters was intended to mock the whole idea of militarism and discipline which was at the core of Fascist ideology.²⁹⁶ When Buzzati had to deal with official representatives of the government in Africa, he chose to give priority to those who showed more interest in ordinary people, as in the case of the reportage on the visits of the minister Teruzzi and the Duke of Aosta. A preference for the more accommodating Duke, to whom Buzzati dedicated five articles (two of which were censored), is evident, especially for the attention given to the 'residenti' and the *ascari*. Teruzzi, on the other hand, was interested only in visiting the most important cities and the most spectacular aspects of the colonization.²⁹⁷

The anti-hero that dominates Buzzati's colonial articles is not an indestructible character who fights against evil. He is a man with doubts and fears who is able to accept his own destiny and to face it with dignity. Ethics becomes once again the yardstick according to which Buzzati approaches history and its representation: only

²⁹⁶ See Panafieu, *Janus*, pp. 178-238.

²⁹⁷ See Caspar: 'Il Duca [...] aveva saputo farsi amare da tutti [...]. Il Duca si recava [...] nelle zone più impervie dell'impero per incontrare gente tagliata fuori dal mondo, confortare i residenti che ricevevano poche visite, sentire i loro pareri [...]. Tutto questo mostra Buzzati nei suoi ritratti del Duca, uomo attaccato e vicino agli umili e agli ascari. Invece [...] Teruzzi si era recato in città importanti [...]. I suoi viaggi [...] dovevano soprattutto mostrare [...] il viso trionfante del fascismo [...]' (pp. 46, 47).

those who are able to face their destinies and to acknowledge their responsibilities deserve to be remembered. Buzzati's aim to portray examples of courage and ethical conduct among those who were experiencing the life in the colonies reaches moments of almost religious involvement, and needs to be linked to his constant search for an ulterior meaning beyond what he was observing as a part of the 'other world' fantasy enabled him to decipher. In a sense broader than that which is given to the belief in a specific transcendent entity, Charles Burdett's paraphrasing of John Gray can be effectively applied also to Buzzati's belief in the presence of a 'superior' reason for human existence: 'the tendency to believe is inseparable from the human condition'.²⁹⁸ Buzzati's anti-heroes who face their responsibilities have no fear of death and live in a harmonious relationship with nature: they are not that far away from the Nietzschean idea of the Overman, who, as explained by Graham Parkes, 'is far from the type that dismisses this transitory world of ours as meaningless or worthless', but rather 'emerges from our going beyond the human perspective and transcending the anthropocentric worldview'.²⁹⁹ Panafieu mentions the figure of the lieutenant Angustina in *Il deserto dei Tartari*, who decides to die in an honourable way during an expedition through the mountains that surround the fortress. Drogo himself is able to accept his destiny and to die when his moment arrives, despite its coincidence with the long-awaited arrival of the enemy. Buzzati's anti-heroes in *L'Africa* are both Italian and natives: a good example are the *ascari* of 'A cavallo' Savoia' le le cusciumbuia'!' called 'penne di falco' that Buzzati defines as 'uno dei reparti più valorosi dell'impero' (p. 95). The workmen on the Dancalia road are seen in such a heroic way that Buzzati feels them 'invidiosamente diversi, come accade dinanzi agli eroi' (p. 126).³⁰⁰ In 'Notte dancala con ingegnere e gattopardo', the engineer Raffa deals with a leopard with extreme calm, while continuing to do his job of directing the construction. The possible examples are numerous: from Guaschino, Locker and Bonardi, protagonists of 'Lavoro di Pionieri', who reinvented themselves in Ethiopia as brick makers (pp. 182-185), to the men from Puglia who founded the 'Bari d'Etiopia': 'erano 105 uomini, in una piatta e selvatica

²⁹⁸ Charles Burdett, 'Italian Fascism, Messianic Eschatology and the Representation of Libya', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11 (1), 3-25 (p. 4). I will deepen the discussion about the relationship between Buzzati and religion in chapter 5.

²⁹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1st edition in German: 1883-1885]), p. XVIII.

³⁰⁰ Interestingly enough the censor deleted the word 'invidiosamente', probably because of the racist idea that Italian could have never felt jealous of a native.

valle, isolati dal mondo civile [...]. Non persero neppure un'ora, non si fermarono un istante [...]' (p. 187).

Nevertheless, this constant ethical drive which guides Buzzati's representation of both the space and the protagonists of the colonial endeavour hides more complex reasons, once again inscribed within the epistemological context of which Buzzati himself was a part. Not only the representation of the desert, but also that of Buzzati's anti-heroes is dependent on 'an intellectual framework that was dominated [...] by the notion of an established order rapidly coming to an end so as to give way to a radically new mode of being in the world'.³⁰¹ The preference for those who were literally building the colonial empire is not only an individual choice of the author, but inserts his journalistic correspondence into a specific frame of references imposed by Fascism. This framework clearly asked for 'the representation of the indigenous community's lived experience of time as passive, undifferentiated and static' so as to extol 'the future realization of the ideal society proclaimed by Italian Fascism [...] the indigenous culture of those parts of northern and eastern Africa [...] served as the visible antithesis of the new world that Fascist Italy claimed that it was in the process of creating'.³⁰² Hence, in Africa, the aesthetic and philosophical choices of the journalist are constantly problematized and made ambiguous by the influence of the surrounding ideological framework. Again Burdett's words help us understand why Buzzati's individual portraits of the men involved in the building of the colonial empire, either heroes or anti-heroes, are inseparable from implications of political nature:

An essential part of the task of every Italian who represented Libya in the interwar years was to witness not only the transformation of the land surface but the evolution of the individual who was involved in the colonizing process: it was, in other words, to witness the process of the alteration of external and *internal* space as it occurred in real time.³⁰³

2.3 Racism and 'Orientalism'

If the description of the desert and the representation of the anti-heroes who peopled Libya and Ethiopia served to help Buzzati's 'other world' making its first appearance in the context of this journalistic production, then the encounter in the

³⁰¹ Burdett, 'Italian Fascism', p. 9.

³⁰² Burdett, 'Italian Fascism', p. 13.

³⁰³ Burdett, 'Italian Fascism', p. 16.

colonies with the ‘anthropological otherness’ represented by the natives addresses directly the problem of race and its traces within the ‘other world’ described in *L’Africa di Buzzati*. In North Africa, the presence of a fictional element within Buzzati’s news enabled a representation of reality in which racism played a major role. I have argued so far that Buzzati’s ‘other world’ needs to be considered as not separated from the empirical one but, on the contrary, as a deepening and enrichment of the visible. Hence when fantastic settings and literary metaphors come into place in a particular context such as the colonial one, we have to analyze also their possible ideological meaning.

The problem of racism in Italian Fascist colonies is a complex one, featuring internal contradictions between the ideology of the regime and how its ideas were actually carried out. This premise is necessary to an understanding of how, even within Buzzati’s journalism, it is not possible to speak simply of racism. As explained by Fabrizio De Donno, before the decision was made to invade African soil, ‘the idea of Mediterranean unity created a rhetoric of inclusion between Italians and the African peoples [...]’, and this idea ‘continued to flourish during the first fascist period up to 1936, in support of anti-British, anti-German [...], as well as anti-racist policies [...]’.³⁰⁴ However, when Buzzati left for the colonies in 1939, the situation had radically changed: ‘with the invasion and the proclamation of the fascist empire [...], fascist Italy began a new ‘racist’ phase’ and ‘[...] by 1937 a regime of ‘apartheid’ was in force in Italian East Africa’.³⁰⁵ However, the practical application of this racism was not always possible: it had to face the fact that Italian colonists from the peninsula worked and often lived side by side with the natives.³⁰⁶ The contradictions and differences between

³⁰⁴ Fabrizio De Donno, ‘La razza Ario-Mediterranea. Ideas of Race and Citizenship in Colonial and Fascist Italy, 1885-1941’, *Interventions. International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8 (3), 2006, 394-411 (p. 401).

³⁰⁵ De Donno, ‘La razza Ario-Mediterranea’, p. 405. See also Alberto Sbacchi, ‘I rapporti italo-etioptici tra il 1935 e il 1941’, in *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 469-500 (p. 470): ‘la politica coloniale degli italiani, una volta stanziatisi nelle zone principali e assicuratisi il controllo dei centri urbani, cominciò a rivelarsi crudele, razzista e contraddittoria’. After the promulgation of the racial laws, Italian policy in Africa ‘si fece più intransigente’ and ‘mise in evidenza una più netta differenziazione e separazione fra neri e bianchi’ (p. 485).

³⁰⁶ See Sbacchi, ‘I rapporti italo-etioptici tra il 1935 e il 1941’, pp. 485, 486: ‘[...] la legislazione razziale non fu applicata ovunque e con la stessa forza. Sebbene essa sostenesse la separazione delle due razze, ciò non si dimostrò attuabile in città come Addis Abeba a causa della carenza di abitazioni, per cui gli italiani furono comunque obbligati a vivere a stretto contatto con gli etiopici’, and p. 486: ‘[...] il tentativo di Mussolini di fare degli italiani una razza padrona fallì perché l’italiano medio era incurante della separazione razziale e poco attento alla legislazione razzista. Gli italiani [...] non applicarono le leggi razziali con il fanatismo tedesco’. See also Giulia Barrera, ‘Patrilinarity, Race, and Ideology: The Upbringing of Italo-Eritreans during Italian Colonialism’, in *Italian Colonialism*, ed. by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp. 97-108; the chapter ‘Razzismo di stile italiano’, in Alberto Sbacchi, *Il colonialismo italiano in Etiopia. 1935-1940* (Milan: Mursia, 1980), pp.

the premises and the applications of Fascist racism in Ethiopia are mirrored by Buzzati's attitude towards the natives. This relates to the concept that Edward Said has called 'vacillation': 'if the mind must suddenly deal with what it takes to be a radically new form of life [...] the response on the whole is conservative and defensive. [...] novelty and suggestiveness are brought under control [...]'.³⁰⁷ This was not only the condition of the African peoples, but also of the journalist, who found himself confronted by a different race of human beings for the first time.

Nonetheless, Buzzati never approached the natives with fanaticism: his encounter with African 'anthropological otherness' is generally marked by a positive attitude, and this is particularly evident in the articles in which he mentions his attendant, the *ascari* Ghilò.³⁰⁸ In the article 'L'ascari Ghilò leone' (pp. 102-107), for example, Buzzati describes the ambush by Ethiopian rebels in which Ghilò died, and he has words of sincere affection and respect for his attendant, who is described alternatively as a 'belva' and 'leone', while his loyalty to Buzzati and his courage are strongly emphasized.³⁰⁹ Interestingly, this article is not only one of the restricted number of five pieces dedicated to episodes of warfare, but, as underlined by Caspar, is characterized by an atmosphere that resembles that of *Il deserto dei Tartari* (p. 102). Not coincidentally, Buzzati does not present himself in the article by name, but as 'tenente Drogo', which is the name of the protagonist of the novel. The narrative framework is once again similar to that of a fantastic story: while the company is moving towards 'remote montagne' and is attacked by a group of rebels, Ghilò's concerns are about Buzzati/Drogo (p. 104). The battle is presented as the climax of a long period of waiting, and the atmosphere is rarefied, as in a world on the border of reality and fantasy: '[...] tutto è proprio identico ai sogni' (p. 104). After having been informed of the death of his attendant, Buzzati interrupts the narrative of the battle and dedicates to Ghilò the rest of the article, which becomes a piece of 'fantastic news': Buzzati imagines that Ghilò's soul is 'uscita dall'involucro nero e sta navigando lassù [...] diretta [...] al cielo degli spiriti semplici e buoni' (p. 105). The story is set in a sort of dream at the threshold of the afterworld: Ghilò finds himself facing a tall and beautiful

217-241, and the chapter 'La questione della razza' in Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale. Vol. 3: La caduta dell'impero*, pp. 218-276.

³⁰⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 58, 59.

³⁰⁸ The *ascari* were the indigenous troops which served under the Italian Army during the colonial period.

³⁰⁹ As reminded by Caspar, the loyalty of the *ascari* 'non è certo un'invenzione di Buzzati. La fedeltà degli ascari nei confronti dei loro 'capi' fu una realtà fin dalla creazione del corpo nel 1885' (p. 98).

official, covered in silver. Ghilò's vision recalls that of Sebastiano Procolo in the novel *Il segreto del bosco vecchio* and of Planetta in the short story 'L'assalto al grande convoglio' by confirming once again the strong link existing between Buzzati's fictional and journalistic production (p. 106). The official tells off the attendant for having abandoned Buzzati, but when he finds out that Ghilò died in order to protect the journalist, he calls him 'leone' and sends him to a 'grande grande licenza' (p. 106).

However, a certain sense of irony towards peoples who were generally considered socially, culturally and politically inferior emerges from Buzzati's reportage. A first example may be found in this very same article: every time an *ascari* speaks in Italian he uses only the infinitive tense. If this is read as being plausible, then the choice acquires the form of mockery when the fantastic figure of the official, covered in silver and based in the afterlife, says to Ghilò: 'Tu avere lasciato signor tenente, questo non stare buono. Tu adesso non poter più tornare, tu perduto anche moschetto, tu perduto cavallo' (p. 106).³¹⁰ Elsewhere, the references to the racial differences between colonizers and colonized are even more subtle: 'I bianchi, per evidenti ragioni, si limitavano a compiti di caposquadra' (p. 164), but there are passages in which generalizations and stereotypes are evident.³¹¹ The racial laws of 1936 and their implementation in 1937 influenced Buzzati to write passages like this: '[...] un'agenzia di trasporti al mercato indigeno vuol dire in questo caso che Italiani lavorano per gli indiani, gli arabi o peggio gli etiopi, e ciò non va d'accordo col nostro prestigio di razza' (p. 140). Besides, Buzzati defines the remains of the society of the Ethiopian Negus as an 'inciviltà' (p. 148), while the city of Asmara 'trasportata di peso [...] in un civilissimo paese europeo, farebbe la sua bellissima figura' (p. 157). Traces of a supposed superiority of the Italian race over the colonized characterize Buzzati's descriptions of Ethiopian habits, as in the censored article 'Festa di nozze' (pp. 248-253). In others judgments of local customs, especially in the case of religious rituals, are almost offensive: 'Di solito, bisogna dire la verità, le cerimonie copte appaiono piuttosto squallide se non addirittura straccione' (p. 163).

Buzzati's descriptions, even when they are merged with literary fiction, develop from the viewpoint of a western man who cannot address North African peoples without

³¹⁰ On the Italian spoke by the natives see also the article 'Quando i negri credono di parlare italiano. Incroci e bizzarrie in uso in Etiopia' (p. 273-276): Buzzati's ironic tone is evident from the title.

³¹¹ See p. 135: 'Il sudanese saluta tutti quelli che passano, lo iemenita se ne infischia. Lo iemenita al lavoro continua a cantare [...]. Il sudanese invece non canta. Ma tutti e due in fatto di abitazione si arrangiano facilmente. Prendono sei sette bidoni, ci stendono sopra una stuoia e la casa è bell'e fatta'.

bias: Buzzati was a man of his time, the bourgeois cultural and social environment in which he grew up, worked and obtained his professional achievements constituted a background which inevitably made him write about the colonized from a patronizing point of view. In order to understand this process it is necessary to read Buzzati's articles with reference to Edward Said's concept of 'orientalism' (see chapter one). The most important idea for my argument, which is linked to Said's theory, is that '[...] what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West'.³¹² Said explains how the representations of the East available to the western public are always written by European scholars, and how they create a pattern of metaphors and representations used to describe the Orient which not only form a proper literary tradition but also influence the way the Orient is perceived and judged. Buzzati's 'fantastic news' could not help but be influenced by the consequences of the process that Said describes as 'ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')'.³¹³

By building on Said, but integrating his study with the theories of the sociologist Peter Berger, Charles Burdett argues that the entire corpus of the literary production of the correspondents from the Italian colonies 'serves [...] as a means of examining how the cultural geography of the regime was defined and elaborated upon [...]; it can be used as a means of considering the continuation, over time, of certain modes of perception [...]'.³¹⁴ Burdett's work is important in that it does not commit the mistake of 'exaggerating the degree to which the impressions [of one individual or another and hence of Buzzati as well] were formulated independently when [...] the views they were keen to express often repeated [...] officially sanctified opinions' (pp. 331, 332). Buzzati's writings from the colonies are then inevitably 'to some degree, indicative of collectively organized interpretations of the human world' (p. 332). However, according to Burdett, it is not enough to rely only on Said and other post-colonial thinkers when analyzing the work of journalists in North Africa, and this is the reason why he builds his argument on Berger's studies 'on the social construction of reality' (p. 332). Burdett

³¹² Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 36-40.

³¹³ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 43, 44.

³¹⁴ Charles Burdett, 'Nomos, Identity, and Otherness: Ciro Poggiali's *Diario AOI 1936-1937* and the Representation of the Italian Colonial World', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 79 (2011), 329-349 (p. 331). Further reference to this essay will be given in the text.

argues that ‘the subject rather than passively internalizing the structures and concepts of the social world, actively appropriates these through an ongoing dialectic with the society’ (p. 333). In other words, Buzzati ‘is [...] a co-producer of the social world’ (p. 334) he is representing and uses it as an instrument for ordering his own experience. For these reasons, Buzzati’s concentration on the building of the cities and various kinds of infrastructure can only partially be interpreted as a personal choice, be it aesthetical or ethical: it is rather the result of ‘a violent and dramatic process of world creation’ which Fascism imposed in Italian colonies and which had in the ‘organization of its perception’ one of its most important characteristics (p. 335). In particular, the representation of the so-called ‘grandi opere’ was intended as a ‘proof of the exportation and implementation of the material structures of the metropolis’ in the conquered territories (p. 335).

L’Africa di Buzzati is rich in ‘all the figures of speech associated with the Orient [that] are all decorative and self-evident [...]’,³¹⁵ because the representation of Ethiopia offered by the author is ‘embedded [...] in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer’.³¹⁶ In Buzzati’s fantastic narrative, and in line with Said’s ‘orientalism’, North Africa is described as a mysterious, exotic land. If the West is rational and civilized, then Ethiopia is strange and irrational. The entire collection is rich in examples such as the description of Dancalia as ‘immensa e selvaggia’ (p. 135), and the characterization of Africa as ‘classica e antica, rimasta apparentemente intatta dall’inizio del (sic) secoli [...]’ (p. 153). The adventure of the colonists who came from Italy is narrated as a heroic enterprise in ‘Epoepa rurale tra i monti dell’Hararino’ (pp. 186-190) and, again in the context of the desert of Dancalia, the landscape is portrayed as an ‘uncanny’ living creature, hostile to the work of the colonists:

Quasi a consolare gli animi chiusi dalle rupi d’inferno, nubi di fattura soavissima e pura aggiravano quietamente sopra di loro. Esse avevano per lo più forma di gondole e sirene, si incolonnavano in seicenteschi cortei, fluttuanti di pennacchi e di veli (p. 127).

As Burdett claims while analyzing *Ciro Poggiali’s* diaries, also in the case of Buzzati’s correspondences from the colonized territories ‘the significance of the contradictions that run through his work is ultimately not what they reveal about the

³¹⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 72.

³¹⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 272, 273.

complexities of the psychology of the author, but rather what they reveal about the web of attitudes and perceptions concerning Italy's role in Africa in which his thought processes were inextricably enmeshed' (p. 341).

2.4 Engagement and Disengagement

Politically speaking, one of the most controversial issues within Buzzati's work during the 1930s and the 1940s is the fascination with the aesthetic beauty of battle. As I will examine in the next chapter, this fascination is particularly explicit in *Il Buttafuoco*, where Buzzati's reportage of the war in the Mediterranean Sea is at times so emphatic that it speaks of militarism. If this interpretation is too bold and partly misleading, then the choice of assimilating the shootings and the explosions of the battlefield into an exciting show acquires particular relevance once the historical context of the time is taken into account. In *Janus*, Panfieu strongly argues that Buzzati's aim in *Il deserto dei Tartari* was to set the story in a military context, with the purpose of staging a definitive condemnation of the Fascist use of violence and alienating discipline. The French scholar proposes the questionable thesis of an exterior militarism embraced by Buzzati in order to avoid censorship.³¹⁷ Whereas the former idea is justifiable, because of the oppressive and unhealthy perception of the fortress which emerges from the pages of the novel and which might be linked to an exaggerated and repressive application of military rules by the regime, the latter is hardly so: if Buzzati simply wanted to avoid censorship, then there would not have been any reason for professing a fascination with the beauty of battles after the end of the war and as late as his interview in 1971.³¹⁸ The negative judgment of Fascist militarism that is present in *Il deserto*, independent of how much it was sincere or calculated, is not present in the articles written from the colonies. The binding and oppressive militarism of the Bastiani fortress, in the five articles of *L'Africa di Buzzati* dedicated to the clashes with the rebels and to military operations by the colonizers, becomes adventure and vital energy (pp. 91-111). This apparently bold difference between what emerges from Buzzati's fiction and his journalism may be easily justified by the fact that fiction,

³¹⁷ Panfieu, *Janus*, pp. 178-238.

³¹⁸ For example, while talking about the battle against the rebels on 20 July 1939 in which he was involved, Buzzati told Panfieu: 'È stata una cosa bellissima. Sembrava uno dei racconti di cosacchi o qualche episodio delle guerre dell'ottocento. Romanticamente perfetto!...L'ambiente, gli spari, la galoppata...Una cosa stupenda!', *Un autoritratto*, p. 117.

notwithstanding the limits imposed by censorship in every area of the publishing industry, could provide a safer ground where metaphors and symbols were used to criticize the regime. One of the main topics which Fascist censorship did not tolerate in the press was the insertion of fantasy, poetic images and sentimentalism within the news, whereas in writing fiction this obstacle was easier to avoid. The setting of *Il deserto* in a military context permitted an interpretation of the novel as militarist – and hence aligned with the ideology of the regime – which lasted for long, at least until the revealing interpretation of Buzzati's work provided by Panafieu in *Janus*. On the contrary, journalistic reportage, by being constantly under the censor's examination, did not allow any kind of political content which questioned Fascism and its militarism. On the level of the narrative structure of the texts, whereas in a fictional context militarism could be described as immobilized by its own sterile hierarchies and effecting people's lives by imprisoning them – as in the case of Drogo –, journalism, on the contrary, in order to pass the control of censorship, was only allowed to describe the actions of battles and report facts. Buzzati chose to use the reportage of battles to extol their aesthetic beauty and vigour.

The most famous outcome of the exaltation that the battles in the desert elicited in the author is 'Eleganza militare', a short story published on 13 November 1939 in the *Corriere della Sera* and then included in *I sette messaggeri*.³¹⁹ As far as journalistic articles are concerned, both 'A cavallo Savoia le le cusciumbuia!' and 'L'ascari Ghilò leone' refer to the battle of 20 July 1939 in which Ghilò died and after which Buzzati was honoured with the 'medaglia d'argento al valore militare' (p. 17). Interestingly, the previously unpublished 'A una certa ora...' on the one hand and the couple of articles formed by 'L'importanza militare della conquista della sacca di Dolo' and 'L'importanza militare della conquista di Mojale' on the other, mirror the ambivalence not only of Buzzati's narrative on the battles but of his work from the colonies in general. This ambivalence resembles that between fantasy and reality which renders Buzzati's journalism a narrative experience on the threshold between fiction and non-

³¹⁹ This short story, completely fictional and for this reason excluded from *L'Africa di Buzzati*, tells the story of an indeterminate regiment which is marching towards 'il cosiddetto destino'. As the moment of the battle approaches, the soldiers, despite being tired and 'ridotti veramente male', become more and more elegant in the eye of the narrator. The climax which concludes the story is the moment of the first shooting, when the soldiers appear 'di statura grandissima, con uniformi ricamate d'oro, fasce di mille colori, lance e sciabole di argento puro [...]'. See Dino Buzzati, *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), pp. 97-105.

fiction. ‘A una certa ora...’, written in September 1939, describes the reactions of people in Addis Abeba to the news of the invasion of Poland by the Nazis. The narrative is deeply poetic, enriched by the use of fantasy typical of Buzzati’s ‘fantastic news’: the population of the colony seems to be detached from what is happening in the continent and unaware of the fact that ‘di queste ore [...] si parlerà per molte decine di anni [...], si scriveranno centinaia di libri, e usciranno sull’argomento film [...]’ (p. 91). The distance of the African country from their native land estranges the protagonists of the colonial enterprise and ‘la lontananza immensa [...] circonda anche gli avvenimenti freschissimi di un’aureola di favola [...]’ (p. 92). Finally, the closing of the article focuses on the recurrent theme of the war as ‘la grande avventura’, which inspires ‘una lieta determinazione di sfida’. If ‘A una certa ora...’ is a good example of what the merging of fantasy and news can produce, then ‘L’importanza militare della conquista della sacca di Dolo’ and ‘L’importanza militare della conquista di Mojale’ show how different the outcome of this journalism can be when Buzzati puts aside his ‘other world’ and merely carries out his duty as a reporter. In these two articles, both written after his return to Italy, Buzzati explains in strictly technical terms the importance of two operations in the colonial territories by the Italian army. The emphasis is much more on the efficiency of the Fascist troops rather than on the poetical descriptions of the battles and their epic beauty:

La nostra perfetta organizzazione permette [...] di rifornire celermente quegli sperduti presidi: in poche ore l’aereo supera ciò che soltanto audacissimi esploratori fino a ieri osavano sfidare [...]. Quelle menti semplici e rozze, ma stranamente sensibili nel giudicare la giustizia e la rettitudine dei governanti avevano fatto senza esitazione la scelta in favore dei metodi di governo italiano, ispirati a equità forza e umanità, al paragone dei quali il dominio britannico appariva esclusivamente teso a scopi di sfruttamento senza preoccupazione per il benessere e la dignità umana delle genti sottomesse (pp. 109-111).

The comparison between ‘A una certa ora...’ and the two articles written from Italy shows the complexity and ambivalence of Buzzati’s colonial reportage, which had to be realized in two different modes: on the one hand, the author’s desire to create a new form of journalism, which had to create space for the literariness of fantasy and to propose the themes and atmospheres typical of Buzzati’s fictional prose, and on the other the need to find a compromise with Fascist racism, exacerbation of militarism,

obsessive discipline and the pressure of censorship. In other words, the political disengagement that fantasy could allow, and which has been often described as the trademark of Buzzati's correspondence during Fascism,³²⁰ lived not only side by side with the unavoidable engagement of the journalist who was working for one of the most popular newspapers of the empire, but was deeply interwoven into it. As I argued while analyzing the figures of the desert and the anti-heroes, Buzzati's African articles are, despite the intentions of the author, part of a literature framed by fixed ideological coordinates. Even when fantasy seems to take the reader far away from the description of the colonial environment and towards a realm in which imagination can erase social, cultural, and even racial differences, Buzzati is no exception to the mechanism according to which 'in evoking 'another civilization', a 'different world' [...] Italian commentators painted a picture of a community that was in the grip of a belief system that promoted immobility over progress, acceptance of the world as it was over the desire for change, submission [...] over [...] industriousness'.³²¹ This system of belief was then strongly reinforced and assured by censorship.

A closer look at the relationship of 'fantastic news' with the themes of Fascist propaganda helps in understanding Buzzati's way of dealing with censorship between the 1930s and the 1940s. If it is true that Buzzati complained more than once about the limitations imposed by the regime on his work, then it is also important to underline that he never addressed the problem in ethical terms, but only from a practical viewpoint. This is particularly relevant and also surprising given the strong ethical drive of Buzzati's narrative and his idea of both history and journalism. There is no document which testifies to a clear condemnation by the author of the lack of press freedom and circulation of ideas in ideological terms, and Buzzati seems at times to interpret the denial of the censor as a personal matter.³²² The same kind of complaint is present in

³²⁰ See for example Indro Montanelli, *La mia eredità sono io. Pagine da un secolo*, ed. by Paolo di Paolo (Milan: Rizzoli, 2008), p. 312: 'le sue descrizioni, salvo qualche trascurabile particolare tecnico, erano così al di fuori del tempo e dello spazio, che avrebbero potuto benissimo adattarsi anche a Lepanto, a Trafalgar, a Tsushima o alle Falkland'.

³²¹ Burdett, 'Italian Fascism, Messianic Eschatology and the Representation of Libya', p. 11.

³²² See Caspar, p. 43: 'Il giornalista si lamentò, in una lettera mandata il 29 luglio 1939 al Direttore del *Corriere della Sera*, della censura che secondo lui si usava nei suoi confronti e che lo faceva considerare 'un ospite sgradito'. Buzzati complained also about the slowness with which the newspaper published his correspondence and the difficulty, because of the censorship, of finding interesting new themes to write about. In a letter to Arturo Brambilla dated 6 and 7 October 1939 Buzzati writes: 'Il controllo grandissimo che qui si esercita sulle pubblicazioni giornalistiche, le restrizioni preventive su questo o quell'argomento, la riduzione delle pagine del giornale, fanno sì che il mio lavoro sia ridotto di molto. A quanto mi consta, di tutti i pezzi che ho mandato dal principio di settembre, non uno è stato ancora

two other letters, dated 27 October and 19 December of the same year, whereas Buzzati wrote to his editor on 29 July 1939 with reference to a censored article.³²³ More interestingly, in an article written in 1952 and mentioned by Caspar, Buzzati says that ‘[...] in Africa Orientale il lavoro giornalistico era difficilissimo: [...] tutti i problemi interessanti erano tabù [...]’ (p. 41). Caspar argues that Buzzati used his peculiar mix of journalism and fiction ‘per almeno due ragioni: perché questo era il suo modo di scrivere ma anche quello di superare il divieto della censura’ (p. 30). Caspar’s statement efficiently portrays the ambivalence with which Buzzati’s reportage can be read: the idea of merging fiction and facts is at the core of the originality of Buzzati’s news; but in the colonial context it became also a way to avoid cuts from the censor without distorting his style. Amongst the themes that journalists were not allowed to write about were crime and the customs of the natives: the former must have been particularly difficult for Buzzati to give up, whose ‘cronaca nera’ – as I will try to demonstrate in chapter four – was particularly suited to the dialogue between journalism and fantasy, whereas *L’Africa* presents several examples of articles that were censored because they were too attentive to the natives’ lives. Articles such as ‘Festa di nozze’, in which the Ethiopian groom is described as a ‘valoroso guerriero’ (p. 249) and ‘La ‘bocca’ di Ligg Iasu’, dedicated to the death of a prominent figure in Ethiopian politics, were too focused on the discovery of the colonized people as peers with different cultures and traditions to be accepted by a regime which saw in the natives only an inferior race.

As always when trying to interpret the relationship between Buzzati and Fascism, it is hard to establish where to place the border between a passive acceptance of the regime and the author’s interior struggle against what Panafieu called ‘problematica del potere’, that is Buzzati’s condemnation of every kind of political and ideological abuse.³²⁴ In an interview published in the magazine *Gente* in 1969, Buzzati, while describing a picture in which he was wearing the ‘camicia nera’ with some colleagues, defines the Fascist age as ‘nefanda’, the regime as ‘bieco’ and, almost as a justification,

pubblicato [...]’. See Dino Buzzati, *Lettere a Brambilla*, ed. by Luciano Simonelli (Novara: De Agostini, 1985), p. 243.

³²³ See Buzzati, ‘Addis Abeba, 27 October 1939’, in *Lettere a Brambilla*, p. 245: ‘[...] di tre articoli che ho mandato in ottobre non uno è stato finora pubblicato’ and Buzzati, ‘Addis Abeba, 19 December 1939’, in *Lettere a Brambilla*, p. 246: ‘Al Corriere ci sono oggi sei pezzi non ancora pubblicati, la qual cosa mi toglie la voglia di lavorare’.

³²⁴ See Yves Panafieu, ‘Aspetti storici, morali e politici del discorso sull’impotenza’, in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 23-48.

talks about feelings of tenderness for the young people portrayed.³²⁵ This idea of the naivety of Buzzati's character often emerges, especially from the memories of his old colleagues, to justify the journalist's detachment from the political debate of his time and the lack of a clear-cut position against the regime during the *ventennio*.³²⁶ In fact, the decision by an intellectual, writer and journalist such as Buzzati not to take a stand, in the historical context of the 1930s and 1940s in Italy, is more complex and is a political stance in itself. Such a position cannot be put aside too easily, and it must be admitted that 'fantastic news' is anything but an ideologically innocent corpus of texts.

Buzzati's stoicism, his high sense of responsibility, and inability to break with rules and discipline, imposed on him obedience and also heroism in the battlefield. This choice, on the one hand undoubtedly coherent with the author's idea of the centrality of rules, order and ethics to discipline the complexity of modern life, on the other shows frictions and contradictions with the crossing of boundaries that Buzzati's fantasy allowed. Besides, the African articles and the struggle within them to merge the use of imagination and didacticism show how, during the 1930s, Buzzati was much closer to the historical avant-garde than to the modernist movement, at least in terms of ideological premises. In *After the Great Divide*, Andreas Huyssen claims that '[...] the historical avant-garde aimed at developing an alternative relationship between high art and mass culture and thus should be distinguished from modernism, which for the most part insisted on the inherent hostility between high and low'.³²⁷ If from a poetical point of view the literary outcome of Buzzati's work of reportage from Libya and Ethiopia is far from modernist and postmodernist formal experimentations, in terms of poetical theory Buzzati proves to be still highly topical for his willingness to reject the separation between life and art, the doctrine of art for art's sake and the division

³²⁵ 'Questa foto deve essere stata scattata intorno al 1930. Siamo a Milano [...] in occasione di non so quale cerimonia fascista [...]. Come tutti sanno, a quell'epoca nefanda, mentre la quasi totalità del popolo italiano, assetato di libertà, languiva nelle carceri, io e pochi altri eravamo iscritti al partito fascista, e nei giorni topici si indossava la camicia nera prescritta dal bieco regime dittatoriale. [...] fotografie come questa [...] ispirano solo un sentimento di tenerezza. Eravamo giovani, allora. Qualcuno sognava la vera rivoluzione fascista. Contro Mussolini', *Gente*, anno XIII, N.28/9 July 1969, quoted in Almerina Buzzati and Guido Le Noci, *Il pianeta Buzzati* (Milan: Apollinare, 1974), not numbered pages.

³²⁶ See for example Indro Montanelli, 'Buzzati giornalista e la politica', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 19- 20.

³²⁷ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. viii. For a theorization of the differences between modernism and the avant-garde see also Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

between elitist and mass culture, while never renouncing his identity as a bourgeois and conservative man.

Buzzati's correspondence tried to create a link with the readers while not engaging directly with the political debate, to render his journalism appealing through the use of literary metaphors and different narrative viewpoints, while accurately representing the colonial endeavour to the masses: *L'Africa di Buzzati* and its examples of 'fantastic news' present and synthesize this constant ambiguity. In these terms, two good examples of the dialogical conflict within Buzzati's African reportages between fiction and non-fiction, order and fantasy are the articles 'Lavoro di pionieri' (pp. 182-185) and 'Il funerale del potocarpo' (pp. 203-205). In the former, as underlined by Caspar, an 'evidente antropomorfismo' is present: animals and the forest are animated and the constant cross-references to novels and short stories confirm, in a journalistic context, how fiction and non-fiction were used by the author on the same level. The latter piece of news is built on alternated paragraphs, either objective and detached or completely fantastic. Here the work of humble people (woodcutters in this case) is extolled and narrated with a fairytale tone as emblematic of the application of an ethic based on work and respect for one's duties, whereas the trees that these men are cutting learn with time to live within the human community:

[...] con l'andare del tempo il legno dimenticherà il linguaggio degli uccelli e delle gazzelle: in sua vece imparerà l'italiano e alla sera si diventerà ad ascoltare i discorsi della famiglia. Di giorno, poi, si presterà a divertire i bambini, essendo la porta un arnese importantissimo per giocare a nascondersi.

Il caposquadra [...] gridò nel suo tono irripetibile e musicale [...] E i sei uomini con gli uncini fecero girare il troncone. Mario Poppi mi spiegò che il più prezioso di quei legni era il cossu: 1500 lire al metro cubo [...] (p. 204).

The evidence collected from the close reading of the texts of *L'Africa di Buzzati* shows that, while in Libya and Ethiopia, Buzzati tried to concentrate his aesthetic experience on the contrast between fantasy and fiction by building a bridge between news and the fictional baggage of fantastic metaphors and themes he was already using in his fiction. However, the aim of finding a space within his journalistic representation in which freedom of imagination and nature could have a role is still, during the 1930s, at the beginning of its parabola, and limited by the cultural and ideological framework

in which he had to work. The encounter with what was the ‘anthropological otherness’ of the colonized communities was a stimulating point of departure for the use of the technique of the ‘animation of the inanimate’, and the desert represented the possibility of a ‘new beginning’ for the anti-hero protagonists of the building of the Italian ‘fourth shore’. Yet, in those years Buzzati, as a correspondent of the *Corriere della Sera*, represented, together with other commentators and journalists, the face of the invader, and his work of reportage is today the complex record of how the coerciveness of the ‘new world’ imposed by Fascism on African populations was experienced by his sensibility. In the next chapter I will turn my attention to how Buzzati’s ‘other world’ continued to evolve in his journalism when the reporter found himself involved in another seminal point of western history: the Second World War.

Chapter 3: ‘Fantastic News’ at War – *Il Buttafuoco* (1940-1943)

*Nel caso dei racconti di guerra non è il fantastico ad inserirsi nella realtà, ma semmai il contrario. È questa rude cronaca [...] a sfociare qua e là in una trasfigurazione suggestivamente insolita, a dare valore e interesse a buona parte dei racconti del Buttafuoco.*³²⁸

Anna Tarantino

This chapter is dedicated to *Il Buttafuoco. Cronache di guerra sul mare*, and has the aim of studying how ‘fantastic news’ was applied by Buzzati while he was working as a war correspondent. The problem of the objectivity of the representation of the ‘real’, as it was addressed during the period spent in Africa, found in the context of the Second World War an ideal prosecution. By following the change in the journalistic genre adopted by Buzzati – from the colonial correspondence to the war reportage – the ambivalence in the journalist’s registration of facts expanded its meaning to a larger and global scale: it was not something which had consequences only for Buzzati, his readers, and the Italian population anymore, but for the entire world, which had been drawn into the military enterprise. The use of journalistic accuracy coupled with the insertion of fantastic themes became more and more a planned operation and consolidated the shape the journalist was giving to his ‘other world’.

I will try to continue to trace the history of this ‘other world’ by analyzing how it evolved during the war as it was experienced by Buzzati. The study of the ways in which fictional themes served in this particular context to inform Buzzati’s registration of facts will show how his journalism was starting to challenge the faith in rationalism, which continued to be brought into question with increasing strength after the end of the Second World War. The articles about battles and war heroes are textual confirmations of the intellectual continuity not only between Buzzati’s war and colonial productions, but also between his journalism and his more strictly literary works. The same can be said for the theme of the waiting for something remarkable to happen and the anguish elicited by the reflections on the meaning of the military experience. The geography of the desert, which in the colonies served to illustrate the possibility of a clash between facts and fiction in the representation of the world, is substituted here by the ambivalent presence of the sea.

³²⁸ Anna Tarantino, ‘Il Buttafuoco’: osservazioni di un lettore ordinario’, *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 34-42.

As I hope to show in this chapter, Buzzati's journalistic narrative continued, during the years of the war, to be determined not only by his poetic and aesthetic choices but also by the influence and pressure of Fascist censorship and, more broadly, by the historical context in which it took shape. As in the case of the correspondence from the colonies, the role of military heroes and the fascination for the aesthetic beauty of battles show the complexity of the relationship between Buzzati and political power, its rhetoric, and propaganda effort, but also the originality in the way Buzzati used these figures to build a symbolism around the represented reality. I wish to propose that *Il Buttafuoco* represents a 'work in progress' which on the one hand brought the results of Buzzati's journalism produced in Libya and Ethiopia a step further, both in terms of aesthetic and intellectual results, while still only foreshadowing the dynamics of Buzzati's appropriations of literary genres within journalism which will find their full realization only in the crime news of the postwar period.

The stylistic and thematic continuity between *L'Africa di Buzzati* and *Il Buttafuoco* may be depicted as problematic from a political perspective, since it follows the development and the subsequent fall of the Fascist empire during the 1940s. Even though the colonial enterprise was quickly running towards its end when Buzzati arrived in Ethiopia, he could still report the success of the regime in forcing its presence on African soil. During the battles in the Mediterranean Sea, on the other hand, there was no mistake that Fascism was facing a clear and definitive defeat against a stronger, more prepared and better equipped enemy. As a consequence of this situation and of the fact that the pressure of censorship had increased consistently during the war, my position is that, in terms of politics, the texts of *Il Buttafuoco* are even more difficult to decipher than those written in the colonies. However, the feeling of being part of a group of men fighting for their country involved Buzzati to the point that, as I explain in the third section of this chapter, eight years after the war he felt the need to go back to the days of the war to correct the information provided by a book published in England in 1952 about the battles in the Mediterranean between the Italian Navy and the British Royal Fleet. Finally, there is something else that makes this part of Buzzati's production even more problematic in ideological terms. As I stated in chapter one (see p. 48), Buzzati had quite a negative opinion of modernity and the new political realities of the post-war world, such as the youth movement of the 1960s. The strong feeling of nostalgia for the years of the battles that emerges from the texts of *Il Buttafuoco* might

let us think that the years spent under the domination of Fascism were somehow rehabilitated from Buzzati's point of view in the light of his discontent for modernity. There is however no proof of this: the ambiguity of Buzzati's declarations and his reluctance to talk about politics leave us in the field of pure speculation.

3.1 Fantasy and Reality aboard Navy Ships

Between 1940, only a few months after his return from Ethiopia, and August 1943, Buzzati worked as a special correspondent from Italian Navy ships engaged in the Mediterranean Sea.³²⁹ Despite having been published before *L'Africa di Buzzati*, *Il Buttafuoco* represents a sort of unintentional sequel to the work edited by Marie-Hélène Caspar. If the former had the aim of bringing new insights into Buzzati's correspondence from the colonies and to publish a journalistic production which was still closed in the archives of the *Corriere della Sera*, then the latter did the same with the war reportage. However, the publishing history of the volume not only complicated its analysis but also allowed accessibility only to a small portion of Buzzati's work from the front line. The question whether this book could have given Buzzati's readers and scholars more if it had been published after and not before the comprehensive work done by Caspar will never have an answer, and Almerina Antoniazzi, Buzzati's widow, plainly brought the problem to light while explaining to Cinzia Mares how *Il Buttafuoco* was born:³³⁰

Io ho consegnato l'intera guerra, compresi moltissimi articoli non pubblicati, alla Mondadori, che evidentemente ha fatto autonomamente una selezione. All'inizio dovevano esserci due volumi comprendenti tutti gli articoli. [...] Peccato, perché resta un lavoro incompleto se si decide di trattare l'argomento guerra, allora lo si fa per tutta la guerra:

³²⁹ Fabio Atzori, in "Ma è giusto anteporre la cronaca all'articolo?". Buzzati in guerra per il 'Corriere della Sera', in *Studi Buzzatiani*, 2 (1997), p. 147, explains that the dates of boarding can be found in Almerina Buzzati and Guido Le Noci, *Il pianeta Buzzati* (Milan: Apollinare, 1974), not numbered pages. Buzzati is aboard from 30 July to 30 August; from 3 to 6 September; from 12 September to 8 October; and from 10 October to 19 November 1940. He is on the *Gorizia* from 31 August to 2 September and from 7 to 11 September. He is on the submarine *Bragadin* on 9 October. Then Atzori explains: 'Meno precisi si può essere a proposito del periodo trascorso da Buzzati sul *Trieste*, dove si imbarca fra il 19 novembre [...] e il 27 novembre, data della battaglia di Capo Teulada, restandovi almeno fino al 7 novembre 1941 [...]. Non è possibile stabilire [...] su quali navi egli sia imbarcato nel 1942 e 1943 [...]'.

³³⁰ Cinzia Mares, 'Conversazione con Almerina Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 7 (2002), 127-137 (p. 135).

soltanto così è possibile ricostruire un periodo e dare vita ad un *corpus* di un certo valore [...]. Io volevo che venisse fatta tutta la guerra.³³¹

The book collects only forty-six texts, which include pages from Buzzati's private diaries, censored articles, news published in the *Corriere d'Informazione* and some previously unpublished works.³³² Its texts represent the beginning of a more solid use of fiction within a journalistic context that Buzzati was developing. As confirmed by Felix Siddell, 'the presence of the mysterious and fantastic [...] has a somewhat different effect in the articles of *Il Buttafuoco*'.³³³ By remaining 'lucid and coherent', 'Buzzati's war correspondence is [...] both a question of epistemology and survival, rendering separation of the practical from the aesthetic [...] not only impossible but also superfluous'.³³⁴

In the Mediterranean Sea literature and life intersect: fictional themes are used to represent reality by showing continuity with the first attempts realized in Libya and Ethiopia, but the choice of metaphors, settings, and tone stabilize in a more precise series of themes. However, the war context was too claustrophobic and monotonous to enable the employment of a varied and heterogeneous corpus of situations and characters borrowed from diverse literary genres. Here, rather than looking at a specific literary tradition according to the single episode he was reporting, Buzzati reinforced the use of narrative devices commonly linked to fictional narrative which he had already applied with success in his previous journalistic writings. All of them were then linked together in a cluster of images and metaphors about military actions and the sailors' memories. As a consequence of this aesthetical choice if, on the one hand, *Il Buttafuoco* appears as the work of an expert reporter who was consciously employing fictional techniques within reportage, on the other it is a sort of 'work in progress': it takes a step further the narrative results of the correspondence from North Africa but, at the same

³³¹ The lack of the name of the editor of the volume is another issue linked to the publication of *Il Buttafuoco*. The book is without introduction and there is no explanation on the nature of the criteria which guided the choice of the articles which were short-listed from the collection handed by Buzzati's wife to the publishing house: 'Mi sembra strano che non ci sia il nome di un curatore [...]. Attuare una scelta non ha molto senso, anche perché in base a cosa la si attua?' (see Mares, 'Conversazione con Almerina Buzzati', p. 135).

³³² Atzori, in "Ma è giusto anteporre la cronaca all'articolo?" (p. 148), states that many articles in the book are wrongly assigned to the *Corriere d'Informazione* and that they were published in the *Corriere della Sera*.

³³³ Felix Siddell, 'Surveillance in 'Il Buttafuoco'', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 3 (1998), 52-63 (p. 52).

³³⁴ Siddell, 'Surveillance in 'Il Buttafuoco'', pp. 52 and 54.

time, is not yet the result of a systematic and conscious appropriation of genre fiction *topoi*.

Between 1940 and 1943 the ‘other world’ proposed by Buzzati’s journalism is shown, as in the case of the colonies, by only one kind of journalism, that is reportage, and this uniformity of journalism still corresponds to a uniformity of literary themes. It will be in the postwar years, as I will show in the next chapter, that Buzzati will develop an application of diverse genre fictions despite still using a sole journalistic genre, i.e. crime news. A plurality of literary themes, familiar to a progressively wider spectrum of genres, will be used with the result of diversifying and enriching the outcomes of the employment of a specific kind of journalism. *Il Buttafuoco*, on the other hand, stabilizes the use of fictional *topoi* to a strict set of themes. This process confirms as problematic the idea of ‘history’ which emerges from the articles, coherently with what happened in the correspondence of *L’Africa di Buzzati*. It is interesting to see how Giovanna Ioli described this idea while analyzing the short story ‘I sette messaggeri’, not coincidentally published for the first time in 1939,³³⁵ in between Buzzati’s colonial experience and his departure for the Mediterranean Sea:

Buzzati [...] diventa portaparola di un piano che si differenzia dalla storia in quanto tale, con le sue storture, i suoi miti di progresso, le sue ferree leggi socioeconomiche, chiusa nelle sue convenzioni, impermeabili a qualsiasi tipo di modificazione. Egli, [...] porta la parola di un altro mondo, camuffandola con il resoconto e la favola. [...] Buzzati profetizza l’ordine etico delle cose, dei fatti, delle persone, operando nel quotidiano con la consapevolezza di compiere un dovere etico.³³⁶

As Foucault argued in *The Order of Things*, the belief in ‘order’ which marked the positivistic faith ‘in evident and distinct perception’ (p. 56) was – at least until the end of the seventeenth century – set apart from ‘the spontaneous movement of the imagination [...]’ (p. 58) and grounded in the understanding that ideas are representations of one’s object of thought.³³⁷ This idea – according to which ‘the sign is the pure and simple connection between what signifies and what is signified’ (p. 67) – was challenged by Kant’s philosophy and its questioning of the possibility of

³³⁵ The short story was then included in the collection *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942) to which gave the title.

³³⁶ Giovanna Ioli, *Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1988), p. 41.

³³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock, 1970 [1st Edition in French: 1966]), p. 54-58.

considering ideas as the only, unproblematic conveyance of knowledge.³³⁸ Representation started then to be considered for the first time as itself a product of the intellect.³³⁹ At the time of the Second World War, when Buzzati was aboard Italian ships, the Kantian revolution had already had strong consequences and the questioning of the possibility of representing the world effectively through language had already been stated by Heidegger and Nietzsche, but also, as far as literature and art are concerned, by Mallarmé's poetry and the avant-garde's movements. Yet I would argue that Buzzati's war correspondence represents a passage in his journalistic career which mirrors the progressive questioning of the reliability of objective representation which characterized the philosophical and aesthetical debate within western society from the passage between the nineteenth and the twentieth century on. By borrowing Ioli's interpretation of Buzzati's fiction produced in 1945 (*La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia* and *Il libro delle pipe*) it might be said that with *Il Buttafuoco* 'Buzzati [...] è stato l'interprete e lo storico di un momento capitale dell'Italia, travolta dalla guerra [...]. Tutto questo [...] lo ha fatto con l'aria di chi non vive nel tempo ma parallelamente al tempo, con l'idea della Storia come di una dimensione di cui l'uomo avrebbe potuto fare a meno'.³⁴⁰ 'History [...] – again in Foucault's words – from the beginning of the Ancient Greek civilization [...] has performed [...] major functions in western culture: memory, [...] vehicle of tradition, critical awareness of the present [...], anticipation of the future [...]. What characterized this History [...] was that [...] it was conceived of a vast historical stream, uniform in each of its points [...]. It was this unity that was shattered at the beginning of the nineteenth century [...]. What first comes to light in the nineteenth century is a simple form of human history – the fact that man as such is exposed to events' (pp. 367-370).³⁴¹ Buzzati's contribution is to bring into journalism the de-historization of modern man and the mystery which, in this way, the events attain: no-one had ever tried such an operation in journalism before. Conscious or not,

³³⁸ See Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 65, 66: '[...] signs in Classical thought [...] are co-extensive with representation, that is, with thought as a whole; they reside within it. [...] All representations are connected as signs [...] the Classical philosophy [...] was thorough and throughout a philosophy of the sign'.

³³⁹ 'Kant [...] thought that representations (thoughts or ideas) were themselves the product of [...] the mind. [...] Another – and in some ways more typically modern – view was that ideas were themselves historical realities. This could be most plausibly developed by making ideas essentially tied to language (as in, for example, Herder), now regarded as the primary (and historicized) vehicle of knowledge'. See Gary Gutting, 'Michel Foucault', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/foucault/>> [accessed 1 May 2012].

³⁴⁰ Ioli, *Dino Buzzati*, p. 73.

³⁴¹ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 367-370.

the insertion of fictional elements in the articles, which begins to characterize Buzzati's reportage organically from the experience of the war, transfers to journalism a revolution which was already a consolidated feature of twentieth-century narrative. If one thinks that in the postwar period Buzzati's fiction was almost ignored in Italy in the light of the success of the realistic credo professed by neorealism, then the major role played by fantasy within Buzzati's journalism in the 1940s appears in all its originality: 'Buzzati si pose davanti al neorealismo del tempo come davanti a uno specchio, rovesciando le immagini, proiettandole all'interno di se stesso. Egli filmò gli eventi e gli uomini dall'interno, produsse un neorealismo della mente e dell'animo'.³⁴²

The set of literary themes chosen by Buzzati for the articles of *Il Buttafuoco* combines then the ethical drive he was constantly looking for in his narrative with the survival in works of reportage of similitudes and resemblances as products of the imagination. Buzzati's war correspondence, by taking further the process started with the correspondence from the colonies, somehow 'saved' the imaginative property of signs. Imagination challenges the objectivity with which signs and language can represent reality, yet this reality still has a meaning, and language is not only a game of the mind: on the contrary, it makes literature a vehicle of knowledge and ethical messages.

3.2 Battles, Heroes, and Dread

Three themes emerge as predominant in *Il Buttafuoco*: the spectacle represented by battles, with their mixture of tragedy, excitement and heroism; the portraits of the heroic protagonists of the war; and the journalist's meditations on the events he was experiencing. During the war Buzzati adapted his 'fantastic news' to these themes according to two journalistic categories, which Fabio Atzori uses to divide the collection from a formal point of view. While analyzing a letter written to Aldo Borelli, Atzori explains the distinction between what Buzzati called 'cronache' ('news') and 'articoli' ('articles'): the former were meant to be pure facts, news in the strictest sense, the latter were complex narratives, filled with reflections, and as distant as possible

³⁴² Ioli, *Dino Buzzati*, p. 72.

from the banality Buzzati saw in the journalistic reportage of his time.³⁴³ Buzzati's declared preference for 'articles' is not linked only to the practical difficulty of obtaining pieces of information which were covered by military secrets, but also to the aim of entertaining the reader. Taking into account the role of readers is to assume that the readership and the context in which the text is produced have an active part in the creation of the text itself, and Buzzati always wrote for his public by pursuing synthesis and simplicity.³⁴⁴ In this sense the recurrence of certain metaphors and modes of representation guides the reader by rendering reality accessible to fantasy. Buzzati's use of the fantastic provides new insights into the described events and makes them comprehensible to ordinary people. It is no coincidence that a major role is given to the feelings and emotions of wives, mothers and relatives of the Italian soldiers: the journalist shows not only a professional interest in his readership as receiver of his work, but also empathy for those involved, whether directly or not, in the war. Furthermore, the use of fantasy is not adopted in the 'articles' exclusively, but is present also in the 'news', that is in those texts which were supposed to be pure facts. This is particularly evident in respect of the reportage of battles.³⁴⁵

The battles were supposed to be recorded exactly, avoiding the use of literary strategies. Yet the first evident characteristics of these narratives are the complete absence of precise geographical references and the lack of chronological information. Nevertheless, the style adopted by Buzzati is technical as far as the military and naval terminology is concerned, and the reconstruction of the movements of the fleets is always very accurate. Regardless of the practical reasons behind this literary outcome,

³⁴³ Atzori explains that Buzzati felt the need for a 'giornalismo che sia capace di misura, che non si abbandoni alla retorica o al 'colore''. Besides, in his letter to Borelli, Buzzati suggests to give more space to 'articles': 'non credete che in questa guerra il pubblico legga più volentieri [...] l'articolo, anche se generico, purché vivo e umano, che il servizio di cronaca, quasi inevitabilmente monotono e monocorde per l'inevitabile ripetersi delle modalità belliche?' (see Atzori, "Ma è giusto anteporre la cronaca all'articolo?", pp. 149-151).

³⁴⁴ See John Hartley, *Popular Reality: Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture* (London: Arnold, 1996), pp. 53, 54: 'While it may seem blindingly obvious at first glance that there must be a public in existence before a press can be invented to serve that public, history actually suggests the reverse: reading publics, and indeed the very idea of the public in the first place, are products of theory, journalism and literature [...]'.
³⁴⁵ Atzori confirms this idea and justifies it with Buzzati's intention of avoiding dullness: 'Quanto ai primi [the texts classified as 'news'] si presenta una questione – il rapporto cronaca/fantasia [...]. C'è [...] chi ha scritto che questi articoli sono un esempio di come la fantasia dello scrittore pieghi il giornalismo ai suoi fini; altri invece avvertono che, per eludere la censura, Buzzati 'iniziò a dare alle sue corrispondenze un taglio più narrativo' [...]. La lettera suggerisce però una terza ipotesi, che riporta in primo piano il giornalista [...]: il modo in cui Buzzati racconta la guerra navale corrisponde al tentativo di riscattare la 'monotonia della cronaca' [...]' (see Atzori, "Ma è giusto anteporre la cronaca all'articolo?", p. 158).

such as the necessity of maintaining military secrets and avoiding the censor's cuts, the contradiction between the accuracy of the reconstruction of the battles and the mythical scene created by the absence of temporal, geographical, and historical information is coherent with the ambivalence that 'fantastic news' was meant to communicate. The ideal situation in which to render this ambivalence was the military action, when men experienced a unique proximity to death: if death represents not only the passage between what is known and what is not, but also the reaching of the 'massima quiete' which coincides with a balance between fantasy and reality that is reachable only at the end of life, then battles bring men near this 'quiete' as much as, in Buzzati's poetical imagery, mountains do.³⁴⁶ *Il Buttafuoco* tells the story of a world which is going to collapse, but that, exactly because it is on the edge of self-destruction, can renounce the 'regolamento' – which means rationalism, unquestionable objectivity, and safety from chaos – and embrace fantasy and imagination.³⁴⁷

In the midst of mystery and danger, absence of certainties and discipline which surround the experience of the conflict, the 'animation of the inanimate' is, with even more power than in *L'Africa di Buzzati*, the rhetorical strategy to represent the war and its battles as a scenario which is both historical and existential: ships, weapons, submarines become alive, and the creatures called into question in *Il Buttafuoco* are not different from those which fill the pages of Buzzati's best-known fictional stories such as 'Il Colombre' or 'Il Babau'. In the article entitled 'La vedetta', the protagonist is a sailor whose orders are to watch the sea and to signal the presence of the enemy on the horizon. There is nothing particularly original in this, except that the sailor is obsessed with the image of an undetermined entity described as 'un essere invisibile e maligno, complice del nemico' (p. 79). This creature that only the 'vedetta' can see is clearly a forefather of the Colombre, the fantastic creature of the homonymous short story, which roams around the sea terrorizing crews and which is described to Stefano, the young protagonist of the story, as 'il pesce che i marinai sopra tutti temono, in ogni mare del

³⁴⁶ As underlined by Lorenzo Cremonesi, in the article 'Umile cronaca di una sortita navale', which was not included in *Il Buttafuoco*, Buzzati compares soldiers' fears to those of the mountaineers before a dangerous expedition. It is the knowledge of being close to death that makes the event remarkable: 'Ma se la parete non facesse paura, se non ci fosse la possibilità di cadere e gli uomini non lo sapessero, che merito ci sarebbe? [...] Se non ci fosse la coscienza del pericolo [...], se ai combattimenti non apparisse l'ora della morte [...], la guerra sarebbe solo una triste boiata', see: Lorenzo Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati. Inchieste, guerre ed esplorazioni nelle pagine del Corriere della Sera* (Milan: Fondazione Corriere della Sera, Rizzoli, 2008), p. 316.

³⁴⁷ See Paolo Donazzolo, 'Regolamento e sublime', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 3 (1998), 95-122.

mondo. È uno squalo tremendo e misterioso, più astuto dell'uomo. Per motivi che forse nessuno saprà mai, sceglie la sua vittima, e quando l'ha scelta la insegue per anni e anni, per una intera vita, finché è riuscito a divorarla'.³⁴⁸ Exactly as the creature of 'La vedetta', which only the sailor can see, also the Colombre can be seen only by Stefano, because 'lo strano è questo: che nessuno riesce a scorgerlo se non la vittima stessa e le persone del suo stesso sangue'.³⁴⁹

The number of texts in which ships assume characteristics that are usually ascribed to living creatures is almost endless: in 'Sfida aperta a tre caccia britannici' submarines are 'nere balene di ferro',³⁵⁰ in 'La torpediniera di Nicolini' 'vanno, gli inermi vascelli [...] con un po' di batticuore' (p. 128), and 'le venerabili siluranti' of 'Fine del sommergibile nemico' 'corrono su e giù per il Mediterraneo infaticabili come giovinette' (p. 134). Sometimes ships are described with similes that are recurrent in the fantastic literary tradition, as in the case of 'Bengala a sinistra' in which a cruiser is compared to a 'castello stregato' (p. 214). In other occasions they are introduced with particularly poetic metaphors: in 'La vittoriosa battaglia del golfo della Sirte', Italian Navy ships are 'bellissime fra le siepi di schiuma' (p. 220). Buzzati's use of the 'animation of the inanimate' stands beside the use of metamorphosis which informs many of his literary works: the animals which populate his *bestiario* often change into monstrous creatures by deploying the process of 'bodily transformation' described by Marina Warner, together with that of 'souls migration', as one of the main principles of fantastic literature:³⁵¹ the rats of 'I topi' acquire 'una potenza, una vitalità infernale' that allow them to subjugate the Corio family;³⁵² the hedgehogs in 'I ricci crescenti' become bigger and bigger throughout the story in order to take their revenge over men's arrogance;³⁵³ while in 'Spaventosa vendetta di un animale domestico', the whole world falls apart in order to please a beast which is part rat, bat, and dog.³⁵⁴ In *Il Buttafuoco* the use of 'animation' confers ambivalence upon the genre of journalistic reportage: we can only speculate whether it served the dominant ideology of the regime by hiding

³⁴⁸ Dino Buzzati, 'Il Colombre', in *Il Colombre* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966), p. 8.

³⁴⁹ Dino Buzzati, 'Il Colombre', p. 8.

³⁵⁰ See Dino Buzzati, *Il Buttafuoco. Cronache di guerra sul mare* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), p. 118. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

³⁵¹ Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 17.

³⁵² Dino Buzzati, 'I topi', in *Il crollo della Baliverna* (Milan: Mondadori, 1954), pp. 124-130.

³⁵³ Dino Buzzati, 'I ricci crescenti', in *Paura alla Scala* (Milan: Mondadori, 1949), pp. 180-186.

³⁵⁴ Dino Buzzati, 'Spaventosa vendetta di un animale domestico', in *Paura alla Scala*, pp. 238-243.

within a fantastic scenario the horrors of the war or, on the contrary, was an instrument meant to overcome Fascist censorship.³⁵⁵ What can be said for sure is that the repertoire of creatures to which supposed inanimate objects are compared is vast and variegated: another good example is in ‘Quella tramenda quota 12’ in which ‘i sommergibili, proprio come fossero delle creature, hanno [...] reazioni, pigrizie, ottusità, capricci’ (p. 231).

Notwithstanding the relevance of the fantastic component of these texts, Buzzati’s precision, as far as the reconstruction of the movements of the fleets is concerned, is so remarkable that, despite being written without renouncing the use of imagination, the reportage of the battles fits his category of ‘news’.³⁵⁶ ‘Bengala a sinistra’ for instance, is written with such a close look at the facts that the reader is not able to connect the article to a precise historical episode. The absence of any indication either of date or place and the comparison of the ship to an enchanted castle are placed beside an obsessive precision in the indication of the time at which the facts took place:

Ore 4.58: un altro bengala sulla sinistra. Ore 5.1: un altro bengala sulla sinistra. Ore 5.7: un altro bengala sulla sinistra. Ore 5.15: un altro bengala sulla sinistra. Ore 5.19: ancora buio e silenzio. [...] Alle 5.30 un caccia segnalò alla nave ammiraglia: «Un aereo si dirige verso di voi». Ore 5.31: altri due bengala [...] (pp. 211, 212).

Paradoxically, the excessive accuracy in the recording of time strengthens the use of fantasy and helps place the facts in a sort of parallel ‘other world’, rather than in the visible one. It is the same that happens when we look at photos too closely and miss the ‘big picture’. Accuracy becomes an ally, rather than an obstacle, to the use of imagination. The same process is applied in ‘La vittoriosa battaglia del golfo della Sirte’ (pp. 215-228): here sailors are portrayed as legendary heroes challenged by adversity, so marvellous that ‘si è fatta a bordo l’atmosfera dei momenti solenni’ (p. 219). And yet the reportage is so accurate and detailed that Buzzati, for once, – probably helped by the fact that this was one of the few battles won by the Italian Navy – tells precisely how, where, and when the clash took place:

³⁵⁵ See Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, p. 326: ‘Buzzati è un giornalista e uno scrittore poco classificabile. [...] Un giorno può scrivere un articolo in tono con le direttive del regime e il giorno dopo toccare tematiche assolutamente non conformiste, o addirittura in contraddizione con la retorica fascista’.

³⁵⁶ See for this also Felix Sidel, ‘Surveillance in ‘Il Buttafuoco’’, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 3 (1998), 52-63.

Il combattimento [...] è durato quattro ore e tre quarti. Alle 19.15 la nave ammiraglia [...] spara l'ultimo colpo. [...] Lo scontro, che potrà essere chiamato la seconda battaglia della Sirte o battaglia del 34° parallelo, è stato il più lungo scontro di questa guerra mediterranea (p. 215).

The importance of not renouncing precision and accuracy even when fantasy and imagination are merged with facts emerged also in two texts published after the war. Both of them were reviews of reconstructions of the battles in which the Italian journalist participated: 'L'ammiraglio Cunningham narra come si combatté nel Mediterraneo' was published on 23 November 1952 and 'Fecero di giorno notte gli Inglesi alla seconda Sirte' on 4 April 1953. The latter criticizes the lack of historical accuracy in the reconstructions of the battles written in Britain,³⁵⁷ while the former is a review of Andrew Browne Cunningham's book *A Sailor's Odyssey*.³⁵⁸ Cunningham, who was the admiral of the Royal Navy, is slightly blamed for not having being impartial in his judgement, especially in 'alcuni apprezzamenti [che] appaiono molto discutibili. In vari casi l'autore attribuisce a noi batoste che in realtà non ci furono [...]'. Cunningham [appare] piuttosto prevenuto circa la nostra flotta [...]'.³⁵⁹ More in general, both of these articles show that even eight years after the end of the war, Buzzati was honestly concerned with the precision that had to characterize journalism, despite the possibilities of making it dialogue with fictional themes. The battles were then both an opportunity to practise good journalism and to entertain the readers through the use of familiar literary metaphors. In particular, the battles provided the war with heroes, namely the second main theme of the collection around which an ambivalent representation of the real is constructed, one which Buzzati had already used in his colonial correspondence.

In the light of a view of history in which, as argued by Nietzsche in the *Untimely Meditations*, faith in historicism becomes only another aspect of rationalism and

³⁵⁷ Dino Buzzati, 'Fecero di giorno notte gli Inglesi alla seconda Sirte', *Corriere della Sera*, 4 April 1953. See also what Buzzati wrote while reviewing Romeo Bernotti, *La guerra sui mari nel conflitto mondiale* (Livorno: Società Editrice Tirrena, 1947): 'È la prima volta che in Italia uno affronta il duro impegno di sistemare [...] i fatti dell'ultima guerra mondiale sui mari. Impresa tanto più scabrosa perché da parte 'nemica' non è stata finora pubblicata una documentazione sufficiente [...]', in Dino Buzzati, 'Un ammiraglio ispeziona i mari dove si combatté', *Corriere della Sera*, 11 December 1947.

³⁵⁸ Andrew Browne Cunningham, *A Sailor's Odyssey* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1952).

³⁵⁹ Dino Buzzati, 'L'ammiraglio Cunningham narra come si combatté nel Mediterraneo', *Corriere della Sera*, 23 November 1952.

Positivism,³⁶⁰ the difference between heroes and anti-heroes, allies and enemies does not make sense anymore. What gives value to a man's life are his ethical standards and his code of behavior: this is the reason why in *Il Buttafuoco* the figure of the hero is set beside that of the anti-hero, who is definable either as a hero who has been defeated (by his enemy, by fate, by nature etc.) or as a minor presence on the historical stage.³⁶¹ If in *L'Africa di Buzzati* examples of anti-heroes are predominant, as I tried to show in the previous chapter, in *Il Buttafuoco* there is a balance between texts whose protagonists are officers and commanders and texts dedicated to marginal characters of the war. In particular, texts which portray common people are all 'articles' and, more than when Buzzati writes 'news', they are filled with dialogues and descriptions.³⁶² The reason of course is that, when writing 'articles', Buzzati had the opportunity to use more broadly the narrative techniques he used in his fiction and to spend more time focusing on how the war was affecting the lives of common people. Besides, in contrast with the African narratives, between 1940 and 1943 Buzzati was more directly in contact with the worst aspects of the war and with the tragedies of the battlefield. In this context, the heroes of the regime – such as commanders and officers – become as human as everyone else: they are men whose courage will be judged according to the dignity with which they will face their destiny while fighting. On the one hand, the presence of humble figures challenges the supremacy of the Fascist hero advocated by the propaganda of the regime, and, on the other, the qualities of these heroes that the journalist extols are those filled with pedagogical significance, namely a lesson about the morality and the sense of duty of the Italian soldiers who were supposed to be paragons of virtue.

In Buzzati's reportage war is not intended as a stage on which to portray the progress of human knowledge and the improvements of the power conferred on western nations by their scientific discoveries and military achievements. The ideal world in which men, animals, and plants live in harmony is lost to a cold and contemptible reality through a process which resembles Barnabo's descent from the fantastic world of mountains to the void of the plain in Buzzati's first novel, *Barnabo delle montagne*. What emerges from the 'articles' dedicated to the protagonists of the war is that ethics

³⁶⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1st edition in German: 1873-1879]), pp. 57-123.

³⁶¹ See Lorena Bizzotto, 'Buzzati e il ritratto eroico: 'Un comandante'', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 471-480.

³⁶² See Atzori, "Ma è giusto anteporre la cronaca all'articolo?", p. 161.

and responsibility, courage and morality – together with the ability to use the imagination – are the only values left that need to be praised. The characters which fill the pages of *Il Buttafuoco* are people who are making history not in the sense of a positivist path that leads to continuous progress, but in the sense of setting an example for future generations by showing that they possess the quality of being just: Buzzati seems to make a stand by embracing the Nietzschean statement according to which ‘the world seems to be full of those who ‘serve truth’ [...]. The truth is that few serve truth because few possess the strength actually to be just. To possess the will is absolutely not enough’.³⁶³ The heroism which Buzzati ascribes to the major and minor protagonists of the war comes always from the belief that a hero is ‘[...] un uomo che combatte fino in fondo, per una questione di giustizia. Che combatte pur sapendo che la battaglia è perduta’ (p. 112) and, in this way, gains dignity.

The best example is that of ‘Un comandante’: this ‘article’ tells the story of one of the commanders who died during the battle of Cape Matapan, and it is set completely outside time and space. As Lorena Bizzotto wrote, a ‘tono onirico, quasi fiabesco, ed eroico [...] si innalza vertiginosamente [...] nel ritratto del comandante’.³⁶⁴ Coherently with his definition of ‘articles’, Buzzati merges the portrait of the commander with a lyrical prose that is faithful to the principles of ‘fantastic news’: heroism is connected with the theme of destiny (p. 7), and the protagonist is described as a modern Ulysses ‘al termine del suo ultimo viaggio’ (p. 10), full of dignity but powerless in the face of the fate to which he is destined. The use of dialogue lends plausibility to the narration, but the reader is left with a doubt about the factual existence of this man, since the border between fiction and facts is obliterated. Buzzati’s aim is not to record the sequence of events but to communicate deeper meanings which in this case are the courage and the ethical values of the protagonist: ‘[...] egli è rimasto lo stesso [...] per quanto lungi lo abbia tratto il destino. [...] vittorioso nel senso più nobile e geloso di questa parola’ (p. 17). ‘Un marinaio’ and ‘La grande ora di un *marò*’ are examples of the attention to anti-heroic figures. The former tells the story of the private Schiano, who loses his life while looking for his friend Martino after his cruiser sank. He bravely refuses to take a place on the rescue boat that could be used by somebody else.³⁶⁵ Even

³⁶³ Nietzsche, ‘On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life’, p. 89.

³⁶⁴ Bizzotto, ‘Buzzati e il ritratto eroico: ‘Un comandante’’, p. 473.

³⁶⁵ The presence of friendship among the most important values of life for Buzzati is confirmed by his own words: ‘Direi che è uno dei fenomeni più belli della vita. La vera amicizia è forse il sentimento più

though Schiano is among the last links in the military chain, Buzzati gives him the part of the protagonist of an episode which is not fundamental to the battle itself, but which can nevertheless deliver a lesson to the readers. In ‘La grande ora di un *marò*’, Battiloro’s horrible appearance testifies to the poor place he occupies within the military ranks. After having been scolded by the commander for his dishevelled aspect, he is injured during a battle and brought to the infirmary, where he lies next to the man who yelled at him. Buzzati imagines his last thoughts to be not about his family or his life, but about trying to appear decorous in the commander’s eyes. Here the buzzatian anti-hero surprises him who is supposed to have the role of heroic guide of the soldiers in the fatal moment of the battle: the commander will survive, but he will never forget Battiloro’s courage. Fantasy is necessary to Buzzati in both cases, not only to give metaphorical depth to the reportage, but also to communicate a useful moral lesson via the heroism of a character from whom the reader would expect only humility and submission. Heroism is also a quality of the protagonist of ‘Le mogli a terra’: a wife who has to accept her role of passively waiting for her husband to come back, and who must live with the lacerating experience of ‘dirsi ogni volta ‘a dopo-domani’ e pensare che forse non sarà vero. Doversi ogni volta separare in un modo strano, una via di mezzo tra l’arrivederci [...] e l’addio [...]’ (p. 31).

Buzzati’s war journalism embraces the idea of the rejection of progress and gives priority to universal and a-historical values which Buzzati, even many years after his return from the war, will claim to be decisive to understand the difference between real heroes and cowards like Mussolini:

[...] se veramente i fascisti fossero stati capaci di comportarsi in quella maniera lì, il fascismo sarebbe stato battuto ma sarebbe caduto molto bene...Mentre è caduto nella merda [...] Mussolini [...] è venuto meno alla regola che tutto si paga [...] se viene il momento difficile e fatale per la tua nazione, tu devi pagare per tutti. [...] Ma cosa ha fatto?...Si è travestito [...], si è chiuso in un camion! [...] ha barato [...] quando si è trattato di pagare non ha pagato [...]. Ha tagliato la corda!...Basta. Squalificato!³⁶⁶

Buzzati finds in the war the context in which to state clearly that his ‘other world’ is far from being self-referential and disinterested in the surrounding reality. The

disinteressato che ci sia. [...] è proprio il disinteresse che fa l’amicizia, secondo me, più bella’, in Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 62.

³⁶⁶ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, pp. 114, 115.

narrator who, thanks to the trick of fiction, can go beyond appearances and transform ships and weapons into monsters, plots the conditions of this ‘other world’: only those who are willing to remain coherent and honest until the end can enter it. The others are destined to pay their dues, like the hypocrites that run to confess when they realize that the giant fist which has appeared in the sky might indicate the imminent end of the world (‘La fine del mondo’);³⁶⁷ or the murderer Stefano Consonni, visited from hell by his victim, Prof. Petercondi, and his nephew who, in the shape of two bluebottles, tell him that in a few months he will be dead (‘Qualche utile indicazione a due autentici gentiluomini, di cui uno deceduto per morte violenta’).³⁶⁸

However, the war is not only a place for battles and heroes; it is also a place for dread, especially the dread due to the obsessive waiting for something to happen: the journalists wait for something newsworthy to write; soldiers wait for missions to start; their wives wait for their return; civilians wait for the end of the conflict and the return to normality; and everyone waits for a meaningful event which could redeem their existence. The third big theme in *Il Buttafuoco* is that of the many reflections Buzzati dedicated to his experience aboard the Navy ships: in these texts an increasing anguish is linked both to the tragedy of war and to its meaning for those who experienced it. In the group of ‘articles’ dedicated to this task it is easier than anywhere else in the volume to find themes and motives which are familiar to Buzzati’s readers and recurrent in his fictional work. Apart from the theme of waiting which I discussed with reference to *Il deserto dei Tartari*, the sense of powerlessness in the face of destiny’s whims that makes the protagonist of ‘Sette piani’ fall from the top to the bottom of the hospital in which he has been admitted and condemns him to certain death is found in ‘Convoglio Duisburg’.³⁶⁹ Here the narrator observes the crew of the ship, and what he sees is not pleasant at all: ‘[...] come sotto i neri umidi strapiombi delle crode, anche allora mi accorsi che l’animo mio era purtroppo piccolo e meschino di fronte alla potenza delle cose’ (p. 160). The reference to the ‘crode’ helps connect the setting of the story to the familiar environment of the mountains, with their capacity to render the feeling of dread and fantasy that comes from the presence of a constant danger: ‘La montagna [...] riporta questo senso di fantastico [...] con molta più energia, perché lì c’è il pericolo

³⁶⁷ Dino Buzzati, ‘La fine del mondo’, in *Paura alla Scala* (Milan: Mondadori, 1949), pp. 221-224.

³⁶⁸ Dino Buzzati, ‘Qualche utile indicazione a due autentici gentiluomini, di cui uno deceduto per morte violenta’, in *Paura alla Scala* (Milan: Mondadori, 1949), pp. 225-233.

³⁶⁹ Dino Buzzati, ‘Sette piani’, in *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), pp. 50-69.

anche di lasciarci la pelle...Cosicché questo senso fantastico, quando si è proprio dentro la montagna, lo si ha in maniera straordinaria'.³⁷⁰

The anguish that the reflections of the writer transmit to the reader in this group of 'articles' of *Il Buttafuoco* is similar to that which characterizes fictional short stories such as 'La fine del mondo' and 'L'incantesimo della natura': in the former, 'un mattino verso le dieci un pugno immenso comparve nel cielo sopra la città; si aprì poi lentamente ad artiglio e così rimase [...]. Sembrava di pietra e non era pietra, sembrava di carne e non era [...]. Era Dio; e la fine del mondo'.³⁷¹ In the latter, '[...] la luna, [...] per un ignoto cataclisma siderale [...] era paurosamente ingigantita ed ora, silente, incombeva sul mondo [...]'.³⁷² This image of a superior, gigantic entity which is about to envelop the world is, in *Il Buttafuoco*, war itself: the conflict acquires the properties of a sort of new dimension, a new reality that has shrouded the usual one. Everyone is affected by this change, whether directly or indirectly involved in the battles: suddenly reality has become blurred by dynamics that people were used to finding only in books about the past. Fantasy has become real and reality is now filled with mystery.³⁷³ The mixture of fear and fascination that such a new, unknown way of life exercises on Buzzati is effectively exemplified by 'La guerra è un posto lontano': the war is compared to a distant, unfamiliar place, 'coincide con l'ultima frontiera della vita' (p. 243). However, the doubts and reverence that such a place inspires make it also 'duro, fiero e spensierato' (p. 244), and resemble the combination of fascination and mystery that is at the core of the 'sublime' of the nineteenth-century fantastic tradition. The war creates infact the conditions Edmund Burke required in order to obtain that mix of beauty and fear which 'exite[s] the idea of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner

³⁷⁰ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 54.

³⁷¹ Dino Buzzati, 'La fine del mondo', p. 221.

³⁷² Dino Buzzati, 'L'incantesimo della natura', in *Sessanta racconti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1958), pp. 353-356.

³⁷³ With regard to the mixture of fantasy and reality that emerges from the presence of the war in people's life, it is interesting that Oliviero Bergamini, while analyzing 'L'epica battaglia del Mediterraneo [...]', which was Buzzati's report of the battle of Cape Matapan, states not only that the power of weapons made the war almost 'abstract', but also that '[...] il combattimento assume quasi l'aspetto di una fantasmagoria [...]'. See Oliviero Bergamini, *Specchi di guerra, Giornalismo e conflitti armati da Napoleone a oggi* (Bari: Laterza, 2009), p. 101.

analogous to terror [...]; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling [...].³⁷⁴

In these texts Buzzati is far from writing only detached journalistic reportage, and the reader might not be able to recognize if the article appeared either in the newspaper or in a collection of fantastic short stories. In 'I sogni di guerra', the war that has overwhelmed and radically changed everyone's life penetrates also the intimate and personal world of dreams:

[...] questo potrebbe sembrare un caso personale [...] ma forse non è. [...] al contrario corrisponde a ciò che succede nel cuore di molti uomini, da quando è cominciata la guerra. I vecchi sogni [...] sono rapidamente caduti, dissolti in nulla [...]. E al loro posto [...] nuovi fantasmi [...]; ma certo la guerra si è infiltrata anche nel geloso dominio del sonno [...]. Alle immagini create liberamente dai personali cervelli ha sovrapposto la sua [...] (p. 140).

As Burke's theory of the 'sublime' dictates, the new existential dimension imposed by war over everyday reality is far from being only negative and oppressive: its nature is both to terrify and fascinate. This is one of the reasons why what the texts say is that a strong sense of nostalgia is connected with the memory of battles: war, in *Il Buttafuoco*, means also youth, and when this period of life is coming to an end it causes a 'sentimento amaro (così come quando le grandi cose hanno termine)' (p. 142). In 'Le voci del Trieste', Buzzati confesses: '[...] io penso che la mia nave, gli uomini, le abitudini [...] i rumori, gli odori, le facce [...], queste cose amate, che un giorno mi parleranno di avventura, spensieratezza, amicizia, andranno dentro di me perdute' (p. 175) and in 'Si rimette piede a terra' the soldiers who are about to go home 'felici non erano [...]. Nell'atto stesso che toccavano la riva, una cappa grigia parve calare su di loro spegnendo sulle fronti la luce' (pp. 276, 277). Once a sublime experience like war is over, the return to the old lifestyle may seem pathetic and pointless (p. 279). Then the theme of nostalgia for the past meets that of the anxiety for the passing of time: if Drogo felt that time was reducing his chance to meet the 'grande occasione', the obsessive repetition of the verb 'ricordi' in '22 anni dopo' (pp. 315, 316) reminds us that those who remember the days of battle know that, even though they had their moment of

³⁷⁴ See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, (London: Penguin, 1998 [1757: second edition, 1759]), part I, section VII.

glory, that moment has passed and will never come back. The themes of waiting and the passing of time cast a long shadow over the experience of war: the ‘grande occasione’ that has finally arrived is nothing more than another episode destined to lose all its meaning in the face of the inevitable end of every man’s life. As I stated in my theoretical chapter, the contemporary presence of distress and fascination for the mystery about the revelation which death represents affects also the meaning of an important and decisive experience such as war. For this reason Buzzati gives a lot of space in his articles not only to the courage of soldiers, but also to their fears. The fears and distress of the journalist as they emerge in ‘Convoglio Silrm’ (pp. 164-174) become those of the entire crew in ‘Umile cronaca di una sortita navale’ and make the sailors’ sacrifice a noble action: ‘È solo la paura che ‘nobilita’ la sfida [...]. Non ha senso esaltare il coraggio, bensì la paura come metro del coraggio’.³⁷⁵ The passing of time and the anxiety of waiting for something to happen overcome any event, even those which seem to be remarkable from a historical point of view: ‘l’attesa è infinitamente più importante del compimento, rappresenta l’essenza dell’esistenza’.³⁷⁶ Buzzati is particularly explicit about this in ‘Si rimette piede a terra’:

[...] le cose intensamente sperate e attese non ci importano più appena le abbiamo raggiunte, [...] la felicità ci sfugge davanti come ombra di chi corre nella stessa direzione del sole: mai la potremo toccare e le uniche cose veramente buone che restano sono proprio il desiderio e l’attesa (p. 279).

In the ignorance of the future, in the waiting for things to happen, lies the meaning of life, even when this waiting means fear and danger. It is a theme to which Buzzati will also return in the years after the war:

Nel *Poema a fumetti* ho cercato di dire che nell’al di là la cosa più bella è la morte. La cosa maggiormente temuta qui è la cosa maggiormente desiderata lì. Di là si capisce che è la morte che dà gusto alle cose della vita. Altrimenti la vita sarebbe la cosa più spaventosa e

³⁷⁵ Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, p. 316.

³⁷⁶ Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, p. 317. See also pp. 351, 352: ‘Episodi come questo [‘Convoglio Silrm’] gli daranno materiale su cui lavorare [...]. Specie gli elzeviri, gli articoli di colore, sono evidentemente ispirati a ciò che ha visto e intensamente provato [...] Come in ‘Sangue nero’ [*Il Buttafuoco*, pp. 204-207], un elzeviro drammatico del 12 febbraio 1942, dove descrive la nafta che fuoriesce copiosa dagli squarci causati dalle esplosioni a lordare i mari e i marinai’. Not coincidentally, in ‘Sangue nero’, there is again the comparison between the sea and the mountains: ‘Le acque deserte assistevano [...] simili alle rupi che adagio riappaiono [...] dopo il fumo della valanga’ (p. 205).

cretina che ci sia. Quando l'uomo sogna l'immortalità, sogna la propria assoluta e cretina infelicità.³⁷⁷

3.3 'Acque deserte': Incommunicability of War and the Sea

All the themes which characterize *Il Buttafuoco* seem to point in a direction which stresses the impossibility, despite any effort of accuracy, of avoiding the fundamental emptiness of the concept of 'objectivity' in the face of such a disarming reality. A group of three texts in particular is dedicated to the task of explicating this emptiness through the problem of the incommunicability of war. In these texts the tragedy of the conflict seems to prevent Buzzati from narrating effectively 'what happened', and the result is that fantasy gets the upper hand over the balance between fiction and non-fiction. Yet this time fantasy is not the realm of the invisible anymore, with its ability to cast a light on our perception of the real. It becomes the refuge from the inability to convey an effective account of the war as an experience which goes beyond the mere narration of the events and which left a profound mark in those who lived it. In this way, even though the starting point of the article is a real episode, the literary outcome is a short story that could easily find a place in one of the writer's collections of fantastic literature.

In the first example, 'Il segreto' (pp. 46-51), the plot is inspired by the imposition of military secrets on naval operations. Two men whose names are not revealed confess an important plan to the narrator and from that moment he has the constant feeling of being observed, that people around him know that he is hiding something. There is not the slightest reference to a fact to which the story could be connected: the text appears to the reader as a fantasy that cannot communicate anything about the war, as the title suggests, but can only declare uncertainty and fears. The same effect of incommunicability and silence is produced by 'Una visita difficile' (pp. 302-310), even though this time there is a real fact in the origins of the text. As explained by Cremonesi, Buzzati joined a captain of the Italian Navy on his visit to the family of a sailor called Battiloro, who died next to him during a battle.³⁷⁸ The episode of the death of Battiloro, already narrated in 'La grande ora di un *marò*', impels the captain to look for the sailor's family with the hope of 'tornare per qualche istante alle giornate eroiche

³⁷⁷ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 236.

³⁷⁸ See Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, pp. 357, 358.

ormai lontane' (p. 303). Buzzati's aim in 'Una visita difficile' is to transmit the almost physical impossibility of explaining the experience of the front line to those who did not face it. Even more directly than in 'Il segreto', in which the silence was partly due to political and strategic impositions, the war seems to have built a wall between soldiers and civilians. A barrier of frustration and nostalgia separates those who fought from those who did not:

Si rende conto di essere solo, assolutamente solo coi suoi meravigliosi ricordi [...]. Anche Battiloro, animo semplice, si sentirebbe solo [...]. Perché ciò che i soldati soffrono nelle ore grandi della guerra non può essere spartito con gli altri uomini, una barriera misteriosa separerà gli uni e gli altri per sempre (p. 308).

The barrier which prevents an effective dialogue between those who lived the war and those who have to listen to their stories assumes the characteristics of an incurable aphasia. The same feeling of incommunicability pervades a cockroach with which Buzzati imagines having a conversation in 'Non tradirà mai le navi il vecchio *fuochista*' (pp. 318-321): in this surreal 'article' a cockroach considers himself to be a real sailor who speaks about his memories of the time he boarded the cruiser *Trieste*. Here, as in all these three texts, Buzzati communicates through the theme of memory the fears and anxieties of an entire generation which had to reinvent itself in order to survive the experience of the war. Despite appearing at first glance only as fictional stories, texts such as 'Il segreto', 'Una visita difficile', and 'Non tradirà mai le navi il vecchio *fuochista*' anticipate the lucid analysis of those years Buzzati offered in the page of his diary entitled 'Una generazione' and published only in 1950 in *In quel preciso momento* with the title 'C'era la guerra'. As Cremonesi suggests, 'Una generazione' can be considered '[...] il manifesto di quei giovani già vecchi che hanno subito sulla loro pelle il dramma dello Stato che si disfa [...] abbandonati, traditi da una classe dirigente che cerca prima di tutto di salvare se stessa'.³⁷⁹

These articles, all focused on the problem of the narration of traumatic events, confirm that the Italian journalist was far from being distracted, naive and too interested in fantastic literature to offer a political and social critique of the events he witnessed between the 1930s and the 1940s. On the contrary, Buzzati proposed with his war correspondence a picture of the difficulties, tensions, and different levels of mediations

³⁷⁹ See Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, pp. 359, 360.

at work when reporting not only the facts he witnessed, but also their effects on those who participated with him in those facts. Hence the failure of communicating effectively the existential implications of the war experience to those who did not participate in military actions represents probably the most profound philosophical implication of this journalism. This implication is reinforced by the role that once again, as happened with the desert in *L'Africa di Buzzati*, nature plays in the collection. If Libyan and Ethiopian nature, as opposed to technology, was represented by the desert, then in the case of *Il Buttafuoco* this seminal role is played by the sea, and it is the sea which perpetrates the relationship based on conflict between fantasy and reality, imagination and rationalism which remains in the background of the texts.

The first observation that needs to be made about the dominant presence of the sea in *Il Buttafuoco* is that it represents an unfamiliar environment for Buzzati, who usually preferred to set his narratives in the mountains or in an urban context. Most of the departures from these two settings are reserved to the desert, not only as far as *Il deserto dei Tartari* and *L'Africa di Buzzati* are concerned, but also in many of his fantastic short stories such as 'Ombra del sud' and 'Il re a Horm el-Hagar'.³⁸⁰ As late as 1971, Buzzati continued to perceive a sort of distance and strangeness in the maritime environment:

Non conosco il grande oceano, o meglio, essendo stato in marina con delle grandi navi, non è che io abbia combattuto con l'oceano...D'altra parte non ho mai assistito a grandi tempeste, salvo una volta di notte, nel Mediterraneo, in cui delle navi erano andate a fondo...Ma non per questo posso dire di avere proprio assorbito la bellezza dell'oceano...Per il deserto invece è stato diverso.³⁸¹

At first, what strikes us in the representation of the sea in *Il Buttafuoco* is the deeply negative connotation that pervades it. There is not the desert anymore to represent, with its quiet and uncontaminated spaces, the possibility of a new beginning for the modern man: now that the horror of war is a daily reality, the sea, with its aggressiveness and depth, rather than the waiting for something to happen, symbolizes the wait for the tragedy of battle and death to materialize. In 'Scorta di notte su mare infido' (pp. 88-95), the sea is defined as unreliable even in the title: it is an enemy that men cannot fight. As Brigitte Le Gouez argues in one of the few studies specifically

³⁸⁰ See Dino Buzzati, 'Ombra del sud', in *I sette messaggeri*, pp. 70-76 and 'Il re a Horm el-Hagar', in *Paura alla Scala*, pp. 202-214.

³⁸¹ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 48.

dedicated to *Il Buttafuoco*, if the sea is used by the author as an image of the surrounding world during the years of the war, then the ship with its crew, of which Buzzati is part, is a sort of micro-society whose values have been overturned.³⁸² Water is not a positive element, but one in which ‘si scioglie la vita’.³⁸³ In the context of battle, when survival becomes the outmost priority, the sea is an obstacle because, especially at night, it hides the enemy. When the animation process comes into place, the sea is defined as ‘ostile’ (p. 79), ‘infido’ (p. 88), ‘nemico dell’uomo’ (p. 205).³⁸⁴ The sea seems to synthesize only the worst aspects of the mountains and the deserts: it does not have their peace and meditative distance from the chaos of the city, and it invariably transmits a feeling of threat and danger. When the sea arrives to hack into Buzzati’s dreams, fighting the image of the beloved mountains, it is felt as an intruder: ‘Tutte le sante notti, da una ventina d’anni a questa parte, [...] sognavo le montagne. [...] Da due mesi [...] mi sono messo a sognare le navi. In principio ci fu una specie di lotta. [...] La montagna non si dava per vinta. Finché scomparve’ (p. 140). In some of the letters sent to his friend Arturo Brambilla during the three years aboard Navy ships, the new presence of the sea in Buzzati’s life is presented as uncomfortable and undesirable. While referring again to his dreams the journalist complains that ‘c’è qualcosa che non va’,³⁸⁵ and that even when the mountains are present in his dreams, they are now shown ‘in strane guise’.³⁸⁶

Another seminal component of Buzzati’s representation of the sea in *Il Buttafuoco* is the spatial dialectic between high and low. This topic has been studied by Caspar with attention to Buzzati’s first fictional works, and she argues that if in Buzzati’s narrative what is linked to highness and the mountains is usually positive, then what is low – such as the valley in which Barnabo passes a long period of time before going back to the

³⁸² Brigitte Le Gouez, ‘Buzzati e il mare nel ‘Buttafuoco’’, *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 34-42 (pp. 46 and 55).

³⁸³ Le Gouez, ‘Buzzati e il mare nel ‘Buttafuoco’’, p. 44.

³⁸⁴ As underlined by Le Gouez, the sea is also associated with mournful colours and compared to the most negative characteristics of the deserts, with obvious references to *Il deserto dei Tartari*. See Le Gouez, ‘Buzzati e il mare nel ‘Buttafuoco’’, pp. 49, 50. Here are some examples: in ‘Scorta di notte su mare infido’ ‘[...] i marinai guardavano con qualche orgoglio le navi fragili [...] eccoci, laggiù nel deserto sarete voi a combattere’ (p. 89) and ‘[...] il mare (è) un rigoroso deserto’ (p. 94). In ‘Notte di agguato nell’abisso marino’ there is the first appearance of the most recurrent oxymoron in the volume: ‘acque deserte’ (p. 58). One last example is in ‘Una crudele serata’ in which the sea ‘è una immensa ed escrabile distesa di acque deserte’ (p. 289).

³⁸⁵ Dino Buzzati, ‘5 Marzo 1941’, in Dino Buzzati, *Lettere a Brambilla*, ed. by Luciano Simonelli (Novara: De Agostini, 1985), p. 258.

³⁸⁶ Dino Buzzati, ‘31 Ottobre 1941’, in *Lettere a Brambilla*, ed. by Luciano Simonelli (Novara: De Agostini, 1985), p. 264.

foresters' house – is considered negative.³⁸⁷ Nevertheless, this appears to be only partially true for *Il Buttafuoco*. The consequence of the preference for high-altitudes means that the battles in the Mediterranean Sea are set often ‘tra la superficie e l’abisso’ (p. 133); but Buzzati can see the surface of the water both positively and negatively. In ‘Notte di agguato nell’abisso marino’, ‘sei metri di distanza separano due opposti mondi: in alto il mare, il vento, l’aria pura, la libertà senza confine, in basso la clausura in una scatola d’acciaio zeppa di ordigni’ (p. 53). However, as stated by Le Gouez, and according to the overturned logic of war, ‘i fondali offrono un rifugio ai sommergibili che provano a sottrarsi alla caccia data loro dagli incrociatori nemici’.³⁸⁸ This ambivalence in the representation of the dialectic between the abysses and the surface mirrors the characteristic ambivalence which pervades the entire volume. As with the strict dictates of military discipline, both the fascination and the horror of battle, and the obedience to the orders that comes from authority, the sea is not immune from those contradictions that form the core of *Il Buttafuoco*:

Data la lunga permanenza sulla nave nasce una specie di intimità col mare, specie di lunga consuetudine che smorza la paura, la diffidenza, l’angoscia. [...] Il fondale è allo stesso tempo il fondale rifugio e la fossa in cui le navi ferite a morte affondano. Più che di reale capovolgimento dei valori, ci troviamo qui di fronte a un’ambivalenza [...].³⁸⁹

If, on the one hand, the sea is described more often in negative than in positive terms, the more Buzzati passes time aboard the ships, the more his respect for the sea grows. Rather than intimate as Le Gouez does, I would say that the sea, which is the master of the destinies of those involved in the battles,³⁹⁰ remains an enemy, but one that merits the respect of its opponent. Yet what is particularly interesting for me in his representations of the sea is that Buzzati maintains in it a perfect coherence with the metaphors of his poetical experience: transfigurations, mutations, transformations, and the ‘animation of the inanimate’ contribute to merge fantasy and journalism through a technique which Anna Tarantino effectively called ‘trasfigurazione [...] insolita’.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Marie-Hélène Caspar, ‘L’organizzazione spaziale nei racconti di Dino Buzzati’, in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 121-138.

³⁸⁸ See Le Gouez, ‘Buzzati e il mare nel ‘Buttafuoco’’, p. 55.

³⁸⁹ See Le Gouez, ‘Buzzati e il mare nel ‘Buttafuoco’’, pp. 51 and 56-59.

³⁹⁰ Le Gouez, ‘Buzzati e il mare nel ‘Buttafuoco’’, p. 50.

³⁹¹ Tarantino, ‘Il Buttafuoco’: osservazioni di un lettore ordinario’, p. 35.

3.4 Fantasy and Censorship

As in the case of *L'Africa di Buzzati*, it is fundamental to read the articles collected in *Il Buttafuoco* as documents of a very peculiar historical period and to see how Fascism entered, with its totalitarian power, the writer's laboratory. After those he wrote from Libya and Ethiopia, these articles compose the second important part of Buzzati's journalistic production during Fascism: they testify not only to his participation to the Second World War, but also to the evolution of his complex relationship with the regime. As a witness and a reporter, Buzzati needed to come to terms with censorship even more than he had to while working from the African colonies, and censorship was a challenge not only for Buzzati but for every journalist who worked during the *ventennio*, and in particular, during the Second World War. From 1940 the regime decided to increase its control over publications, the Minister of Popular Culture Alessandro Pavolini started to meet the editors of the most important Italian newspapers every week, and from February 1940 the Commissione per la Bonifica Libreria withdrew from the market all the books which were considered dangerous.³⁹² As effectively explained by Oliviero Bergamini, 'in Italia [...] il Ministero della Cultura Popolare [...] esercitava varie forme di controllo e condizionamento, la cui più emblematica era costituita dalle 'veline', messaggi dattiloscritti inviati regolarmente ai giornali con precise disposizioni sulle notizie da dare e non dare'.³⁹³ However, it would be a mistake to think that Buzzati passively accepted the impositions that came from the Minister of Popular Culture: the correspondence he kept up with friends and colleagues, but above all with Aldo Borelli, his editor at the *Corriere della Sera*, has

³⁹² See Maurizio Cesari, *La censura nel periodo fascista* (Naples: Liguori, 1978), pp. 79-99.

³⁹³ Bergamini, *Specchi di guerra*, p. 97. One of these *veline* is still kept in the file 'Dino Buzzati' in the Historical Archive of the *Corriere della Sera*. The document, dated 13 December 1940, is very explicit and gives war correspondents precise indications as to what can and what cannot be reported from the front line: 'I corrispondenti di guerra presso gli aeroporti e le basi navali dovranno descrivere nei loro servizi soltanto le operazioni aeree o i combattimenti ai quali hanno partecipato o che conoscano per diretta relazione dei partecipanti. Nelle relazioni dei loro servizi i corrispondenti dovranno attenersi a uno stile sobrio e preciso, senza amplificazioni retoriche e sviamenti coloristici. Descrivano i fatti mettendo in luce la durezza di questa guerra e la tenacia del nemico, vinta dall'ardimento e dall'eroismo dei nostri combattenti. Si esaltino gli atti di valore collettivi e individuali citando per questi ultimi i nomi dei protagonisti. Naturalmente devono essere omesse le indicazioni di reparti e tutte quelle vincolate dal segreto militare'.

Buzzati's complaints and requests for explanations about the censor's cuts as two of its main topics.³⁹⁴

The most important effect of the pressures exercised by censorship on Buzzati is the distortion of the image of his ideological position in relation to the political power that the reader gains from his war correspondence. If the first articles written from the Navy ships are 'ridondanti d'entusiasmo e lodi per l'efficienza della macchina bellica italiana',³⁹⁵ as soon as Buzzati got used to the new environment in which he had to work, 'gran parte del tempo di guerra' becomes 'tedio, attesa, rispetto di direttive che giungono da lontano'.³⁹⁶ The contradictory feelings that emerge from his texts alternate enthusiasm and disillusion, participation and critique. Consequently, as argued by Cremonesi, 'è d'immensa importanza confrontare i suoi pezzi con gli appunti nel privato dei diari personali. Soltanto questi documenti, infatti, restituiscono drammaticamente le gravi difficoltà militari italiane, oltre alle paure e ai disagi dell'inviato, stretto tra le maglie della censura, il suo codice di valori e l'evidenza della cronaca'.³⁹⁷ However, despite the support offered by the diaries the doubts and contradictions remain: on the one hand scholars such as Panafieu reject the idea of Buzzati as an author who was compromised by the regime, on the other, Anna Tarantino thinks that 'alcuni articoli hanno un carattere encomiastico e celebrativo fin troppo evidente'.³⁹⁸ There is an episode in particular which probably demonstrates better than anything else how difficult it was for Buzzati to actually rebel against the established order: after having worked for the *Corriere* under the Salò Republic, on 25 April 1945, Buzzati wrote the article 'Cronaca di ore memorabili' to celebrate the liberation of the country from the Nazi occupation forces. The text patently adopts the

³⁹⁴ Here are some examples from the correspondence with Borelli: 18 September 1940: 'Mi è stata comunicata la circolare ministeriale contro i pezzi di colore. Ma neanche a farlo apposta, proprio in questi giorni brulicano, su tutti i principali quotidiani [...] articoli di varietà [...] proprio del genere che sembrava vietato. In che senso quindi va interpretata la parola "colore"?'; 3 October 1940: request of explanations for the delay in the publication of 'Il segreto militare' and 'un pezzo sugli Inglesi'; 8 January 1941: 'Il lavoro qui non offre [...] molte occasioni cronistiche [...]. Da notare che due articoli [...] sono stati fermati al Ministero [...]'; 22 February 1941: '[...] sebbene negli ultimi tempi siano stati pochi gli episodi di guerra navale suscettibili di servizio, dal 19 febbraio ad oggi ho già fatto sei articoli, di cui purtroppo due [...] sono stati fermati dalla censura [...]'; 11 February 1942: '[...] desidero farvi presente come ben tre [...] servizi siano stati bocciati dalla censura [...] per motivi che sinceramente non mi hanno persuaso pienamente. In realtà i criteri adottati negli ultimi tempi da questi censori [...] fa sì che buona parte del mio lavoro vada sprecata'.

³⁹⁵ Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, p. 331.

³⁹⁶ Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, p. 333.

³⁹⁷ Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, p. 335.

³⁹⁸ Tarantino, 'Il Buttafuoco': osservazioni di un lettore ordinario', p. 60.

argument of the Italian National Liberation Committee³⁹⁹ according to which the defeat of the Fascist regime was due mainly to the work of the Italian Resistance and not the Allies Armies.⁴⁰⁰ In short, Buzzati passed, apparently without any problem, from obeying the orders of a Fascist editorship to following the instructions of the new forces in power.

One of the contexts in which the ambivalence of Buzzati's position not only towards the policy of Fascism but also to the meaning and the effects of the war that the regime wanted, is, as I argued while analyzing *L'Africa di Buzzati*, that of the description of the visual effects produced by the clashes between the armies. Even more than in the African articles, in *Il Buttafuoco*, Buzzati's fascination with the aesthetic beauty produced by weapons is merged with the description of their tragic and destructive effects. Even in a pessimistic and deeply negative page of his diary such as 'Conviglio Duisburg', Buzzati describes '[...] mitragliere che sparavano a raggiera verso il cielo, con le bellissime traiettorie rosse bianche verdi delle codette luminose' (p. 158). The bullets in 'Una nostra torpediniera assale quattro caccia britannici' trace 'secche traiettorie, elegantissimi' (p. 181), and the scene of a sinking ship in 'Una nostra torpediniera contro tre incrociatori e quattro caccia' is 'di bellezza e solennità senza pari' (p. 191). These few examples, together with some controversial declarations made by Buzzati during his interview with Yves Panafieu in 1971,⁴⁰¹ may explain why the journalist was accused not only of having given way to Fascist propagandistic rhetoric, but also to militarism.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁹ The National Liberation Committee (*Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale*) was a political organization that held together the Italian Partisans in the last year of the War conflict, while the Nazi were occupying Italy after the armistice of 8 September 1943. After the liberation from the Germans, the Allies gave the Committee administrative control of Northern Italy. The Committee also formed the Italian governments from 1944 until 1946, when Italy became a republic.

⁴⁰⁰ See Cremonesi, *Dai nostri inviati*, p. 368.

⁴⁰¹ See Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, pp. 117, 118: '[...] per quanto riguarda la guerra [...], penso che oggi si dicano delle grandi coglionerie...Ci sono delle cose peggio della guerra [...]. La guerra ha delle cose stupende [...]. E son d'accordo: nessuno può amare la guerra. La guerra è distruzione, morte, sofferenze [...]. Ma [...] la guerra non è la cosa più orrenda. La guerra è una cosa stupenda. Tant'è vero che tutti gli uomini che io conosco, arrivati a una certa età, le cose che ricordano con maggiore nostalgia [...] sono state le loro esperienze di guerra. [...] la guerra consente all'uomo di [...] essere giovane [...]. Molto più dell'amore. [...] [Ci sono] la bellezza dell'avventura, il rischio, l'azzardo [...] la bellezza di certi spettacoli, che esteticamente sono [...] meravigliosi'.

⁴⁰² See for example Roberto Balzani, 'Dino Buzzati, 'Il Buttafuoco'. Cronache di guerra sul mare', *Nuova Antologia*, 128, n. 2185 January/March 1993, 480-482 (mentioned by Atzori, "Ma è giusto anteporre la cronaca all'articolo?"): the article talks about a 'cedimento vistoso alla retorica patriottica più tradizionale'. Also Arslan (in Antonia Arslan, *Invito alla lettura di Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1993 [1974]), p. 41 writes about an excess of patriotic apology in some of Buzzati's articles such as 'Ritratto con

However, one must not forget that the indications coming from the *veline* of the Minister of Popular Culture were clear in asking reporters to mention the harshness of the war and the heroism of Italian soldiers. Besides, as stated by Fabio Atzori, a too severe judgement of what emerges from Buzzati's correspondence in terms of propaganda 'appare ingeneroso se le [corrispondenze di Buzzati] si confronta[no] con quanto il *Corriere* – e gli altri giornali – andavano allora pubblicando'.⁴⁰³ As recently as 2009, Atzori's position has been confirmed also by Bergamini's research on war journalism:

In questo quadro [quello delle pubblicazioni in epoca fascista] spiccano anche esempi di giornalismo di qualche valore, collocati spesso in un'area grigia tra 'fronda' interna al regime e autentica professionalità, che riescono a descrivere con efficacia alcuni momenti e aspetti della guerra, anche se non arrivano mai [...] a rivelare davvero problemi, sconfitte, verità scomode. Esempio in questo senso è la corrispondenza di Dino Buzzati [...].⁴⁰⁴

The contradictory signals which can be gathered from Buzzati's declarations and his narrative do not permit the establishment of a sole, coherent position of the author with respect to the politics of Fascism. Furthermore, this is not even what should interest us most about his journalism. I would argue that what is relevant is seeing what innovations Buzzati brought to the representation of the war, even if his starting point was common to that of hundreds of other correspondents, i.e. that of serving the propaganda of the empire. Besides, the dynamics at work in the relationship, be they conscious or not, between the author and the reality he observed, are particularly interesting in a journalist like Buzzati who was not only witnessing the evolution of the military enterprise, but who was literally living side by side with the sailors who were supposed to realize the experience of Fascism at war according to the desires of the regime. Finally, what is particularly relevant to my argument is that by using 'fantastic news', Buzzati seems to have been able to a certain extent to take advantage of the limits imposed by censorship: while not being allowed to reveal names and details of military operations, defeats and the manifest inferiority of the Italian Navy, and having

battaglia', which was published in *Prime storie di Guerra*, ed. by Arnaldo Cappellini (Milan: Rizzoli, 1942).

⁴⁰³ Atzori, "Ma è giusto anteporre la cronaca all'articolo?", p. 160 and Bergamini, *Specchi di guerra*, p. 100.

⁴⁰⁴ Bergamini, *Specchi di guerra*, p. 100.

to use a style as sober as possible, he could nevertheless use fantasy in order to maintain the originality of his non-fiction.

Chapter 4: Crime News – outside the Dogma of Referentiality (1945 - 1960s)

*C'è una frase di Carlo Bo che mi ha colpito.
'Buzzati' scrive 'era un cronista di assoluta fedeltà,
ma alla fine andava oltre e scioglieva tutto con il miracolo della poesia.'*⁴⁰⁵
Lorenzo Viganò

In the following pages I will analyze Buzzati's crime journalism by taking into account a sample of the articles which have been collected by Lorenzo Viganò in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*.⁴⁰⁶ Crime news is the journalistic area in which Buzzati was most prolific and in which the implications of his 'fantastic news' regarding the problem of the representation of reality are most evident and challenging. Here Buzzati, once freed from the laces of censorship and the interferences of the regime, brought to its destination the aesthetical path he had started out on in Africa: the journalistic genre of crime news became the perfect ground on which to exploit the possibilities offered by different fictional genres. In the light of this argument, the choice of this book is also motivated by the fact that the double volume edited by Viganò offers the widest available choice of texts of Buzzati's production in this particular journalistic field, from his first short articles written in 1929 – only one year after having been hired by the *Corriere della Sera* – to his last contributions in 1971, a few months before his death.

The first section of the chapter argues that in this particular kind of journalism Buzzati was able to differentiate the use of fictional *topoi* according to the particular situation he had to describe, and explains the relationship that was created between genre fiction and Buzzati's peculiar 'approaches to fantasy'. The cluster of metaphors, images, and settings which in the previous productions could be ascribed to fantastic literary tradition only in general terms or, as in the case of the war reportages, to a narrow series of themes, is complicated in a roster of literary genres which serve the aim of constantly providing new possibilities of interpretation of the real. I will discuss how Buzzati's crime news stimulates the reader to have a pro-active approach towards the analysis of the world: the aesthetic implications of this process lead us to question the

⁴⁰⁵ Lorenzo Viganò, 'Introduzione. Dino Buzzati: la vocazione per la 'nera'', in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2002), pp. IX-XXXIX (p. XIX).

⁴⁰⁶ *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2002). Further references to this collection will be given in the text.

ways in which crime news, in Buzzati, appropriates specific characteristics of genres such as crime fiction, the tales of horror, and *noir* literature.

The philosophical issues called into question by this journalism show the continuity in the postwar years of Buzzati's quest for a challenge to *mimesis*, towards a progressively clearer image of an 'other world' in which fantasy reigns, but which never becomes meaningless. In the last part of the chapter I will address the social and political implications raised by Buzzati's crime news: I will analyze how this kind of journalism uses specific metaphors and *topoi* of the fantastic tradition in order to address the problem of the relationship between the author, modernity and technology, and how his protest against the excesses of progress was both strengthened and concealed by the use of literary metaphors.

4.1 Genre Fiction and 'Approaches to Fantasy' (*Meraviglioso, Assurdo, and Orrido*)

Buzzati's crime news brings to an extremity an apparent contradiction which, as I stated in chapter three, was already a characteristic of his war reportage. On the one hand, there is a constant search for accuracy, which is usually concentrated at the beginning of the piece of news, built on a rich seam of information about the reported fact; on the other, the texts are developed by using narrative techniques and metaphors of literary traditions which the reader would expect to find in a novel or a short story. This kind of journalism refuses objectivity not only in relation to distant reported facts, such as the news from the colonies and the front line of the war, but also to our daily life: the author's accuracy does not regard at all the quest for a fixed and unquestionable 'truth', but becomes rather a commitment and an attempt to offer the readers a reportage as accurate and precise as possible from the narrator's point of view, from which the reader may gather a lesson. The insertion of fictional elements gives then to the representation a further option to investigate the ambivalence of the 'real' as it appears at first glance.

The evolution of Buzzati's journalistic 'other world' finds its fulfillment in crime news by completing the process of exploitation of conventional literary genres which in *Il Buttafuoco* were still limited to a set of a few themes, the process of 'animation', and restrained by censorship. After the fall of Fascism, Buzzati could employ without

limitation a defined set of literary genres which began to dialogue with his various ‘approaches to fantasy’ and imagination. Every crime, natural catastrophe, and tragedy could be reported by using settings, metaphors and symbolisms typical of a recognizable genre fiction, with the aim of offering a further option of investigation of ‘what happened’. In contrast with the production of the first part of Buzzati’s career, in the crime news published after 1945 it is easier to individuate the specific literary genres which Buzzati looks at in order to challenge our idea of objectivity.

Alessandro Scarsella, while studying the originality of Buzzati’s use of the fantastic when compared to the development that this tradition had in Italy, underlined the usefulness of five categories in which Geno Pampaloni, in 1975, divided Buzzati’s different ‘approaches’ to the fantastic mode: *favoloso*, *meraviglioso*, *assurdo*, *orrido*, *innocente*.⁴⁰⁷ The first, ‘a metà strada tra le ‘favole moderne’ del realismo magico di Bontempelli e la trasfigurazione autobiografica di un universo infantile’, and the last, linked to the ‘carattere *naïf* dell’iconografia letteraria di Buzzati’, do not pertain to the mature crime news production of the author and are characteristic rather of the first outcomes of his work. On the contrary, after 1945, when social and political themes became more and more present in Buzzati’s journalism, *meraviglioso*, *assurdo*, and *orrido* could be effectively used as three different ‘approaches to fantasy’ which Buzzati put in dialogue with as many fictional genres in order to adapt his ‘fantastic news’ to the effect he wanted to produce. *Meraviglioso* is defined by Pampaloni as the ‘approach’ which ‘rimanda alla propensione per il mitico e il soprannaturale’; *assurdo* ‘rinvia al trattamento del meraviglioso come ‘insolito’ [...]’; and *orrido* ‘allude alla componente *gothic* dei racconti di Buzzati [...]’.⁴⁰⁸ Most of the texts collected in the first volume of *La ‘Nera’*, i.e. the one dedicated to ‘Crimini e misteri’ can be read as a combination, on the one hand, of one of these three categories, and, on the other, of the *topoi* of one among crime fiction, the tales of horror, and *noir* literature. The texts of the second volume (‘Incubi’), concerning tragedies and natural catastrophes, when failing to enter one of these genres, either because they do not involve any crime or because Buzzati chooses not to use the gothic, however present characteristics and atmospheres linkable

⁴⁰⁷ Geno Pampaloni, ‘Lo scrittore’, in *Omaggio a Dino Buzzati. Scrittore-Pittore-Alpinista. Atti del convegno (Cortina d’Ampezzo, 18-24 Agosto 1975)*, ed. by Circolo Stampa Cortina (Milan: Mondadori), pp. 59-63, quoted in Alessandro Scarsella, ‘Aspetti del ‘caso’ Buzzati: Premesse storico-critiche e studio del fantastico in Italia’, in *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent’anni di promozione di studi dell’Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010), pp. 127-138.

⁴⁰⁸ Scarsella, ‘Aspetti del ‘caso’ Buzzati’, p. 128, 129.

to one among *meraviglioso*, *assurdo*, and *orrido*. The result is a form of journalism so peculiar in terms of style and content as to constitute a sort of ‘genre journalism’ with its own literary identity.

Before seeing some of the results of the different possible combinations between Buzzati’s ‘approaches to fantasy’ and the three literary genres I have mentioned, a first, emblematic example of how Buzzati’s narrative strategy and its effects evolved in this part of his journalistic production may be appreciated in the series of articles he dedicated to the story of Rina Fort, which I introduced in my first chapter. Fort, the murderer in Milan of four people, three of whom were children, becomes, in the fourteen articles Buzzati wrote about her case, the protagonist of a sort of serial short novel. The journalist alternates accuracy, in particular in the description of the crime scene and the trial, with long digressions which dig into Fort’s psyche, and try to understand what ghosts haunt her and the community of Milan that was so shocked by her crime. Furthermore, in particular in the article entitled ‘Un’ombra gira tra noi’, he inserts in a narrative full of ‘real’ people – such as Fort herself, the victims, the judges etc. – a new, fantastic character, which seems to be borrowed directly from a horror story: a shadow, a sort of evil demoniac presence which might be the real cause of the increasing wave of violence that was hitting the city during those years:

Una specie di demonio si aggira dunque per la città, invisibile, e sta forse preparandosi a nuovo sangue. L’altra sera noi eravamo a tavola per il pranzo quando poche case più in là una donna giovane massacrava con una spranga di ferro la rivale e i suoi tre figlioletti [...]. Qualcun altro, diverso da noi, era necessariamente intervenuto l’altra sera, un personaggio delle tenebre vogliamo dire, proprio come in certe storie antiche, il medesimo forse che da troppo tempo sta infestando le nostre contrade [...].⁴⁰⁹

The article uses the images of the shadow and the demon, both typical gothic *topoi*, as living entities which haunt the city and are thirsty for blood. Here the combination of crime reportage and *orrido* is then set beside an almost morbid carefulness in the description of details such as that of the blood found on the scene, which is described as ‘fermo oramai [...] i cui rigagnoli, simili a polipi immondi, lucevano sempre meno ai riflessi della lampadina [...] facendosi sempre più neri’ (p.

⁴⁰⁹ Dino Buzzati, ‘Un’ombra gira tra noi’, in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 3 December 1946, in *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 45, 46.

45). Whereas the accuracy in the description of the crime scene makes the reader think about crime fiction stories with their precision in telling details about the way the crime was committed and how the murderer acted, the focus on blood and the haunting shadow are clearly descendants of the gothic tradition. While ‘Un’ombra gira tra noi’ is marked by this horrific tone, other articles of the same series, such as ‘Il fascino della toga’ and ‘L’accusatore’, are dedicated to Fort’s trial and are closer to crime fiction in their interest in evidence, data, and details.⁴¹⁰ For example, as in the search for a *crescendo* which has the aim of building the suspense that in detective fiction conducts the reader to the final revelation, in ‘Il fascino della toga’ the trial is significantly compared to a battle, a setting Buzzati knew very well from his past experiences (see chapter three). The narrator, rather than focusing on the content of the counsel’s address, shifts attention to the movements, clothes, and tension of the young lawyer. They become the symbol of a fake, hypocritical world which would like to present itself as the defender of justice while its ‘parole così belle, non entrano nelle celle del carcere, là dove il cuore di chi ha ucciso resta carne viva [...]’.⁴¹¹ In ‘L’accusatore’ the title and the beginning of the text lead us to think that the topic will be the public prosecutor’s speech, but the focus shifts again and follows the return home of one of the members of the jury, giving details of his moral doubts about sending Fort to life imprisonment. This combination of attention to the crime as event, but also to its dark, morbid dimension, and, ultimately, to its moral meaning, is particularly interesting in the light of Buzzati’s quest for an ulterior motive behind the facts: what the narrator tries to do is to give a deeper, existential meaning to what happened in order to render it of direct interest for the collectivity and not to make it appear only as a distant, horrific episode which does not concern ‘normal’ people.

With regard to the use of the gothic, it is important to mention that Maurizio Ascari in *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction: Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational*, argues that the effect produced by the dialogue between crime fiction and the gothic tradition is far from lacking sound literary precedents: detective fiction, which emerged successfully in the nineteenth century, has been associated ‘for over a century [...] [with] science’ and ‘might lead us to believe that [this tradition] was unambiguously

⁴¹⁰ Dino Buzzati, ‘Il fascino della toga’, in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 17 January 1950, in *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, pp. 80-83 and ‘L’accusatore’, in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 18 January 1950, in *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, pp. 84-87.

⁴¹¹ Dino Buzzati, ‘Il fascino della toga’, p. 83.

realistic'.⁴¹² On the contrary, as explained also by Clive Bloom, 'neither detective fiction nor science fiction can be separated in their origins from [...] an association' with the gothic.⁴¹³ By tracing 'a map [of] those hybrid zones where [detective fiction's] conventions mingle with those of sensation fiction and the ghost story', Ascari gives a central role to the themes of the gothic in the history and evolution of crime fiction. This puts under a new light Buzzati's literary operation and its combination of fantastic literature with influences from *noir*, the gothic, and detective fiction in his crime reportages. It is not a contradictory use of genres generally considered to be 'realistic' in a narrative that rejects realism, but rather a judicious exploitation of the aspects of those genres which can be related to the atmospheres of mystery and fantasy. It is no surprise then that Ascari explains how in the history of the genre, especially between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, critical emphasis has been placed on the rational component of crime fiction in order to ascribe to it the rank of literary work of art and release it from the 'lowbrow' label which was linked to the themes of the supernatural. As Ascari states, 'in their attempt to assert the dignity of the genre, writers and critics emphasized its rational elements at the expense of other components and consequently pushed the more sensational aspects into the background'.⁴¹⁴ Buzzati's literary operation appears then in all its originality when one considers that with his crime news the combination of gothic and factuality was further problematized by the use of fantasy and accuracy not in a strictly literary context, but in journalism.

Clearly, the meaning of the narrative operation conducted by Buzzati, and his playing with different popular literary genres in order to serve the journalistic genre of crime news, is once again the realization of the impossibility of understanding the world we live if we do not accept its 'hidden' part. The gothic can dialogue with reportage, *noir*, the marvelous, and the grotesque only if one is prepared to accept Buzzati's construction of an 'other world' where shadows, ghosts, haunting presences, but also animated machines and monsters are in real connection with human beings. It is a world which through its creatures and imagination can teach men a moral lesson and one

⁴¹² Maurizio Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction: Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. XI.

⁴¹³ Clive Bloom, 'Introduction', in *Gothic Horror: a Reader's Guide from Poe to King and Beyond*, ed. by Clive Bloom (Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p. 2, quoted in Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, p. XI.

⁴¹⁴ Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, p. 3.

which, as I will try to explain in the last section of this chapter, may be actively put into practice in a modern world ruled by progress, technology, and money. The reader must consider the reportage not as a faithful photograph that, once seen, may be forgotten, but has to take it into account only in order to ponder the meaning of what has been reported and the knowledge that can be gathered from it. The core of this crime news is that, despite the use of fiction, accuracy is addressed as an ethical problem: the journalist must offer to the public a tool for meditation. Not coincidentally, again in ‘Un’ombra gira tra noi’, Buzzati addresses the entire community by criticizing ‘la gente’, because ‘agli spettacoli più fantasiosi di morte violenta aveva fatto negli ultimi anni un allenamento senza pari e la vendetta [...] aveva negli ultimi anni celebrato sagre di incomparabile potenza’ (p. 46). He asks for the people, the ‘real’ people, to fight that imaginary diabolic spirit which is haunting the city: ‘Bisogna scovarlo. Occorre togliergli l’aria, incalzarlo oltre i confini estremi della città’ (p. 47).

4.2 Crimes, Gothic, and *Noir*

It is time to take a closer look at a paradigmatic group of articles from *La ‘Nera’* the analysis of which demonstrates how Buzzati’s interplay of literary genres, fantasy, and journalism reached with the crime news of the postwar years a fundamental point in the evolution of his ‘other world’, and how this ‘other world’ allows us to see the links between Buzzati’s non-fiction and his more strictly literary works. After the group of articles dedicated to Rina Fort, the piece entitled ‘L’ombra in attesa’ is a different example of the insertion of genre fiction elements in a reportage the aim of which is to elicit a reflection, this time about the meaning of death and the role of fate in life.⁴¹⁵ The piece combines gothic and *orrido* and is dedicated to the accident which struck a bus which fell from an escarpment in the precincts of Magreglio (a town in the province of Como) and caused the death of twenty-one young people. Here the accuracy of the detached account provided by the reporter is temporarily set aside in order to give space to a deeper investigation of the meaning of the events. Buzzati introduces in the narrative the presence of death as an active participant in the action by choosing again, interestingly enough, to hide it under the metaphor of the shadow. In this way he calls

⁴¹⁵ Dino Buzzati, ‘L’ombra in attesa’, in *Corriere d’Informazione*, 27 December 1947, in *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, pp. 45, 46.

into question issues of existential significance, such as the relevance of human choices in the face of a destiny which seems to be already decided: '[...] alle porte di Magreglio [...] un'ombra nera e gelida era ferma ad aspettarli. [...] E nessuno lo poteva sapere. [...] Nulla è inquietante – anche per chi ride del fato – come le oscure concatenazioni che [...] sembra preparino [...] questi 'trionfi della morte'' (p. 28). The author's idea of the presence of a fate which dominates our lives and plays with us is set into the article as a warning: objectivity clashes with fiction and complicates the representation of a 'real' in which the concepts of 'truth' and 'falseness' have lost their meaning.

Buzzati's crime news is not only a form of exercise and training for literature: news becomes literature itself by being proposed as a different narrative mode, not opposed to but in communication with realism and the fantastic. As in the case of the blood meticulously described in 'L'ombra in attesa', the readers know that somewhere they have already read about haunting shadows, ferocious murders and spilt blood, because these elements are constitutive of genres such as crime fiction and horror stories. Yet the readers find themselves challenged by the presence of such images in a journalistic context from which they would expect as much sobriety and detachment as possible. Buzzati's crime news confirms Roland Barthes' idea that '[...] a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God), but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture'.⁴¹⁶ In this particular case death acts as a horrific presence which mercilessly strikes young lives. There is no crime, and this is the reason why the article is part of 'Incubi', the section of *La 'Nera'* dedicated to fatalities and tragedies: as in a gothic tale, a pleasant mountain setting is apparently transformed completely in the space of a paragraph when death takes the stage and knocks 'all'uscio, con quel suo picchio atrocissimo che di colpo raggela i cuori' (p. 28). The memory goes immediately back to another text in which death waits patiently outside the door for his victim: in 'Il mantello', one of Buzzati's best-known short stories, a soldier goes to say goodbye to his mother before accepting the will of fate.⁴¹⁷ Exactly as 'quello là che aspetta' in 'Il mantello',⁴¹⁸ in Magreglio 'l'ombra [...] attende e non ha impazienza perché sui libri

⁴¹⁶ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977 [1982]), pp. 142-148 (p. 146).

⁴¹⁷ Dino Buzzati, 'Il mantello', in *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), pp. 138-144.

⁴¹⁸ Dino Buzzati, 'Il mantello', p. 143.

del destino l'ora è già stata segnata e nessuna potenza al mondo la potrà cambiare' (p. 29). The innocence of the victims mirrors the naivety of those characters such as children and young ladies who in gothic tales are more likely to risk their lives. Besides, there is another short story by Buzzati in which death comes knocking as in 'Il mantello' and is as unstoppable and pitiless as in 'L'ombra in attesa': in 'Eppure battono alla porta' death is the noise made by the growing flood outside Maria and Stefano Gron's house which announces the imminent end of their family and the destruction of their 'villa', even though in this case it is the stupidity and dullness of men that is to be blamed rather than destiny.⁴¹⁹

What is relevant to notice here is how the use of the 'fantastic' changed in Buzzati's news from the first part of his career to the period after the end of the war. In the former, as the similarities with the poetics of *Il deserto dei Tartari* that I identified in my previous chapters confirmed, the 'fantastic', rather than a question of aesthetics, is merely an attitude, a point of view. The atmospheres of the settings – deserts and the sea in particular – are sometimes disturbing and warring, sometimes mysterious; the protagonists are either depicted as heroes of mythical stories or victims (see chapters two and three). In the case of crime news instead there is a qualitative change in this 'fantastic' which is upgraded to include an aesthetic component which shows awareness of the literary *topoi* which are more suited to transmit the image of the 'other world' Buzzati was seeking: this 'other world' is now clearly a dimension recognizable only through imagination and art, in which the horrors and contradictions of modern times can be represented and challenged by accepting the presence in our lives of metaphysical entities such as spirits and ghosts.

With the freedom of speech and of the press that was recovered in Italy after the restrictions of the *ventennio*,⁴²⁰ Buzzati could give space within his narrative to genres of fiction which were off-limits before, because of the demands of the censor for adherence to reality and concreteness. One of the genre fictions which is most often called into question by Buzzati in crime news is exactly that particular form of the gothic which in 'L'ombra in attesa' transforms a journalistic article into something more complicated. It is a genre which re-uses those mysterious and scary features which

⁴¹⁹ Dino Buzzati, 'Eppure battono alla porta', in *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), pp. 77-93.

⁴²⁰ See Paolo Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano. Dalle gazzette a Internet* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), p. 147: 'La cronaca nera è un chiodo fisso di Mussolini [...]. Già il 9 gennaio 1926 [...] Mussolini telegrafa ai prefetti che 'occorre smobilitare anche la cronaca nera' e ridurre 'fino a farla scomparire la rubrica dei cosiddetti 'stanchi della vita'.

are part of the nineteenth-century fantastic narrative and yet maintains the analytic rationality which was typical of a character such as Poe's Dupin, combining 'imagination, omniscience and darkness'.⁴²¹ As stated by Rosemary Jackson, 'over the course of the nineteenth century, fantasies [...] reveal the *internal* origin of the other. The demonic is not supernatural, but is an aspect of personal and interpersonal life [...]'.⁴²² Buzzati makes his readers feel the presence of this dark 'other' among them: ghosts, evil presences and shadows live within the society of human beings and are often produced by that same society. 'A loss of faith in supernaturalism, a gradual scepticism and problematization of the relation of self and world, introduced a much closer 'otherness', something intimately related with the self'.⁴²³ A further confirmation of the close relationship which exists between men – namely the society and people to whom Buzzati's journalistic narrative was first and foremost addressed – and those fears and monsters which populate this kind of fiction is H.P. Lovecraft's powerful beginning of his *Supernatural Horror in Literature*: 'the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown'.⁴²⁴

However, Buzzati never transformed completely his works of reportage either into tales of horror or into gothic short stories. Rather, he used images and features of these traditions in order to enrich – in strategic places of his texts – the representation of the real and to make it coherent with the connection between the visible and the invisible which his 'other world' had the aim of depicting. Neither horror nor gothic ever become the sole characteristics of the stories: they are always balanced by a strong link with everyday reality. Buzzati never becomes a writer linkable to a single fiction genre, he is neither a crime fiction writer nor a gothic writer: the originality of his work is in the use and combination of different genres he put at the service of his narrative. Several critics have demonstrated how in his fiction this is proved by the almost constant presence of a journalistic *incipit* in which subsequently an event of uncanny or patently supernatural nature breaks.⁴²⁵ In crime news this process is reversed: the background of the story is journalistic by definition and so are the expectations of the reader. Genre fiction is then

⁴²¹ See Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, p. 49.

⁴²² Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 55.

⁴²³ Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 56.

⁴²⁴ Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York: Ben Abramson, 1945 [1927]), p.12.

⁴²⁵ See for example Maria Luisa Altieri Biagi, 'L' 'incipit' cronistico nei testi narrativi di Buzzati', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 369-390.

summoned to add a further element of representation which equates what is reported by the journalist to what is narrated by the writer: no matter if the context is literature or journalism, the ‘other world’ which our eyes refuse to see is there, and the world we accept because it is justified by reason and empiricism is as fake as that of ancient fables and myths.

If in ‘Un’ombra gira tra noi’ and ‘L’ombra in attesa’, the image of the shadow transmits an uncanny sense of the presence of death and evil among us, in ‘Alla scadenza di un anno’ the gothic element of the story is connected to an ‘approach to fantasy’ which is not so *orrido* as it is *meraviglioso*. The chosen *topos* is not the shadow anymore but the ghost, and Buzzati plays more explicitly with the supernatural and with the relationship between life and afterlife.⁴²⁶ The article, written for the first anniversary of John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s death, skips any kind of journalistic introduction to begin the narration in the middle of a scene set at the border between life and death. The style of the text is characterized by the use of the present tense and by a dynamism which has the effect of giving the story a sense of expectation and suspension: eleven figures of men and women join Oswald, the presumed murderer of Kennedy, in a deserted land between limbo and hell. These ghosts will judge him according to a precise law which states that murderers are not allowed to enter the realm of dead people immediately, but have to wait for a year and roam around the places where they committed their crimes. The dialogues between these ghosts are surreal enough to disorientate the reader, and the re-use of tradition is ironic: the language of the meeting between the spirits is filled with technical and bureaucratic terms and imitates a trial. The meaning of this aesthetic choice is that Buzzati does not pay tribute to a lost literary tradition in order to simply look at it with nostalgia: as we need rules in our lives so as not to be overwhelmed by chaos, so it is in the afterlife. The only difference is that in hell these rules are definitive and merciless: everything we do when we are alive will have a consequence and sooner or later we will all have to pay our dues.

The similarity between life and afterlife which here is symbolized by the bureaucratic tone of the judgement of Oswald’s sin is not a novelty for Buzzati, whose description of hell in ‘Viaggio agli inferni del secolo’ is not coincidentally that of an apparently absolutely normal metropolis, which could be any of the big cities of our

⁴²⁶ Dino Buzzati, ‘Alla scadenza di un anno’, in *Corriere d’informazione*, 21-22 November 1964, in *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 279- 284.

contemporary world.⁴²⁷ There is no difference, apart from the fact that once the threshold is crossed, in the afterlife there is no death waiting for us at the end of our journey, hence there are no more reasons either for fears or doubts, but there is also no more space for hopes or dreams. Interestingly enough, the fictional ‘Viaggio agli inferni del secolo’, which closes the 1966 collection of short stories *Il Colombre*, is narrated as a journalistic inquiry, assigned by the editor of the newspaper to the journalist Dino Buzzati. Moreover, the link between news and fantasy, this world and the ‘other’ is confirmed by the fact that the entrance to this hell which Buzzati has to describe is a very common small door, discovered by a workman during the building of the Milan underground.

In ‘Alla scadenza di un anno’ the narrative choice of reporting dialogues between ghosts in a journalistic article as if it were the normal transcription of real facts creates a dissonance with the dark atmosphere released by the content of the story, and a sort of challenge between signifier and signified that sounds like a mockery of so-called objective and detached journalism:

[...] scadeva un anno esatto dall’atto compiuto personalmente dal nominato Lee H. Oswald e coloro che uccidono con intenzione un altro uomo o donna non possono passare subito di là bensì sono costretti a girovagare per dodici mesi nei luoghi della loro perdizione [...]. Passati i quali mesi il signor Oswald doveva sloggiare definitivamente da questa valle di lacrime e acconciarsi a una eternità più o meno disagiata [...] (p. 281).

Elsewhere Buzzati avoids irony, and his crime news is built like a progression towards the climax of a disturbing, horrific, and dreadful revelation, as in the case of ‘Una testimonianza sul mostro di Londra’.⁴²⁸ Here the ghosts of gothic are coupled again with *orrido* to tell the story of John Reginald Christie, who raped and strangled seven women, including his wife and his daughter, before hiding four of the bodies in a hollow of his house walls, one under the floor, and two in the garden. The narrative is organized as a reported dialogue between a police officer and Mrs. Meddle, Christie’s neighbour. Whereas a superficial reading makes the article seem a cold reportage of an

⁴²⁷ Dino Buzzati, ‘Viaggio agli inferni del secolo’, in *Il Colombre* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966), pp. 399-469.

⁴²⁸ Dino Buzzati, ‘Una testimonianza sul mostro di Londra’, in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 14 April 1953, in *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 137-143.

investigation, by isolating Mrs. Meddle's answers to the officer's questions, a narrative with the suspense of horror stories emerges:

[...] Quando, il 12 marzo, la vedeste nel giardino, la signora Christie era sola o insieme col marito? [...]

'Sola.'

'Siete certa che fosse proprio lei?'

'Certissima: la sua voce che dal giardino chiamava: Johnny! Johnny! [...] Udii aprirsi la porta sul giardino, intravidi nel buio la camicia del signor Christie e poi udii la sua voce: Chi è là? Chi è là? Ma nessuno rispose [...] era buio pesto [...] udii le voci di altre donne che pure ridevano [...] dopo che quelle ebbero sghignazzato lungamente, udii il signor Christie gridare: basta! basta! [...] come ho detto, uscì solo il signor Christie, agitatissimo. Non l'avevo mai visto in quello stato [...] appena il signor Christie se ne fu andato, nella casa fu silenzio' (pp. 140-142).

The climax is reached at the end of the article, when Buzzati finds an original answer to the questions as to the reasons why Christie would have left the house risking that new householders might discover the bodies, which is exactly what happened and what brought about Christie's arrest. Mrs Meddle's hypothesis makes the narrative shift definitively from a journalistic/objective context to that of a ghost story:

'Mi par di udirle ancora, ridevano in modo spaventoso...'

'Che si trattasse, per dirla in parole povere, di spiriti?'

'Voi stesso lo dite.'

'Gli spiriti delle assassinate?'

'Per l'appunto, signor sergente.'

'E quindi il signor Christie avrebbe abbandonato la casa per paura?'

'Sì, sì, questo voglio dire!' (p. 143).

These examples show that Buzzati's preoccupation was not only to fulfill his journalistic duty of reporting the facts accurately, but that his crime news represents a unique literary experience in the twentieth century, both for aesthetic reasons and for the way it addressed problems regarding representation. As the critical theory about crime and horror genres tells us, the search for a combination of facts and fiction was a peculiarity of these genres since the nineteenth century. Crimes were reported by looking for ways to make the reader feel involved and 'a fundamental ingredient in the

recipe for sensation is the ambiguity of stories that are presented as real, but stretch the boundaries of what we might call reality to the utmost, so as to make room for the deepest terrors of the public'.⁴²⁹ Buzzati's re-use of this tradition is clear but is updated to his century: the terrors of the public are elicited and no more called into question only for reasons of sensationalism. 'Sensationalists [of the nineteenth century] had subverted the rules of the literary market, breaking the boundaries between low and high literature and creating a new public for crime literature'.⁴³⁰ While many have criticized Buzzati for his 'too journalistic' style, by demonstrating how the division between 'high' and 'low' literature is still great to be overcome, he started by taking it as a fact and exploiting his new public, made of intellectuals and common people, artists and workmen, to state that there are ghosts and demons which haunt modern times. If for Victorian culture the emergence of the gothic and the dark were traceable in the possibility of a regression of modern civilization to more primitive forms, on the basis of the recent Darwinian theories of evolution,⁴³¹ for Buzzati the monsters that crowd our cities are quite the opposite: they are the degenerate children of that same alleged civilization that has driven itself so far as to de-humanize its inhabitants.

This image of a de-humanized metropolitan population is particularly evident when Buzzati combines his different 'approaches to fantasy' with *topoi* and techniques which can be brought back to *noir* fiction. If in pieces such as those dedicated to Rina Fort there is a potential connection to crime fiction, and in others such as 'Una testimonianza sul mostro di Londra' and 'Alla scadenza di un anno' there are various elements of the horror/gothic story, then there are texts such as 'Delitto senza passione'⁴³² where the crimes reported happen in a setting which is 'il luogo prediletto del *noir*', that is 'la città che cristallizza il degrado della società'.⁴³³ As explained by Monica Jansen, Inge Lanslots, and Dieter Vermandere in their 'Introduction' to *Noir de Noir*, '[...] la linearità razionale del giallo tradizionale [...], nel *noir* viene spezzata dal

⁴²⁹ Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, p. 112.

⁴³⁰ Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, p. 116.

⁴³¹ See Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, p. 146: 'The Victorian faith in progress coexisted with a widespread fear of decline, which fostered a climate of anxiety and helped engender a culture of decadence. *Fien-de-siècle* fiction was haunted by the resurfacing of primeval instincts that had been exercised thanks to the march of civilization'.

⁴³² Dino Buzzati, 'Delitto senza passione', in *Corriere della Sera*, 27 January 1966, in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 329-331.

⁴³³ Pia Schwarz Lausten, 'Un virus nel corpo sano della letteratura? Il nuovo *noir* italiano e l'impegno', in *Noir de Noir*, ed. by Dieter Vermandere, Monica Jansen, and Inge Lanslots (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 57-72 (p. 61).

caleidoscopio dei punti di vista. Per di più nel *noir* il narratore spesso adotta il ‘punto di vista di Caino’, che capovolge gli esiti morali del giallo classico e che riduce la verità alla parzialità del frammento’.⁴³⁴ From what I have been arguing so far it should be evident how a genre fiction with these characteristics could be congenial to Buzzati’s crime news and to his journalism’s questions about reality: ‘lo spostamento della soluzione (nel giallo) verso la problematizzazione della verità (nel *noir*) comporta anche la messa in questione del reale e dei parametri morali adottati dalla società’.⁴³⁵

In ‘Delitto senza passione’ the dark and oppressive atmosphere of the suburbs where only destitute people live is depicted so as to underline the coldness and indifference which surround the murder by decapitation of a man. The description of such desolate areas of the metropolis puts into question the dynamics which regulate our contemporary consumer society: ‘Siamo nel cuore della cosiddetta *casba*, la quale non ha niente di pittoresco e avventuroso [...], è semplicemente un pezzo della Milano vecchia [...] dalla cui faccia il tempo ha cancellato a poco a poco il decoro Borghese dell’origine lasciando un opaco intonaco di abbandono e morte’ (p. 329). Giuseppe Zaffaroni, found dead in his wardrobe, killed by his schizophrenic nephew, is a product of the forgotten areas of the metropolis where desperate men and criminals gather, unwanted by the rest of the community:

[...] almeno questa sera si capisce come da un simile posto possa essere nato questo orrore. [...] è una cosa sconsolata e squallida esattamente come queste case [...]. Questa non è la giungla d’asfalto è, d’asfalto, la sozza palude putrefatta. [...] Un uomo decapitato [...]. Non è un delitto da banditi o da *gangsters*, è un fattaccio sudicio e balordo da sottoscala, fermentato dalla svogliata putrefazione delle anime (p. 330).

‘Delitto senza passione’ is a brief but powerful text, in which the strength of the language used (‘orrore’, ‘sozza palude putrefatta’, ‘fattaccio sudicio’, ‘putrefazione delle anime’, etc.) serves to transmit a sense of *orrido* even if there is no trace of spirits or gothic ghosts. The *orrido* here is a human, totally earthbound attribute, created entirely by men and their cruelty, with nothing supernatural in it. The *noir* helps connect the facts more directly to the lives of the readers because Buzzati exploits its conventional metropolitan setting and foreshadows some of the results of what has been

⁴³⁴ Monica Jansen, Inge Lanslots, and Dieter Vermandere, ‘Introduction’, in *Noir de Noir*, ed. by Dieter Vermandere, Monica Jansen, and Inge Lanslots (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 9-19 (p. 9).

⁴³⁵ Jansen, Lanslots, and Vermandere, ‘Introduction’, in *Noir de Noir*, p. 10.

defined as ‘l’attuale fioritura del giallo-*noir* in Italia’ which ‘[fa] parte di una tendenza della letteratura contemporanea a occuparsi di questioni sociali e politiche’.⁴³⁶ Buzzati, as in the shape that *noir* fiction has assumed in Italian contemporary literature, ‘[...] cerca la verità in una realtà complessa, e c’è un messaggio morale che riflette un bisogno urgente di giustizia [...]’.⁴³⁷

What is important to understand is that this interest in society and modernity, but also in justice and morality, and the ‘punto di vista di Caino’, are all conveyed by Buzzati’s methodical appropriations of the conventions of various fictional genres. Yet, this process has consequences which go beyond aesthetics and concern the problem of representation, intended not only as *mimesis* – that is as the imitation of reality and nature – but as a deeper inquiry into the world, men, the society they inhabit and their connection with the ‘other world’ to which Buzzati tried to give space with his narrative. This is the problem I will try to study in the next section.

4.3 Imagination and *Mimesis*: the lost Cause of Realism

One of the ‘approaches to fantasy’, which I have borrowed from the theorization of Geno Pampaloni, the effects of which remain to be seen when applied to Buzzati’s crime fiction is the *assurdo*. The reason for this is that the absurd tone which some of Buzzati’s articles acquire is particularly useful to understand how Buzzati’s crime journalism transmitted the idea of the modern world as complex, full of unresolved contradictions, and hence capable also of being absurd and incomprehensible. According to the definition of ‘image’ provided by Raymond Williams in *Keywords*, the terms ‘imagination’ and ‘imaginary’ have ‘[...] throughout, in English, referred to mental conceptions, including a quite early sense of seeing what does not exist as well as what is not plainly visible’.⁴³⁸ It is the final part of this statement which interests me the most, because it is this use of imagination as the ability of ‘going beyond’ the visible which gives Buzzati’s fantasy the possibility of representing the complexity of our world. In Buzzati’s crime news the interest for everything that can represent a form of ‘otherness’ acquires a sense only if it helps to develop, in a creative way, a critical eye

⁴³⁶ Schwarz Lausten, ‘Un virus nel corpo sano della letteratura?’, p. 57.

⁴³⁷ Schwarz Lausten, ‘Un virus nel corpo sano della letteratura?’, p. 58.

⁴³⁸ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 158.

on the surrounding world, and the realization of the presence of absurdity in the world is part of this process of awareness.

The matter in hand is always breaking what Andreas Huyssen calls ‘the dogma of mimetic referentiality’.⁴³⁹ Huyssen explains how ‘already in 1931 Brecht argued that in the 20th century traditional realistic dramaturgy was no longer viable and that reality itself required a new mode of representation. The traditional practice of using individual characters to symbolize the universal had become questionable [...]’.⁴⁴⁰ These words show the coherence of Buzzati’s aesthetic operation with twentieth-century scepticism about the existence of a sole meaningful reality, but they also justify, if it were necessary, the reasons for the often criticized under-characterizations of Buzzati’s characters. As in his novels and short stories, also in his crime news Buzzati’s accuracy in the description of his individual characters is limited to a few lines within the text: this choice is deliberate and connected to the goal of making the reader focus on the overall matters of interest that the narrative may have when it is interpreted as a parable of everyday life and the society in which we live. The pedagogical aim of Buzzati’s journalism – which I theorized in chapter one by building on Kathryn Hume’s category of ‘didactic literature’ – sets aside the characterization of characters so typical of the realistic novels in order to focus on broader issues.⁴⁴¹ Long descriptions, articulated plots, and the effort of rendering the narrated events as plausible as possible are not needed since the point of departure, being a journalistic reportage, is already supposedly a reliable source. What is at stake here is the representation of an ‘other world’ which is interwoven with the one in which we think we live: the mistake is in thinking that shocking stories about brutal crimes or absurd events do not concern us because they are confined to the realm of literature.

⁴³⁹ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 170.

⁴⁴⁰ Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p. 102.

⁴⁴¹ In order to deepen the discussion about Buzzati’s choices on the characterization of his fictional characters it will be enough to read some of the most important studies on his production such as, only to mention a few, Antonia Arslan, *Invito alla lettura di Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1993 [1974]); Fausto Gianfranceschi, *Dino Buzzati* (Turin: Borla, 1967); Nella Giannetto, *Il sudario delle caligini. Significati e fortune dell’opera buzzatiana* (Florence, Olschi, 1996); Stefano Lazzarin, *Il Buzzati ‘secondo’. Saggio sui fattori di letterarietà nell’opera buzzatiana* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2008).

The text which probably best exemplifies the dialogue between *assurdo* and crime fiction in Buzzati's crime news is the article entitled 'L'ibi'.⁴⁴² This text was published after a 62 year-old German committed suicide in Mainz because the police did not believe him to be guilty of embezzlement. Buzzati gave the protagonist a fictive name and revealed particulars of the crime – which is a murder in the fiction – which he could not have known about, such as the conversations between the man and his mother. Apart from changing one of the most important details of the reportage, such as the nature of the crime the culprit committed, the text generates an entropic process which takes the reader far away from journalistic objectivity, within a fantastic scenario that remains anyway linked to the core of the piece of news. What Buzzati does in this text is to reverse the reality as we would expect it to be presented by a journalist, namely as objectively as possible: the absurdity is in the fact that being a criminal becomes an honour and not a shame, being found out becomes a goal and not a defeat. Buzzati sets the story in a verisimilar but fantastic environment, in which shared ethical and moral values of modern society are overturned. Gustavo Andorra lives in a world in which murders and betrayals are a merit, so that he cannot accept not being believed by the authorities:

'[...] cosa è successo?' fece la mamma, spaventata [...].

Gustavo le crollò fra le braccia, singhiozzando:

'Non mi credono, non mi vogliono credere!'

'Hai parlato con la polizia?'

'Sì, ho raccontato tutto'

'E non ti hanno creduto?'

'Macché [...]. Non c'è verso di persuaderli. Si sono messi in testa che sono innocente [...].

E ce l'avevo messa tutta [...], questa volta avevo fatto le cose per benino, il sangue, le impronte digitali, tutto quanto...'

'Dio mio, Dio mio' implorò la mamma, sgomenta. 'Che ne sarà di noi, adesso?' (p. 185).

If the 'uncanny', which is considered to be a typical element of fantastic literature, is theorized by Freud as a process of restoration of repressed and primitive impulses, then Buzzati obtains it by presenting an upside-down reality which appears to be

⁴⁴² Dino Buzzati, 'L'ibi', in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 9 November 1958, in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 183-190. The article was also published in the collection of non-fiction texts *Siamo spiacenti di* (Milan: Mondadori, 1960), pp. 57-60.

uncanny because it is not just hypothetically verisimilar, but is connected to an actual event:

Gustavo rievocava come gli fosse nata la prima idea del ‘grande colpo’. L’ambizione di un delitto perfetto, il grande sogno, l’orgoglio dell’ergastolo, magari con cinque bei sodi anni di segregazione cellulare, l’invidia degli amici, l’adorazione delle ragazze del quartiere, i titoloni dei giornali, le fotografie, la gloria! (p. 186).

The decision to change the crime into a murder is functional to exaggerate the perception of absurdity of the event in the reader, and the detailed planning of the crime by Gustavo borrows and at the same time mocks the realistic style of canonical crime fiction: once again literary genres are bent and adapted to serve journalism. Despite the absurdity of the events narrated it is however important to notice that in ‘*L’ibi*’ the representation of reality does not aim to state the meaninglessness of the world: Buzzati’s use of the *assurdo* is provocative and introduces a doubt in the readers’ minds about the reliability of what they are reading, but has a value only if it can teach something useful. What I am trying to state is that Buzzati’s fantastic crime news stays at a point of intersection of various literary traditions the aim of which is to affirm what Florian Mussnug called, while referring to the experimental narrative of Giorgio Manganelli, the ‘impossible longing for absolute meaning and an equally impossible desire for perfect meaninglessness’.⁴⁴³ On the one hand, Buzzati’s position is that described by Doug Underwood as typical of journalist-literary figures whose ‘fiction tended to be based upon the same writing philosophy and skills as their journalism: a careful attention to external things, a strong interest in matters outside of self [...]’.⁴⁴⁴ On the other hand, Buzzati illustrates a clash between what is visible and what transcends visibility: they collide but they remain two faces of the same coin; none of them can be obliterated because they are both essential to the existence of Buzzati’s ‘other world’. Buzzati is a man who inhabits a world which does not want to renounce – to use Derrida’s words – its ‘centre’. As I have already stated in my previous chapters, Buzzati is a proud member of that bourgeoisie which, according to Roland Barthes, ‘promotes the sinful view that reading is natural and language transparent’ and so makes

⁴⁴³ Florian Mussnug, *The Eloquence of Ghosts. Giorgio Manganelli and the Afterlife of the Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 130.

⁴⁴⁴ Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, p. 139.

the readers believe that, through language, they are comprehending ‘a solid and unified ‘truth’ of ‘reality’’.⁴⁴⁵ Only avant-garde writing would be able to ‘allow the unconscious of language to rise to the surface’.⁴⁴⁶ But Buzzati does not arrive either at the narrative experimentations of the avant-garde and neo avant-garde movements of the twentieth century or at the political commitment against the bourgeois class which characterized Italian neorealist literature. As explained by Sharon Wood, ‘Buzzati stood aside [...] from the Neorealist aesthetic that was rooted in its political ethic and remained uninvolved in the formal linguistic expressionism of the early 1960s’.⁴⁴⁷

There are cases in which the quest for a meaning in this world is symptomatic of such an urgent need that not only the *assurdo*, but also the other uses of the fantastic we have seen applied so far by Buzzati, are set aside to privilege a moral/didactic intent. The need for a ‘centre’ in Buzzati’s vision of the world, the search for a meaning which must somehow justify the dread of human lives never stops, and is traceable in articles such as ‘Non inutilmente’.⁴⁴⁸ The text, written for the death of the racing driver Alberto Ascari, tries to find a life lesson, a reason of coherence behind the series of incidents which involved several famous Italian drivers in the history of professional racing. This search for meaning finds a solution in a pedagogical lesson that the journalist tries to communicate to his readers:

Quale vantaggio porta all’umanità la smania di costruire macchine sempre più potenti e di lanciarle in una follia mai sazia di velocità [...]? [...] rispondiamo: ‘Non solo serve, è indispensabile, non potrebbe non esistere’. Senza saperlo, i piloti come Alberto Ascari non sono che le avanguardie della vita che va avanti [...] e, se si fermasse, perirebbe. [...] è lo slancio vitale che le incita al di là di ogni confine’.⁴⁴⁹

As this passage shows, ‘while Buzzati’s tales can effectively skewer the illusions and absurdities by which people live, they also demonstrate a large degree of moral didacticism’.⁴⁵⁰ The pedagogical element of Buzzati’s journalism is a symptom of the

⁴⁴⁵ See Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker, *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), pp. 155, 156.

⁴⁴⁶ Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker, *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, p. 156.

⁴⁴⁷ Sharon Wood, ‘Dino Buzzati’, in *Italian Novelists since World War II, 1945-1965*, ed. by Augustus Pallotta (Detroit and Milan: Thomson Gale, 1997), pp.75-84 (76).

⁴⁴⁸ Dino Buzzati, ‘Non inutilmente’, in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 27 May 1955, in *La ‘Nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, pp. 79-84.

⁴⁴⁹ Buzzati, ‘Non inutilmente’, pp. 82, 83.

⁴⁵⁰ Wood, ‘Dino Buzzati’, p. 80.

necessity not to stop looking for a reason behind human existence which could still justify what Foucault called ‘the sovereignty of the subject’.⁴⁵¹

This aspect of his narrative represents the most evident difference between Buzzati’s representation of reality and the most extreme developments of that ‘vision of modernity [which] begins with Nietzsche and Mallarmé and is thus quite close to what literary criticism describes as modernism [...] – an aesthetic question relating to the energies released by the deliberate destruction of language and other forms of representation’.⁴⁵² Buzzati wanted to represent an ‘other world’ in which the visible and invisible lived together, which went beyond realism and the mere recording of data, but he never questioned a system of which he considered himself to be an integral part and which was for him both tested and reassuring. He worked within the fixed order of postwar Italian journalism and in one of the oldest and most conservative newspapers of the country. This fixed order was characterized by a long lasting static nature: newspapers, after twenty years of severe control exerted by Fascist censorship, were not able to engage problematically with the political and social debate and, even during the 1950s, were stuck in a form of torpor which connived with the established power. This was particularly valid for the *Corriere della Sera* in the period of Mario Missiroli’s editorship, between 1952 and 1961. As explained by Paolo Murialdi, ‘Missiroli è un campione della cautela e dell’ufficiosità e il caporedattore che compila il *Corriere*, Mario Mottola [...], non è da meno di lui. Al più diffuso quotidiano si addice [...] l’aggettivo ‘pantofolaio’’.⁴⁵³ In Italy, in the postwar period, ‘le uniche novità della stampa quotidiana continuano a essere rappresentate dai giornali del pomeriggio e della sera. Il modello preferito è *France Soir* [...] e non il giornale popolare all’inglese il cui tipico esempio è il tabloid *Daily Mirror*’.⁴⁵⁴ This still elitist, tamed journalism is the background from which Buzzati cannot be detached, even if his crime journalism represents an exceptional attempt at a way out of this blocked system of representation of the real. In my theoretical chapter I wrote that the sense of entropy that arises from Buzzatian narrative and its mixture of objectivity and subjectivity, facts and fiction, is a state of calm that, according to the author, in life is not reachable. Buzzati cannot accept the idea of a totally chaotic, irrational world, and for this reason his fantasy needs to

⁴⁵¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1st Edition in French: 1969]), p. 14.

⁴⁵² Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p. 203.

⁴⁵³ Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*, p. 210.

⁴⁵⁴ Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*, p. 210.

remain anchored to reality: journalism is the narrative mode and the medium that allows him to do so.

4.4 A Silent Revolt: Crime News and Society

The conservatism of the *Corriere della Sera* which characterized the newspaper in the years after the end of the Second World War turned out to be a fertile ground for Buzzati's subtle way of engaging with the political and social debate of his time. During the 1950s and the 1960s there was no censorship which could stop Buzzati, but only an established practice of moderation and traditionalism which became the trade-mark of the *Corriere* and which was first established by the editorship of Luigi Albertini, between 1900 and 1925.⁴⁵⁵ Buzzati's crime news perfectly suited this tradition: he only apparently moved his attention from questions of global relevance – such as those concerning politics, technological progress, atomic bombs etc. – to individual episodes that mirrored those major issues from the perspective of the single citizen. The crimes and dramatic events reported by the journalist were, on the contrary, analyzed in a way that could be described as a movement from the inside to the outside, which is to say from the particular to the general. The use of genre fiction – either crime fiction, gothic, or *noir* – was then linked to the single episode which interested the article and indirectly, subtly, to the critique or the analysis of a social or political question. A good example in this sense is the article I mentioned in my first chapter regarding the night security guard Giuseppe De Blasi, murderer of his own children.⁴⁵⁶ Here the setting is again that typical of *noir*, namely the decadent industrial metropolis. The metropolitan setting of the crime reinforces the coherence of Buzzati's operation with that of his literary sources: if 'one might even claim that the great protagonist of nineteenth-century sublime is London, which comes to represent a 'heart of darkness' at the core of the empire',⁴⁵⁷ then Buzzati's Milan has the same function in his crime news. In 'Una tragedia della città', the tragedy of a single man, which might seem to be an isolated episode of the effects of stress and depression, turns out to be a fierce analysis of the phenomenon of migration from southern Italy and urban decay during the 1960s.

⁴⁵⁵ See Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*, pp. 97-109.

⁴⁵⁶ Dino Buzzati, 'Una tragedia della città', in *Corriere della Sera*, 3 August 1963, in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 230-236.

⁴⁵⁷ Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction*, p. 51.

The interest in contemporary political and social issues is to be uncovered by the reader under the veil of fictional metaphors. As Stephen Martin wrote, '[...] we are left to face many of the same feelings and anxieties as the protagonist, a result of the fact that Buzzati never lets his reader see any more than the protagonists [...]'.⁴⁵⁸ Besides, Buzzati's 'moral didacticism' – softened by the use of imagination – tells us, more often than not, that men are the main cause of their own problems and of those which afflict their communities. His crime news displays a critique of modern society and in particular the problem of technology and science, both linked by the journalist to the anxiety for enrichment which characterizes modernity. Crime journalism becomes a means to address subtly, with the support of fiction, moral, social, and economic issues, by maintaining the detached aplomb typical of the *Corriere della Sera* and avoiding a direct participation in the heated political debate of the time.

One of the best examples of the way Buzzati used crime news to develop his critique of the excesses of modern society is 'Il demone degli asfalti'.⁴⁵⁹ The article is mentioned also by Sonia Basili, who, in her paper entitled 'Buzzati e i nuovi fenomeni di costume', investigates the actual number of articles of the decade between 1958 and 1968 in which the journalist gave space to those social phenomena that profoundly marked the years of the Italian 'economic boom'.⁴⁶⁰ her results state that 'tanto per il Buzzati narratore che per il Buzzati giornalista [...] l'uomo non può che essere la materia prima su cui lavorare, attraverso la quale trarre tutta una serie di riflessioni sulla vita e sul destino individuale o collettivo [...]. Ogni articolo [...] è dunque una buona occasione per trattare di fenomeni e atteggiamenti sociali [...]'.⁴⁶¹ The car in particular, protagonist of 'Il demone degli asfalti', is considered to be 'uno di quei mezzi moderni che più invelenisce gli animi degli uomini'⁴⁶² and its comparison to a demon makes the text fit in the category of *meraviglioso*. There is not a ghastly atmosphere which would allow us to talk of gothic, even though Buzzati was far from being new to the practice of transforming technological achievements of modernity into spectral and frightening creatures: in the short story 'La macchina che fermava il tempo' a system failure of a

⁴⁵⁸ Stephen Martin, 'Exploring the Intertextual: Buzzati and his Readers of 'I Sette Messaggeri'', *Italica*, 72 (1), Spring 1995, 70-82 (p. 78).

⁴⁵⁹ Dino Buzzati, 'Il demone degli asfalti', in *Corriere della Sera*, 25 February 1960, in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 1, ed. by Viganò, pp. 191-195.

⁴⁶⁰ Sonia Basili, 'Buzzati e i nuovi fenomeni di costume', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 5 (2000), 69-93.

⁴⁶¹ Basili, 'Buzzati e i nuovi fenomeni di costume', p. 70.

⁴⁶² Basili, 'Buzzati e i nuovi fenomeni di costume', p. 79.

machine which can lengthen men's existence reverses the process and consumes hundreds of lives in a handful of seconds; in the novel *Il grande ritratto* the entire action is set in a world where the excesses of scientific progress already possess such a fictional level of horror that Endriade, the protagonist, can build a machine shaped on the memory of his dead wife.⁴⁶³

'Il demone degli asfalti' is based on the story of Oreste Casabuoni, a lawyer who, after having been attacked by two people because of a risky overtaking at a traffic light, shot to death Aurelio Pellegatta, one of the two attackers. Buzzati builds the news as an examination of conscience: the single episode becomes a means to address the problem of how the overwhelming presence of cars in our lives transforms people from being respectable citizens to behaving like savages:

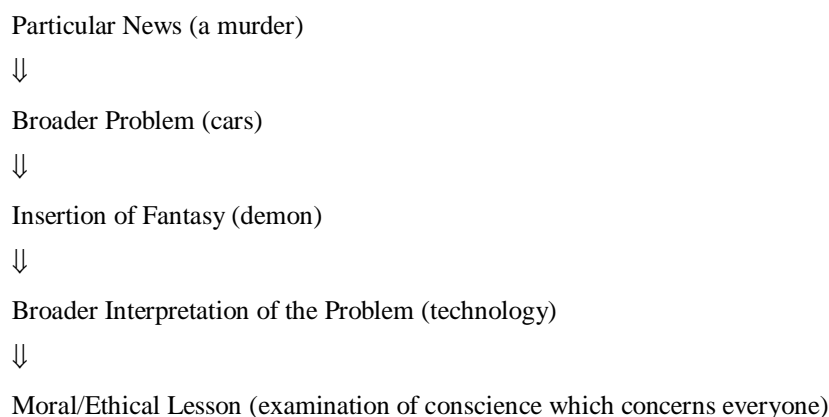
[...] Non siamo un po' tutti complici, noi che guidiamo l'automobile, del delitto di ieri a Milano? [...] È proprio l'auto, o il mezzo motorizzato in genere, a invelenire misteriosamente gli animi. Persone normalissime e educate, che nella vita familiare e di lavoro hanno un ferreo dominio di se stesse, diventano delle cariche esplosive quando hanno in mano il volante (p. 193).

In this text, if the single piece of news opens to the broader problem of the excessive presence of cars in men's lives, then the latter issue is brought a step further by the insertion of fantasy in order to enlarge the discussion to the negative influence that technology and progress have on human beings. With a loan from the tradition of ghost stories, the anger which is liberated in men by cars is compared to an illness of the soul caused by a mysterious demon of the asphalts which pollutes the brains of the most respectable men:

È una malattia a cui ben pochi sfuggono [...]. Un nefasto demone fluttua allora sulle fiamme di auto, camion, motorette e motocicli, si insinua nell'interno delle macchine, penetra nei cervelli. Ogni uomo al volante diventa come un arco teso [...]. Neppure gli affetti familiari [...] servono da contravveleno (p. 194).

It is a Chinese box mechanism which could be schematically represented like this:

⁴⁶³ See Dino Buzzati, 'La macchina che fermava il tempo', in *Il crollo della Baliverna* (Milan: Mondadori, 1954), pp. 116-123 and *Il grande ritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1960).



My intention is not to argue either that Buzzati's crime journalism is organized by a fixed structure, that the order represented by this outline is constant, or that all the elements in the scheme are always present. What I am trying to claim is that this narrative, on the one hand, refuses the typically modernist idea of a literature which needs to maintain its elitist character by remaining separate from life and mass culture, while on the other it challenges the simplistic representation of the real offered by the standard detached and tamed journalism of Buzzati's time. Fantasy and fiction are then united in order to transmit a teaching and to stimulate readers' reflection on themes of social interest. In the case of 'Il demone degli asfalti', Buzzati addresses the problem of technology indirectly, but effectively: he leaves the consequences of the anxiety of progress veiled under the subtle metaphor of a demon.

Buzzati's crime news is original and innovative not merely because it addresses social and political issues, but because of its way of doing it. Italian journalistic tradition was accustomed to the presence of intellectuals and men of letters in the news rooms both before and after Fascist dictatorship, and the most important newspapers of the peninsula competed for the big names of Italian culture. However, their articles and short stories were almost exclusively part of the so-called *terza pagina* which, invented by Alberto Bergamini in 1901 for the *Giornale d'Italia*, was a space totally dedicated to cultural topics.⁴⁶⁴ As explained by Paolo Murialdi, in Italy, newspapers, despite being organized according to the *omnibus* (for everyone) formula, were in fact elitist publications: 'La differenza tra giornali politici di opinione e giornali di cronaca, tra fogli di qualità e fogli popolari, che caratterizza la stampa quotidiana francese, inglese e

⁴⁶⁴ Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*, pp. 102, 103.

statunitense, in Italia non è netta o addirittura non esiste'.⁴⁶⁵ In other words, the traditional separation between literature and journalism was deeply-rooted in both the literary and journalistic Italian panorama and crime news was the last place where a reader would expect to find a challenging representation of everyday life. Buzzati, on the contrary, chose not to be indifferent, as too often has been argued, to the social and cultural debate of his time, but to approach it by narrating single, even minor events under the veil of fantasy and metaphor, in order to render them paradigmatic of the situation of the community. Buzzati's crime journalism presents the image of an intellectual who was able to offer a broader and less compromised interpretation of facts than that allowed by those who were deeply involved in the political and cultural debate. One of the techniques for reaching this goal was to use as metaphors of the dangers and problems of contemporary society an up-to-date version of the most common characters of the fantastic literary tradition: 'una volta esistevano la sfinge, l'ippogrifo [...], il tritone [...], il basilisco. Oggi non esistono più' and they assume the form of what Buzzati calls 'moderni mostri' such as 'il dirigente di una grande industria', 'il genio perduto' and 'il patito sociale'.⁴⁶⁶ Chronotopes typical of the fantastic tradition – such as haunted houses, castles, and monsters of horror and ghost stories – give way to cars, express trains, and telephones.⁴⁶⁷

Another example of this technique and, above all, one that contains a strong moral didacticism, is the crime news article 'Non tutta fatalità'.⁴⁶⁸ Published by the *Corriere* on 2 February 1961, this text combines the stories of a car and a train crash which both happened on the morning of the 1st of February. The bus crash in the Naviglio Grande caused the death of nine people, while part of a train which was travelling from Paris to Trieste went off the rails as a result of a fault and killed thirteen people at Cassano d'Adda (Milan). Buzzati followed, with a few adaptations, the outline I highlighted in 'Il demone degli asfalti': the strange and dramatic coincidence of the combination in the

⁴⁶⁵ Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*, p. 95.

⁴⁶⁶ Dino Buzzati, *Le notti difficili* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971), pp. 105-110.

⁴⁶⁷ See Stefano Lazzarin, *Fantasmî antichi e moderni. Tecnologia e perturbante in Buzzati e nella letteratura fantastica otto-novecentesca* (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2008), p. 16: '[Buzzati] non è contemporaneo delle principali scoperte tecnologiche [...]: la sua attività letteraria si situa 'a valle', quando, nelle mentalità, la stranezza perturbante del treno, del telefono o della fotografia è stata ormai assimilata. Nonostante ciò, Buzzati appare [...] rappresentativo: è un autore particolarmente sensibile a queste tematiche, e la sua opera è significativa per [...] l'impatto della tecnologia sulla letteratura, il suo carattere perturbante, infine il ruolo degli oggetti tecnologici nell'evoluzione del fantastico [...]'.

⁴⁶⁸ Dino Buzzati, 'Non tutta fatalità', in *Corriere della Sera*, 2 February 1971, in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, pp. 119-124.

same morning of two major mortal incidents is defined as ‘malvagia’, giving it in this way an ‘uncanny’ appearance from the beginning (p. 121). However, the single episode of the ‘due disastri’ is soon extended to the broader question of the ‘macchina’, which would be the ‘causa comune [...] anche se molto lontana’ of the two disasters (p. 122). The insertion of *meraviglioso* is subtle, but present: after having given to the tragedy the appearance of a thinking creature by defining it as cruel, Buzzati calls into question magic, by arguing that in order to ‘impedire che mai più in Italia simili cose avvengano’ it would be necessary ‘togliere di mezzo, con un’operazione di magia, l’ossessione della velocità di cui tutti siamo schiavi’ (p. 123). The fourth step of the path followed by the journalist is the extension of the problem to the entire society: it is the obsession with speed, defined as a fever which risks burning us all, which contaminates the sense of our limits and makes everyone forget that ‘anche nella tradizionale e quasi antiquata ferrovia si può annidare la morte’ (p. 123). Death is represented as an animated and thinking being, which hides in order to hit men when they are unprepared, and it is not a surprise if the entire text reaches its climax with a moral lesson: it would be absurd to persuade the modern world that this urge for speed and progress needs to be slowed down because the process is now irreversible.

Articles such as ‘Il demone degli asfalti’ and ‘Non tutta fatalità’ exemplify effectively the various passages of Buzzati’s manipulations of the narrative forms of crime news and fiction. As argued by Sharon Wood, ‘Buzzati combines the maximum of reality with the maximum of fantasy. Reality is not set aside but [...] viewed from another angle [...]’ in order to problematize and speculate about questions of social interests.⁴⁶⁹ In some of his short stories this speculation is more evident and acquires stronger tones, such as in ‘Paura alla Scala’, in which there is ‘[...] an unforgiving demystification of a corrupt society determined to maintain its political dominance’.⁴⁷⁰ In the context of crime journalism, on the other hand, the polemic is more tamed and balanced: this is the reason why, by recovering Panafieu’s idea of the presence of elements of revolt in Buzzati’s fiction, I would rather speak, for his crime news, of a ‘silent revolt’.⁴⁷¹ The core of this ‘silent revolt’ is the contrast between the part of Buzzati’s narrative which speaks of a journalist who grew up professionally in the news

⁴⁶⁹ Wood, ‘Dino Buzzati’, p. 83.

⁴⁷⁰ Wood, ‘Dino Buzzati’, p. 80. See Dino Buzzati, ‘Paura alla Scala’, in *Paura alla Scala*, pp. 25-73.

⁴⁷¹ Yves Panafieu, *Janus: Propositions pour un décryptage sociologique et idéologique de l’oeuvre de Dino Buzzati* (Paris: Laffont, 1989), pp. 99-136.

room of the conservative *Corriere della Sera*, a bourgeois man faithful to his employers, and those texts which transmit the idea of a man of letters engaged with the difficulties of representing facts objectively in the twentieth century. Buzzati's 'silent revolt' is hidden under stories which narrate the conditions of Italian citizens in a country that, defeated in the war, was struggling to build its future. The difficulty, for a journalist, of stimulating a productive debate on the events which characterized the 1950s and the 1960s is summarized by Paolo Murialdi when he states that 'dopo [...] la sconfitta della coalizione centrista [...] del 1953 [...] l'Italia si avvia verso una forte e squilibrata espansione industriale e commerciale [...]. Nonostante tutti questi sommovimenti i mezzi di informazione restano a lungo legati alla logica degli schieramenti contrapposti. Neppure l'avvento e il rapido trionfo della televisione [...] modificano questa condizione [...]'.⁴⁷²

'Domande senza risposta' is one of the articles of crime reportage which probably best represent Buzzati's 'silent revolt' and its didactic aim.⁴⁷³ Published after the flood that in 1968 killed forty people in the Mosso Valley, near Vercelli, this text is a distillation of the contradictions which characterized Italy after the 'economic boom' of the 1950s and the social and political clashes of the 1960s:

No, non è possibile: [...] siamo una nazione civile, in prima linea sulla strada del progresso [...]. Poi viene l'autunno, piove a dirotto due tre giorni, e il paese piomba nel lutto. Ci deve essere un errore di base [...]. Da una parte la modernità più spinta, dall'altra strutture medioevali (p. 217).

The necessity of building a new relationship between men and nature is clearly stated by Buzzati, who refuses to give up the quest for a balance between the push towards progress which characterizes modernity, the doubts about the role of men in a world that has lost its anthropocentrism, the possibility of understanding and representing that same world, and the need for rules, order, and control:

⁴⁷² Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*, p. 217. See also Murialdi's observations about the 1960s: 'La politicizzazione interessata resta una caratteristica deteriore dei quotidiani d'informazione. [...] In Italia, nel 1960 il travaglio politico è intenso [...]. Particolarmente gravi sono le prove di acquiescenza verso il potere fornite da molti giornalisti. [...] Montanelli lo rileva scrivendo sull'*Europeo*: 'Il Italia la libertà c'è: quella che non c'è è l'abitudine a usarla. La maggior parte dei giornalisti, quando compongono un articolo lo fanno interrogando la censura. Quale? Quella che hanno in corpo da secoli e di cui non riescono più a fare a meno'' (p. 228).

⁴⁷³ Dino Buzzati, 'Domande senza risposta', *Corriere della Sera*, 5 November 1968, in *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, Vol. 2, ed. by Viganò, pp. 217-219.

L'Italia è piccola, ma anche complicata [...] in questo fazzoletto di terra la natura si è sbizzarrita a inventare una infinità di trappole a sorpresa [...] gli alberi tagliati stoltamente, il fiume e il torrente trascurati, le ripe non difese, gli argini non nutriti, malamente si vendicano. E la gente muore. Certo è duro spendere milioni e miliardi [...] per una cosa che [...] non rende un centesimo [...]. Eppure proprio qui sta la saggezza [...]: proprio qui sta la vera civiltà di una nazione (pp. 218, 219).

Buzzati's works of reportage regarding murders, deaths, and catastrophes all have in the background the message of this 'silent revolt' against the dangers and corruption of modernity. This narrative recovers the idea typical of late nineteenth-century journalism that literature and news compete with each other in order to attract public attention and perform a function of both information and entertainment. However, both in the journalism of the twenty-first century and in that of Buzzati's time, this idea changes and is disrupted in a clear separation between journalism and literature, only the latter being considered capable of offering a deep and genuine representation of a postmodern world in which the concept of objectivity has lost its meaning. For Buzzati, on the contrary, anything works when it serves the aim of rendering representation both enjoyable and challenging for the reader:⁴⁷⁴ there is a total refusal of any separation between the meaning of literature and the 'real' life which readers experience, and Buzzati sees as an opportunity the blurring of high art and mass culture, literature and reportage. The extent to which this opportunity arrives appears to be evident after the publication of *Poema a fumetti*.⁴⁷⁵ here the dialogue is not only between different traditions within the same text (Greek myth and modernity), but also between narrative genres usually considered to belong to different levels of artistic status (prose, poetry, and comics). Also the posthumous *I miracoli di Val Morel* confirms the experiments attempted in *Poema*:⁴⁷⁶ here Buzzati transforms a series of folkloristic *ex voto* in small paintings provided with fictional explanations. The supposed 'high' and 'low' categories of distinctions between different literary genres and media do not concern at

⁴⁷⁴ See these declarations from Yves Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1973), pp. 161-163: '[...] quale tipo di consigli [...] vorrebbe dare a un giovane autore [...]? Gli direi: prima ricordati che non sarai mai abbastanza semplice [...]. Poi gli direi: [...] fa pure in modo che uno, arrivato alla seconda pagina abbia voglia di andare avanti [...]. Io vorrei il giornale in cui trovi tutto in poco. Per me il vizio spaventoso di noi tutti italiani è l'essere prolissi. Per dire una cosa per cui basterebbero dieci parole, ne adoperiamo quattrocento'.

⁴⁷⁵ Dino Buzzati, *Poema a fumetti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969).

⁴⁷⁶ Dino Buzzati, *I miracoli di Val Morel* (Milan: Garzanti, 1971).

all the quest for the description of Buzzati's 'other world': they would actually limit its representation. Whatever the chosen form of narrative – either fiction or journalism, theatre or painting, comics or folk tales – Buzzati repeats the same operation: he tries to interpret reality through the disclosure of the fantastic which is hiding within it. There is no intellectual prejudice towards any means which is capable of narrating something and making it enjoyable: 'Ora, come diceva Voltaire, se non sbaglio, tutti i generi sono ammissibili in letteratura, tranne il genere noioso', and it is no coincidence that these words are immediately followed by the idea that journalism is the subject which is able to teach a writer how not to be boring: 'Io scommetto che molti miei illustri colleghi, se avessero fatto proprio un *apprentissage* giornalistico [...] scriverebbero dei libri molto più leggibili di quelli che scrivono'.⁴⁷⁷

The impossibility of finding a place in Buzzati's 'other world' for a distinction between 'high' and 'low' literature will be further evidenced in the texts I will analyze in the next chapter: here, the intrinsic nature of the theme, the paranormal, allows Buzzati to mix illustrious literary references with popular beliefs and folklore. As listed by Lorenzo Viganò, 'le novelle di Grimm e le favole di Andersen, [...] Poe [...], Hoffmann, Wilde [...], Thomas Mann [...]. E poi Dickens, Conrad, Kipling. E naturalmente Dostoevskij [...]',⁴⁷⁸ but also Arthur Rackham's paintings and Egyptology:⁴⁷⁹ the reference does not count; what counts is that 'accanto al 'pianeta Buzzati' ruota [...] un 'altro mondo' [...]. Un mondo dove spesso niente è come appare, dove passato e presente si confondono, e realtà e fantasia sono parole senza significato'.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁷ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 165.

⁴⁷⁸ Lorenzo Viganò, 'Introduzione', in *Le cronache fantastiche di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), pp. IX-XXXIX (p. X).

⁴⁷⁹ In order to deepen the discussion about Buzzati's relationship with the work of the painter Arthur Rackham and with the influence of the Anglophone culture in his work, see Valentina Polcini's recent Ph.D. thesis: *Dino Buzzati and Anglophone Culture: The Re-use of Visual and Narrative Texts in His Fantastic Fiction*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Exeter, 2010. Print.

⁴⁸⁰ Viganò, 'Introduzione', p. X.

Chapter 5: Paranormal Activities – Inquiries into the Unknown (1950s and 1960s)

*The greatest taboo among serious intellectuals of the century just behind us [...] proved to be none of the ‘transgressions’ itemized by postmodern thinkers: it was, rather, the heresy of challenging a materialist worldview.*⁴⁸¹

Victoria Nelson

One of the most interesting legacies of the nineteenth-century fantastic tradition to which Buzzati gave a role in his narrative was that dealing with the paranormal. In this last chapter I will try to demonstrate that if crime news represented for Buzzati the context in which, better than anywhere else, he was able to bend the *topoi* of genre fiction so as to enrich his journalism, then the articles concerning the paranormal, by giving continuity to the premises traced by the texts collected in *La ‘Nera’*, served to investigate more closely phenomena rejected by the creeds of science and technology. As argued by Lorenzo Viganò, ‘se infatti gli articoli di *nera* mostrano la vocazione di Buzzati a raccontare i fatti veri e spietati della vita [...] le sue ‘cronache fantastiche’ [...] raccontano invece il realismo magico della sua fantasia, quel ‘mondo secondario’, come lo definisce Nella Giannetto, che riflette noi e la nostra vita come in uno specchio deformante’.⁴⁸² The clash between scientific progress and the need for dreams, illusions, and an authentic relationship with nature is explored by Buzzati via the investigation of the role that occultism, the quest for ways to transcend human nature, magic, and extrasensory events had in Italy between the end of the 1950s and the 1960s. The results of Buzzati’s investigation – inspired by the French volume *Guide de la France mystérieuse* – formed the texts which composed the inquiry Buzzati conducted in 1965 for the *Corriere della Sera* entitled *In cerca dell’Italia misteriosa*. These texts were then grouped together with other pieces of news related to the theme of the paranormal in the collection *I misteri d’Italia*, published in 1978.⁴⁸³

The collection of articles *Le cronache fantastiche*, published in 2003, offers a further opportunity to see how fiction and factuality collide in Buzzati’s journalism in

⁴⁸¹ Victoria Nelson, ‘Grotto, an Opening’, in Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 1-23 (p. 16).

⁴⁸² Lorenzo Viganò, ‘Introduzione’, in *Le cronache fantastiche di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), pp. IX-XXXIX (p. XII).

⁴⁸³ See Dino Buzzati, *I misteri d’Italia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1978), p. 9 where Buzzati mentions the volume *Guide de la France mystérieuse*, ed. by René Alleau (Paris: Tchou, 1964).

order to complete the image of his ‘other world’ and its role of challenger of the supposed unity of the real.⁴⁸⁴ The natural link of the texts on the paranormal with the crime news analyzed in chapter four is testified by the fact that the first volume of *Le cronache fantastiche* is entitled ‘Delitti’ and groups together, almost as if they were the same thing, ‘gli omicidi veri e propri, ma anche quelli – della fantasia, dell’invidia, della gelosia [...] intesi più genericamente come il Male (con la ‘M’ maiuscola)’.⁴⁸⁵ By approaching the theme of the paranormal Buzzati continues the aesthetic operation of putting in dialogue imagination and *mimesis* by exploiting the narratological and rhetorical resources of different kinds of narrative. This process confirms, with its appropriation of the dynamics of fictional genres, that, despite the ‘secularization of mystery’ which characterized western culture from the nineteenth century on, a new consideration and a first-hand observation of supposed supernatural phenomena was justified by the public increasing interest in spiritualism.⁴⁸⁶

What the articles about the paranormal add to the ‘history’ of Buzzati’s ‘other world’ is further evidence that he was able to ‘counteract the homogenization of the [journalistic] medium which is widespread in relation to mass media’.⁴⁸⁷ This is because the theme of the paranormal, more than any other topic previously touched on by Buzzati’s journalism, raises questions related to issues of fundamental relevance such as death, the relationship with religion, and the dialogue with the afterlife. In the first section of the chapter I will explain how Buzzati’s interest in the paranormal can be placed within a tradition which shows that neo-romantic *topoi* such as spirits, metempsychosis, parapsychological phenomena, etc. were anything but alien from the concerns of Italian intellectuals, at least until the beginning of the Second World War. I will close the chapter by trying to evidence how Buzzati recovered this interest in a more secularized age, when neorealism and Marxism dominated and a rational scepticism rendered it difficult to believe that ‘gli spiriti’ are ‘fenomeni naturalissimi’.⁴⁸⁸ In between the study of the relationship between the texts and the cultural and intellectual context of the time, I will try to analyze some of the most representative articles of *I misteri d’Italia* and *Le cronache fantastiche*: they complete

⁴⁸⁴ Dino Buzzati, *Le cronache fantastiche*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2003).

⁴⁸⁵ Viganò, ‘Introduzione’, p. XI.

⁴⁸⁶ The expression ‘secularization of mystery’ is borrowed from Maurizio Ascari, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction: Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 55.

⁴⁸⁷ Daniel Chandler, ‘An Introduction to Genre Theory’, 1997,

http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf [accessed 12 May 2012].

⁴⁸⁸ Yves Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1973), p. 171.

the picture I have traced so far concerning the evolution of Buzzati's 'other world' in the way it is presented through his journalism. The theme of death, the problem of religion, and the clash between materialism and spiritualism are amongst the issues these texts bring to the fore. As I did in chapter four with Geno Pampaloni's categories of *meraviglioso*, *assurdo*, and *orrido*, describing the application of Buzzati's 'approaches to fantasy' to his crime news, here I will use the categories proposed by Stefano Lazzarin for the analysis of Buzzati's interpretation of fantastic literary tradition in order to show that when 'fantastic news' dealt with the paranormal it revealed a double attitude: either sarcastic and disapproving about the most ingenuous manifestations of the faith in extrasensory phenomena, or curious and attracted by the possibilities of the human mind which go beyond generally accepted scientific knowledge.⁴⁸⁹

5.1 Esoteric Journalism: (Not Only) a Question of Genres

A premise to the analysis of Buzzati's interest in the paranormal is necessary: where does this interest come from? In *Futurismo esoterico*, Simona Cigliana offers a wide survey of the role that all the themes linked to the occult had not only in Italy but throughout Europe, between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁹⁰ She confirms Marina Warner's arguments about the topicality of ideas concerning 'bodies, souls, and spirits' that have changed their shape but that, even today, are so resilient as to justify an exploration of the 'work of imagination in envisioning the invisible and giving form to the impalpable'.⁴⁹¹ If Warner explains how the word 'medium' itself began to be extended to individuals as early as 1854, and 'in the nineteenth and twentieth century [...] Surrealism established the faculty of projective [...] imagination as a crucial function of the psyche [...]', then one sees how relevant is Cigliana's idea that '[la] cultura irrazionalistico-esoterica diffusasi in Europa, soprattutto in Italia e Francia, a cavallo fra i due secoli [...]' shows '[un] interesse per il

⁴⁸⁹ Stefano Lazzarin, 'Nani sulle spalle dei giganti. Buzzati e la grande tradizione del fantastico', *Italianistica*, 1 (2002), 103-119.

⁴⁹⁰ Simona Cigliana, *Futurismo esoterico. Contributi per una storia dell'irrazionalismo italiano tra Otto e Novecento* (Naples: Liguori, 2002).

⁴⁹¹ Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors and Media into the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 19, 20.

paranormale che non fu né episodico né passeggero'.⁴⁹² These arguments challenge the position of scholars such as Remo Ceserani, who sees these fields of investigation as 'aree geografiche un po' marginali dove si colgono bene i rapporti fra una cultura dominante e un'altra che si sta ritirando [...]'.⁴⁹³ Far from considering as marginal the space given to occultism and the paranormal by European culture in the last two centuries, Cigliana explains how Futurism was only one 'tra i movimenti artistici che, tra Otto e Novecento, si accostarono a tematiche attinenti alla ricerca psichica e spiritualizzata' (p. 10). Buzzati's interest in the paranormal does not come out of nothing then, but is inscribable within a tradition which arrived to produce its own *letteratura di genere*. From the 1850s on – but as early as the seventeenth century for many other scholars – extrasensory events constitute 'il volto di un interesse da tempo radicato nel mondo della cultura' (p. 22), which represents 'il corrispettivo razionalistico della fede perduta, il recupero [...] di una possibilità metafisica [...] di cui il determinismo positivista aveva dichiarato l'illegittimità [...]' (p. 25). It is universally accepted today – thanks to studies such as those of Cigliana and Warner – that by the end of the nineteenth century the paranormal became a field of interest not only for uneducated people but also for renowned and cultured figures such as Henri Bergson, Lewis Carroll, Arthur Conan Doyle, Madame Curie, Charles Dickens, Carl Gustav Jung, and Robert Louis Stevenson. In the meanwhile, officially recognized organs were formed to demonstrate the existence of ghosts and spirits, including the English Metaphysical Society and the Society for Psychical Research.⁴⁹⁴

Dino Buzzati's work between the end of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s represents an indication of the importance, even after the demise of the avant-garde movements, of the recovery of those neo-romantic spiritualistic tendencies that journals such as *Leonardo* (1903-1907) and *La Voce* (1908-1916) and institutions such as the Biblioteca Filosofica in Florence (1905-present) started. This interest in the paranormal and the questioning of positivism lasted, as explained by Cigliana, up to the late twentieth century (p. 119). However, 'questo filone di 'sapere romantico', continuamente presente nella cultura moderna [...] assume volti e, soprattutto, valenze differenti in relazione al mutare dei caratteri della cultura dominante [...]' (p. 105). For

⁴⁹² See Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, pp. 17, 18 and Cigliana, *Futurismo esoterico*, pp. 10-12. Further references to Cigliana's volume will be given in the text.

⁴⁹³ Remo Ceserani, *Il fantastico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), p. 81.

⁴⁹⁴ See Cigliana, *Futurismo esoterico*, pp. 27-29 and Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, p. 15.

example, whereas Futurism recovered occultism and the paranormal in order to promote an inquiry of the human psyche and to proclaim a blind faith in progress as a manifestation of human will, Buzzati approaches the paranormal with a melancholic spirit: the occult represents a part of life which science and modernity are constantly trying to undermine, and this is particularly true in an age such as that of the postwar years, in which neorealist literature dominated. In the last section of this chapter I will explain in more detail the element of originality which characterized Buzzati's treatment of the occult in relation to his contemporary historical and cultural context. Here what is important to acknowledge is that there are rules for the supernatural which change and adapt according to the epoch in which they act: 'queste regole si fanno valere in un ambito che [...] è immaginario. [...] Entro tale ambito [...] tocca alle regole limitare determinandola, e determinare limitandola, l'infinita della fantasia [...]. Epoca per epoca, testo per testo le regole vengono inventate in proprio e/o riprese da codici pre-esistenti'.⁴⁹⁵ In Buzzati, these rules state that the themes linked to the occult do not acquire either purposeful or euphoric tones. On the contrary, they represent almost a flight from the coldness of technical and scientific conquests. They combine those that Orlando defined as the two complementary faces of the supernatural 'sublime' after the revolution brought about by the Enlightenment: the one linked to the 'preromantica riscoperta della natura' and 'quella imparentata da Burke col terrore'.⁴⁹⁶

I agree with Antonella Gramone when she states that 'Buzzati succeeds in lending plausibility to [...] (apparently) unrealistic stories. And it is in his 'popular journalism' [...] that we can find the roots of Buzzati's fantastic, and an explanation of his ambivalence [...] between reality and fantasy'.⁴⁹⁷ In the articles I will analyze in this chapter, the process of re-use of genre fiction *topoi* within journalism is taken for granted to a level that implies the same indifference for normative impositions on genres classifications that characterized the entire panorama of Italian literature during the 1960s.⁴⁹⁸ However, Buzzati's aesthetical experience is poles apart from that of a

⁴⁹⁵ Francesco Orlando, 'Statuti del soprannaturale nella narrativa', in *Il romanzo*, Vol. 1, ed. by Franco Moretti (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), pp. 195-226 (p. 199).

⁴⁹⁶ Orlando, 'Statuti del soprannaturale nella narrativa', p. 213.

⁴⁹⁷ Antonella Gramone, 'Dino Buzzati's Journalism: Reporting from the Borderline', *Neohelicon*, 1, 27 (2000) 179-190 (p.185).

⁴⁹⁸ See Remo Ceserani, *Raccontare la letteratura* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990); Margherita Ganeri, 'La teoria dei generi letterari dopo gli anni Settanta: il superamento dell'approccio normativo', *Allegoria*, 23 (1996), 25-35; and Florian Mussgnug, 'Between *Novissimi* and Nuovo Romanzo. Literary Genre Categories in the works of the Gruppo '63', in *From Eugenio Montale to Amelia Rosselli: Italian Poetry*

movement such as *Gruppo '63*, which was born with the intention of experimenting and breaking with traditional forms of narrative expressions such as the novel. Buzzati was firmly linked to a narrative with a logical development, in which concepts such as 'meta-fiction', 'circular narrative', 'nonsense' etc. did not have any place. Exactitude, plot, closure, and meaning held together his style. Yet at a thematic level, he refused the boundaries imposed by tradition and his language pursued syntactic and semantic simplification only through a massive and assiduous work of cuts and refining, as many studies have already demonstrated (see Introduction). Despite maintaining the use of a narrative driven by a strong desire to remain 'readable' by everyone, and constantly refusing the linguistic experimentations typical of the Italian *neoavanguardia* of the 1960s, Buzzati used the genre of inquiry to give space to themes which were unusual for the journalistic context of his time: as in the case of his crime news, his challenging of normative divisions between genres was not formal or rhetorical. On the contrary, it was grounded on the aspects of reality he decided to report by adding a fictional element to his representation, and on the fact that his investigation of the real was approached with a sensitivity disposed to consider that fictional element as plausible. In order to appreciate Buzzati's articles on the paranormal it is then essential that 'superamento dell'approccio normativo' of which Margherita Ganeri finds a definitive acknowledgement 'nelle teorie elaborate dopo la fine degli anni Settanta, sul versante dell'estetica della ricezione e della sociologia marxista'.⁴⁹⁹ The presence of ghosts and spirits within a journalistic context is acceptable only by overcoming an 'approccio logico-formalistico' in which 'si annida il pericolo di un'ermeneutica sostanzialistica che veda i generi come degli *a priori*, come dei codici dotati di funzioni regolative'.⁵⁰⁰

Naturally, between crime fiction, gothic, and *noir*, i.e. the three main fictional genres one can find in Buzzati's crime news (see chapter four), in the articles concerning the paranormal the horrific/gothic element is almost overwhelming. However, defining only as 'gothic' or 'horror' these texts would be misleading. It is not only a matter of genre and aesthetics, but of the way of working on the represented reality, the nature of people's interest in and fascination with the supernatural, the desire of elaborating on these phenomena a broader reasoning on the relationship between the

in the Sixties and Seventies, ed. by John Butcher and Massimo Moroni (Leicester: Troubadour), pp. 21-40.

⁴⁹⁹ Ganeri, 'La teoria dei generi letterari dopo gli anni Settanta', p. 31.

⁵⁰⁰ Ganeri, 'La teoria dei generi letterari dopo gli anni Settanta', p. 33.

literary tradition and its value in a modern, technological, and secularized society. An effective way to understand how the paranormal is shaped by Buzzati within his pieces of news is to apply to the analysis of this journalism the four ways in which, according to Stefano Lazzarin, Buzzati's use of fantasy can be interpreted:⁵⁰¹

- a. Trattamento parodico della tradizione [...].
- b. Atteggiamento nostalgico verso la tradizione [...]
- c. Letterarizzazione della tradizione. La tradizione è ridotta a un repertorio di immagini letterarie [...].
- d. Sovrapposizione di una tematica 'esistenzialista' alle tematiche più tipiche del genere: il fantastico scivola verso un'interpretazione metaforico-allegorica [...].

The third of the options proposed by Lazzarin is strictly connected to the fictional context, in which Buzzati can bring the *topoi* of the fantastic tradition to such an intellectual and literary level that they do not have the function of being scary or uncanny anymore, but rather become a tribute to masters of the genre such as Hoffmann and Poe: spectres, ghosts, and also 'alcuni personaggi ricorrenti nei testi [...] non sono che la versione aggiornata di individui inquietanti che frequentano gli universi del fittizio e del gotico fin dalle origini'.⁵⁰² The phenomenon of literariness in itself, when taken as a mind game and as a tribute to the tradition of a specific literary mode and its genres, cannot be present in Buzzati's journalism, which, as I have tried to demonstrate, is impregnated with morality and pedagogy and needs to have a useful message to deliver in order to be justifiable. On the contrary, the other three ways of re-interpreting the fantastic tradition proposed by Lazzarin can be found in the articles concerning the paranormal, and coincide with three different approaches to the theme of the occult that Buzzati shows both in the texts of *I misteri d'Italia* and *Le cronache fantastiche*. In the next section I will try to analyze some examples of these three categories as they can be found in the articles on the paranormal and to render explicit their connection to topical

⁵⁰¹ Lazzarin, 'Nani sulle spalle dei giganti', p. 112.

⁵⁰² Lazzarin, 'Nani sulle spalle dei giganti', p. 106. According to Lazzarin this is the case of short stories such as 'La notte', in *Paura alla Scala* (Milan: Mondadori, 1949), pp. 215-220; 'L'ubiquo', in *Il Colombre* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966), pp. 235-244; 'Scorta personale', in *Paura alla Scala*, pp. 83-87; 'I ricci crescenti', in *Paura alla Scala*, pp. 180-186; 'La giacca stregata', in *Il Colombre*, pp. 193-202; 'L'altare', in *Il Colombre*, pp. 331-338; and 'I vecchi clandestini', in *Le notti difficili* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971), pp. 296-301.

aspects of Buzzati's narrative 'other world', such as death and the relationship with religion.

5.2 Existentialism, Nostalgia, and Parody

The division proposed by Lazzarin helps to individuate, for the specific context of the paranormal, those aspects of Buzzati's articles which make them 'members of a genre' not because of 'a single trait in common [...]', but because they 'have multiple relational possibilities with each other'.⁵⁰³ As we have seen, the crime news of the postwar years completed an intellectual and aesthetic process started with the articles from the colonies and based on the appropriation of *topoi* of different literary genres so that they could enrich journalism with particular attention to the effect Buzzati wanted to achieve in the reader. With the news on the paranormal Buzzati continued this operation but gave more space to those themes and characters that could represent an attempt to link the world of the living and the world of the dead. His operation became less of an aesthetic and more of an existential nature: the 'other world' of fantasy that coexists with reality and the visible became functional to the dialogue with another otherness, that of the afterlife. All Buzzati's texts concerning the paranormal are then linked by a common, fundamental idea: spirits are not a product of our imagination, but a physical phenomenon which manifests itself as a residue, a mark which is left by people after their death in the places in which they lived. This residue is not everlasting, but wears out with time: the more the distance from the moment of death, the less the presence of the dead person can be felt by the living.

The 'existentialist' approach is the one in which Buzzati demonstrates the most genuine interest in extrasensory events: here he confirms the idea, supported by Cigliana and Warner, according to which, even in the second half of the twentieth century, it is possible to talk about occultism without embarrassment and to believe that literature can still represent supernatural phenomena as a part of our reality, either physical or mental. In the article 'Batticuore a mezzanotte: c'è un fantasma nel granaio', which opens the 1965 inquiry *In cerca dell'Italia misteriosa*, Buzzati explains how '[...] gli spiriti [...] perdano di anno in anno vitalità e consistenza [...]. Quasi che non si

⁵⁰³ Ralph Cohen, 'History and Genre', *New Literary Theory. Interpretation and Culture*, 17 (2) Winter 1986, 203-218 (p. 210).

trattasse di anime trattenute quaggiù [...] bensì di un'impronta, un'orma, una traccia, uno stampo, lasciato da alcuni esseri umani; che [...] con l'andare del tempo si smussa, si logora, si annulla'.⁵⁰⁴ The centrality of this text is demonstrated by the fact that Buzzati developed and reworked it several times. Published in the *Corriere* for the first time in 1965, it was included in *I misteri d'Italia* in 1978. It gave rise to the short story 'Lo spirito in granaio', also in *I misteri d'Italia*, and to the fragment 'Lo spirito del granaio', published in 1985 in *Il reggimento parte all'alba*. Later, in 2003, both 'Lo spirito in granaio' and 'Lo spirito del granaio' were included by Lorenzo Viganò in *Le cronache fantastiche*.⁵⁰⁵ In 'Batticuore a mezzanotte' the idea of the residue left by the dead is a pretext intended to put immediately in dialogue living and dead people. The original story revolves around the mystery of the spirit of an old farmer who used to rob his masters and colleagues and for this reason was condemned to remain, after his death, in the place where he committed his misdeeds.⁵⁰⁶ Buzzati refers to a previous encounter with the spirit, which is narrated in the short story 'Lo spirito in granaio', and returns to the same barn where the farmer is supposed to materialize. Around midnight he hears 'un passo', 'non ci può essere errore' (*MI*, p. 14). We are told that it probably was a noise made by the keeper of the barn who, however, by the end of the article, denies having ever left her room during the night. The reader is left with an uncanny feeling and is also provoked by Buzzati, who asks a rhetorical question about the plausibility of the event: 'Stupidaggini, vero? Ridicole superstizioni da analfabeti, si intende' (*MI*, p. 11). Yet, Buzzati is not a naive illiterate, and his readers know it. He legitimizes the paranormal as a spiritual dimension of life and as an integral element of human experience. This is not a novelty for the readers of Buzzati's fiction: in 'Ombra del sud' a mysterious man that only the narrator can see seems to have arrived as a messenger from another world to escort him 'in mezzo al deserto, nel palazzo bianco e meraviglioso [...]';⁵⁰⁷ in 'Cèvere', the homonymous protagonist 'ogni sette anni [...]

⁵⁰⁴ Dino Buzzati, 'Batticuore a mezzanotte: c'è un fantasma nel granaio', in *I misteri d'Italia*, p.11. From now on shortened in *MI*.

⁵⁰⁵ See Dino Buzzati, 'Lo spirito in granaio', in *I misteri d'Italia*, pp. 155-164 and *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 5-9; Dino Buzzati, 'Lo spirito del granaio', in *Il reggimento parte all'alba*, ed. by Indro Montanelli and Guido Piovene (Milan: Frassinelli, 1985), p. 90 and *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, p. 421.

⁵⁰⁶ Interestingly enough this penance is very similar to that suffered by Oswald in the crime news 'Alla scadenza di un anno' (see chapter 4).

⁵⁰⁷ Dino Buzzati, 'Ombra del sud', in *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942), pp. 70-76 (p. 76). The text was first published as an *elzeviro* in the *Corriere della Sera*, 2 July 1939 with the title 'Messaggero

risale il fiume con la sua lunga piroga, fino alla grande ansa, e si ferma presso il paese di Naer a prendere i morti’;⁵⁰⁸ in ‘Nuovi strani amici’, the recently dead Stefano Martella is followed by the narrator in his familiarization with hell, which, as in ‘Viaggio agli inferni del secolo’ (see chapter four), resembles a perfectly normal city, only that here there is no pain, desire, passion, or fear, namely there is nothing which makes life worth living.⁵⁰⁹ The list could be much longer: the number of fictional texts in which Buzzati plays with the afterlife or puts it in dialogue with the world of the living is almost uncountable, and it will be enough to think about stories such as ‘Qualche utile indicazione a due autentici gentiluomini’, ‘Il cane che ha visto Dio’, ‘Appuntamento con Einstein’, ‘La giacca stregata’ etc.⁵¹⁰ Hence the shift between a purely literary interest in the paranormal and its legitimacy is achieved by moving from a fictional context to a journalistic one. Besides, in ‘Batticuore a mezzanotte’, as explained by Viganò, Buzzati makes someone else’s experience his own so as to render it more personal: it was in fact his brother Adriano who actually entered the barn and then told Dino about his experience.⁵¹¹

‘Batticuore a mezzanotte’ remains however one of the less dark pieces in which the paranormal is approached by Buzzati with a genuine belief in its plausibility. Elsewhere the supernatural testifies an increasing presence of the theme of death which casts a shadow over Buzzati’s fantastic ‘other world’ and the possibilities of communication with the afterlife: the ambivalence of the real and the various possibilities of interpreting it seem now to be a small thing when compared to our total ignorance about the ‘real’ ‘other world’, which waits for us after our death: ‘il fantastico di Buzzati risulta una continua protesta contro il nostro mondo quotidiano, una sempre rinnovata creazione di un mondo ‘altro’ [...]. Ma se questo ‘altro mondo’ è [...] il mondo della fantasia dove tutto può succedere [...], sottile è la soglia che ci separa dal vero ‘altro mondo’, il mondo dell’aldilà verso il quale Buzzati guarda, oltre la morte,

del sud’. With the same title it has been included in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 165-170.

⁵⁰⁸ Dino Buzzati, ‘Cèvere’, in *I sette messaggeri*, pp. 132-137 (p. 132), first in the *Corriere della Sera*, 5 May 1940, now in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 333-337.

⁵⁰⁹ Dino Buzzati, ‘Nuovi strani amici’, in *Paura alla Scala* (Milan: Mondadori, 1949), pp. 125-132.

⁵¹⁰ Dino Buzzati, ‘Qualche utile indicazione a due autentici gentiluomini (di cui uno deceduto per morte violenta)’, in *Paura alla Scala*, pp. 225-233, in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 58-65; ‘Il cane che ha visto Dio’, in *Il crollo della Baliverna* (Milan: Mondadori, 1954), pp. 33-66; ‘Appuntamento con Einstein’, in *Il crollo della Baliverna*, pp. 139-145; ‘La giacca stregata’, in *Il Colombre* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966), pp. 193-202.

⁵¹¹ See Viganò, ‘Introduzione’, p. XIV.

con desiderio e paura'.⁵¹² The understanding of death as a frontier that might open up on nothingness, thus making existence meaningless, becomes stronger in Buzzati and, as if to exorcise this hypothesis, death becomes progressively more present also in his journalism. In the war correspondence, as well as in that from North Africa, the monotony of the battles confronted men with destiny, but also gave them a chance of redemption through the acceptance of their fate and the exhibition of courage. In the case of crime news, the focus was not so much on the meaning of death but on the ways in which death can manifest itself, on the impossibility of controlling the games of destiny, and on the absurdity of men's cruelty. The articles on the paranormal express Buzzati's biggest fear, which is effectively described by Giovanna Ioli:⁵¹³

Buzzati non temeva la morte, 'temeva – dice Almerina – quello che poteva o non poteva trovare dopo la morte'.⁵¹⁴ Questa paura del vuoto dopo la morte ha due livelli: c'è questa prima idea che, se c'è un aldilà [...] esso sia in fondo del tutto incommisurato ai desideri dell'uomo e finisca per essere l'uniforme, il sempre uguale, il non-tempo senza vita [...].⁵¹⁵ Ma c'è un altro timore, un vero terrore assai più grande di questo: la paura che là ci sia il niente, il vuoto assoluto.

The fear of the void after death is expressed through a darkness which reveals the presence of Evil among us: in 'Lo sciopero del male', the Devil goes on strike because he is disgusted by the operation of 'bonifica' decided by the government.⁵¹⁶ With the disappearance of crimes, illness, robberies and all the other ways in which Evil acts among people, the world of living is left in a state of complete apathy: 'Non insidiata più dai delinquenti né dalle malattie, la gente perdeva ogni tempra combattiva, ogni tensione di nervi, ogni mordente. Una generale rilassatezza, un plumbeo tedio, un paese

⁵¹² Alvaro Biondi, 'Una lunga fedeltà. Dino Buzzati e l'«Italia magica», in *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent'anni di promozione di studi dell'Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010), pp. 139-156 (p. 154).

⁵¹³ Giovanna Ioli, *Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1988), pp. 155, 156. Ioli's quotation of Almerina Buzzati's words is from Cinzia Mares, 'Conversazione con Almerina Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 7 (2002), 127-137.

⁵¹⁴ See Cinzia Mares, 127-137 (p. 133).

⁵¹⁵ This is exactly what happens in the already mentioned 'Nuovi strani amici' and 'Viaggio agli inferni del secolo'. The idea of a strong link between our world and Hell, once again represented by a small passage which connects the two, is repeated also in 'Sotto i nostri piedi': here a trap door which connects the earth with Hell is accidentally found during the building of an anti-aircraft shelter by two bricklayers during the Second World War (see Dino Buzzati, 'Sotto i nostri piedi', in *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 21 August 1948, in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 290-294).

⁵¹⁶ Dino Buzzati, 'Lo sciopero del male', in *Corriere della Sera*, 2 April 1961, in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 1 *Delitti*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 5-11. From now on shortened in *CFI*.

morto' (*CF1*, p. 8). Evil does not threaten us only with its presence, but also with its absence: men need it to find a reason to carry on, to justify passions and feelings, but above all to be able to hope for something better that might be waiting for them in the afterlife: '[...] noi temiamo il Male, lo combattiamo, lo disprezziamo, ma [...] ci è indispensabile, non ne vogliamo/possiamo fare a meno. Proprio come il buono ha bisogno del cattivo per poter dare un senso alle sue azioni [...]'.⁵¹⁷ In 'Guardi che...' the obscure, ghastly presence of Evil is transmitted through the recurrent disturbing phone calls that the narrator receives every time he arrives in a new city.⁵¹⁸ Tokyo, New York, or Chicago: there is no safe place. The phone rings and someone on the other side warns: 'Guardi che è sceso al suo albergo' (*CF2*, p. 84). When the protagonist feels finally safe, in his house in Milan, he receives another call: 'Guarda che è venuto ad abitare nella tua casa' (*CF2*, p. 87), but who, and why? '[...] si tratta per caso del personaggio oscuro che insegue ciascuno di noi, da quando siamo nati? E non si rivela quasi mai, se non nelle ore fatali?' (*CF2*, p. 88). These scary phone calls, an improbable strike by the Devil, but also the ghost of 'Batticuore a mezzanotte', are all products of Buzzati's fantasy which looks for intermediaries between our world and the world beyond death. Evil threatens us with its darkness, but its presence assures us that something is waiting for us after death, maybe it will be something horrible, but at least it will not be nothingness. As effectively argued by Giovanna Ioli, the meaning behind the situations described by these texts and the characters which populate them is the condition of modern man in his 'inferno dell'eterno presente e la speranza in un futuro di luce e di silenzio'. Between these two extremes is the place of fantasy, imagination, doubts, and mystery.⁵¹⁹

Buzzati also tries different, more positive ways of exorcising the fear for a *post-mortem* emptiness, and he does it through the assumption of a possibility of communication between the world of the living and the dead which can take place via a first-hand experience such as that of 'Batticuore a mezzanotte' or with the (sometimes serious, sometimes playful) rediscovery of popular beliefs, as happens in the inquiry into folkloristic attention towards the paranormal in the Veneto region which Buzzati

⁵¹⁷ Viganò, 'Introduzione', p. XXX.

⁵¹⁸ Dino Buzzati, 'Guardi che...', in *Corriere della Sera*, 30 April 1967, in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmî*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 84-87. From now on shortened in *CF2*.

⁵¹⁹ Ioli, *Dino Buzzati*, p. 154.

entitled ‘Gli angoli strani del Veneto’.⁵²⁰ Here the journalistic tool of interview is used to investigate the popular culture of a specific area of the country. Buzzati depicts Veneto as a quiet and safe place, ‘una terra rassicurante’ (*MI*, p. 21), but also as being mysterious ‘proprio perché il mistero non si vede’ (*MI*, p. 19). A woman from Arcade ‘con due occhi che pareva una strega’ (*MI*, p. 19) discovers witchcraft and then disappears; an ex-inmate has a conversation on a bus with don Chiotto, a priest who has been dead for three years; possessed women are healed by the Madonna di Caravaggio; ‘un omino tutto rosso coi cornetti neri e la coda’ called Mazzariol causes the peasants to lose the way home at night; a monster terrifies the people of Castelbaldo with strange howls; ‘la Lumiera, una specie di minuscolo fantasma’ enlightens the way of wayfarers near Mogliano; and a railway-man/medium from Verona comes back from death for a séance. Every paragraph of the text is a piece of a kaleidoscope of oral stories which constitute an essential part of the community and testify of the importance for its identity of the belief in extrasensory phenomena. ‘Gli angoli strani del Veneto’ was the second episode of *In cerca dell’Italia misteriosa*: the honest, disinterested credence in the supernatural which its texts record seems to create grounds for hope that the presence of the supernatural among us will be also enlightening and instructive. Even if in our modern times, ‘col progressivo livellamento delle creature umane, questi casi si fanno sempre più rari’ (*MI*, p. 22) and supernatural creatures are being exiled because ‘tutti questi spiriti sono stati confinati al Concilio di Trento’ (*MI*, p. 27), Buzzati seems not to give up hope completely. This ambivalence in the relationship with what might exist after death, with death itself, and with the paranormal is well synthesized by this last reference to the Council of Trent, which uncovers a bigger issue lurking in the background of all the existential questions elicited by Buzzati’s articles on the supernatural: the relationship with religion, faith, and God.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) marked a turning point of repression by the Catholic Church which involved not only Calvinism and Lutheranism but which also imposed strict and inviolable limits to the believers’ freedom of interpretation of the scriptures and to their relationship with the supernatural. Buzzati’s sarcastic reference to this kind of obscurantism by the religious authority goes in the same direction as his critique of the restraints that modern society imposes on the spiritual dimension of life: also the Church, by confining spirits and ghosts to the status of superstitions, good only

⁵²⁰ Dino Buzzati, ‘Gli angoli strani del Veneto’, in *I misteri d’Italia*, pp. 17-26.

for ignorant or dishonest people, deprives men of a possibility of dialogue with any kind of ‘other world’. I will analyze the problem of the struggle between modernity and the paranormal in the next section of this chapter. Here I am interested in showing how Buzzati’s fascination with the paranormal, and his fears related to death, call into question a relationship with faith that was based on conflict and which was problematic throughout his whole life. The experience of Evil as well, which, as we have seen, has its own space in the articles on the paranormal, plays its part in the relationship between Buzzati and the transcendent.

As has been written by Alvaro Biondi, ‘Buzzati ha avuto acutissimo il senso della quasi irrimediabile malvagità umana [...] le fonti evangeliche o comunque quelle della tradizione cristiana [sono] sempre lì, sotto la pagina [...]. Nondimeno questo scrittore così consapevole del male [...] ha anche vivissimo il senso della Redenzione, del riscatto sempre possibile, dell’opera [...] delle forze del bene [...]’.⁵²¹ As is well known, Buzzati received a strict Catholic education, which formed the foundation of those ‘fonti evangeliche’ to which Biondi refers, and many scholars, even recently, have studied the complex relationship between Buzzati and religious faith.⁵²² For Buzzati it is basically men who have rejected God: for their laziness and cowardice they have preferred to remain tied to an earthly life: ‘[...] le novelle buzzatiane sono ricche di figure trascendentali [...]. Spesso queste figure evocatrici [...] sembrano offrire all’uomo la possibilità di un riscatto [...] che per il credente sta nel riconoscere l’esistenza di Dio [...]. Ma l’uomo ha paura di sconvolgere la sua esistenza per un’entità che non ha mai visto [...] e preferisce scacciare questi strani fantasmi [...]’.⁵²³ That which pervades Buzzati’s narrative, however, is the never completely refused possibility that God might exist. As the abyss of void and nothingness after death is a possibility, so it is God: ‘[...] il messaggio che deriva da tutta l’esperienza esistenziale di Buzzati e soprattutto da tutto il suo ‘mondo testuale’ è [...] quello di un Dio ‘possibile’, di una realtà che ci sfugge o dalla quale noi fuggiamo, ma che ‘forse’, appunto, continuamente

⁵²¹ Biondi, ‘Una lunga fedeltà’, p. 154.

⁵²² See at least: Giancarlo Vigorelli, ‘Buzzati, la morte, Dio’, in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi), pp. 83-86; Roberto Festarazzi, ‘Una lettera d’amore col sigillo del Papa’, *Jesus*, September 1994, 106-109; Gaetano Afeltra, ‘Buzzati, in quel preciso momento’, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 March 1997; Lucia Bellaspiga, *Dio che non esisti ti prego. Dino Buzzati, la fatica di credere* (Milan: Ancora, 2006); Silvio Bertoldi, ‘Buzzati e Dio, l’ultima intervista’, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 September 1994. Important declarations about this topic can be found also in Buzzati’s interview with Yves Panafieu (Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, pp. 83-89).

⁵²³ Sara Emilia Di Santo, ‘Al di là dei dogmi...Dino Buzzati e Zeno Saltini: un’amicizia inedita’, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 14 (2009), 49-76 (p. 50.).

ci insegue o ci ‘cerca’ [...] o ci ‘aspetta’ [...]’.⁵²⁴ As a journalist, Buzzati was interested in the daily demonstrations of this positive possibility of the transcendent. One of the best examples in this respect is that of the articles dedicated to the community of Nomadelfia, such as ‘Apposta dall’Inghilterra per visitare Nomadelfia’ and ‘L’usignolo di Nomadelfia’,⁵²⁵ which tell also of Buzzati’s friendship with don Zeno Saltini (1900-1981), founder of the community born in Fossoli in 1947 and which still exists in Tuscany, near Grosseto.⁵²⁶ Here Buzzati compares the life in the community, in which orphans are welcomed by volunteers called ‘madri di vocazione’ as natural children, to that of ‘gente ordinaria, borghese, con lo spirito riverso negli affari, nelle mode del momento [...]’.⁵²⁷ The reference to the Council of Trent in ‘Gli angoli strani del Veneto’ represents the imposition of authority, of the institution as holder of power, hence it represents the side of religion which is furthest from Buzzati’s sensitivity. What fascinates Buzzati is that goodness which is able to be a source of a pure spiritual dimension, which is generous and not merged with earthly goods and compromised with political and economic powers. The experience of Nomadelfia is a strong example of Buzzati’s fascination with a sincere faith, projected to do what is good for other people. If religion is intended in these terms, the interest for the transcendent and the desire to turn to God can coincide with the ethics and morals that, according to Buzzati, should regulate men’s lives. As written by Domenico Porzio: ‘la presenza di un’interrogazione religiosa non presuppone necessariamente una professione di fede: è sufficiente a provocarla quell’approfondimento della vita morale [...] dalla quale scaturisce pietà e compassione verso il prossimo e verso ogni creatura vivente [...]’.⁵²⁸ The reference to the Council is therefore not intended as a sarcastic mockery of the Catholic faith, but as a position in line with Buzzati’s disapproval of any form of ideological and political imposition such as the Counter-Reformation. The questions posed by Buzzati and by the mysterious, ‘other’ dimension of his narrative remain of metaphysical nature, an appeal to release the spiritual part of life and to admit its plausibility.

⁵²⁴ Biondi, ‘Una lunga fedeltà’, p. 146.

⁵²⁵ See Dino Buzzati, ‘Apposta dall’Inghilterra per visitare Nomadelfia’, *Corriere della Sera*, 12 May 1949 and Dino Buzzati, ‘L’usignolo di Nomadelfia’, *Corriere della Sera*, 30 May 1965.

⁵²⁶ See Sara Emilia Di Santo, ‘Al di là dei dogmi’ and Sara Emilia Di Santo, ‘Il coraggio della bontà. Dino Buzzati e don Zeno Saltini (Empoli: Ibiskos, 2010).

⁵²⁷ Di Santo, ‘Al di là dei dogmi’, pp. 60, 61.

⁵²⁸ Domenico Porzio, ‘L’interrogazione religiosa nell’opera di Dino Buzzati’, in *Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Fontanella, pp. 72, 73.

The ‘atteggiamento nostalgico’ individuated by Lazzarin co-exists with the ‘existential’ one in ‘Gli angoli strani del Veneto’. The powerful thirst for rebellion and the faith in men’s will which characterized the interpretation of the supernatural typical of Futurism, in Buzzati remains in passive nostalgia for a time when extrasensory experiences were still considered possible: ‘il fantastico è oggetto di rimpianto, perché una nuova consapevolezza, quella della sua ‘impossibilità’, è sopravvenuta’.⁵²⁹ In the short story ‘Il Babau’, Buzzati speaks directly to fantasy: ‘Galoppa, fuggi [...] superstite fantasia. Avido di sterminarti, il mondo civile ti incalza [...]’,⁵³⁰ whereas in ‘Vantaggi del progresso’ the nostalgia returns in the form of a bold sentence on the wasted existence of human beings:

Il volante [...], il ghiaccio del frigo, lo sputnik, la musica stereofonica, il cervello elettronico, quante balle! Si solleva l’uomo, di giorno in giorno, dal livello animale; e cresce la sua inquietudine. [...] Non ci diamo pace per salire sempre più su, di meccanismo in meccanismo. [...] E cresce l’inquietudine.

Non facciamoci illusioni. Il giorno che usciremo da questa terra, passeggiando di pianeta in pianeta, la fregatura sarà totale. Altro che conquistata libertà.⁵³¹

Our society, in which progress and science rule, does not have time for the spirit: ghosts and apparitions are part of a worn out imaginary which is a prerogative of ingenuous people. Modernity and progress have leveled and conformed human beings so much that there is no more space for fantasy and imagination. The melancholia linked to the thought of a lost time in which the supernatural was still plausible is at the centre also of the short article eloquently entitled ‘Spiriti’:⁵³² here the idea of the residue left by dead people is marked again, this time by being compared to ‘orme sulla sabbia [...] che a poco a poco il tempo cancella’ (CF2, p. 405). Yet it is not only time which consumes the existence of spirits in the same way as it consumes that of men, ‘ancora più distruttivo è l’affanno delle grandi città’, because ‘nel cuore della città non c’è spirito, per forte e baldanzoso che sia, il quale possa resistere a lungo’ (CF2, p. 405). The city is used once again as a metaphor of the destructive power of progress, which

⁵²⁹ Lazzarin, ‘Nani sulle spalle dei giganti’, p. 112.

⁵³⁰ Dino Buzzati, ‘Il Babau’, in *Le notti difficili*, pp. 3-8.

⁵³¹ Dino Buzzati, ‘Vantaggi del progresso’, in *In quel preciso momento* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1950), p. 211.

⁵³² Dino Buzzati, ‘Spiriti’, *Corriere della Sera*, 22 March 1970, then in ‘Fatterelli si città’, in *Le notti difficili*, pp. 197-202 (pp. 201, 202) and in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, p. 405. From now on abbreviated in CF2.

returns also when Buzzati reinforces the nostalgia with the use of irony as in ‘La camera chiusa’.⁵³³ Here it is reaffirmed how ‘[...] molte persone [...] lascino un’orma, una impronta, che permane dopo la loro morte. [...] ammesso che dopo la morte, le creature umane possano [...] ritornare [...]. Torneranno, è evidente, nelle case dove sono state più o meno felici’ (CF2, pp. 10, 11).⁵³⁴ Buzzati does not take a definite position on ghosts and spiritual manifestations: ‘Ripeto che io non credo in una sopravvivenza cosciente, non mi sento nemmeno in grado di escluderla in modo categorico’ (CF2, p. 11). Yet the text creates a confrontation between Buzzati himself, who represents a world which still believes or would like to believe in spiritual phenomena, and the young boyfriend of Buzzati’s niece, who mocks the journalist for his open-minded opinion on ghosts and spirits. Buzzati, after having explained how he believed that three rooms of the old country house of his family contained a ‘mark’ of previous dead guests, finds the boy exploring one of the rooms. Warned to be careful, the next morning the young man is found dead in that same room and Buzzati closes the text with a bitter ‘gli sta bene’. The entire story is filled with this kind of ironic bitterness for a young and arrogant world which mocks the belief in the supernatural, and with the idea that what once was uncanny and scary, but accepted, is now the real victim of a reality which does not have space for imagination:

[...] il giovanotto, avendo udito il mio parere, si mise a sghignazzare, come usano adesso i ragazzi poco intelligenti con le persone molto più anziane di loro. [...] Lei non ci crede, ma gli spiriti, o quelle cose che noi chiamiamo spiriti, col tempo invecchiano anche loro, perdono agilità, si fanno più lenti (CF2, p. 13).

Bitterness for a present that does not understand, genuine interest in phenomena which represent a world that modernity is progressively annihilating and that are seen by the narrator as an integral part of our existence: but what about parody? Why does Buzzati need also that ‘trattamento parodico della tradizione’ which Lazzarin places at the top of the list of the ways in which Buzzati interprets the fantastic? The answer is that parody is a useful instrument to condemn the excesses of superstitions, to mock

⁵³³ Dino Buzzati, ‘La camera chiusa’, in *Corriere della Sera*, 12 November 1967, in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 10-14.

⁵³⁴ See also ‘La casa stregata’, in which Enrico Marsia decides not to leave his house despite its being inhabited by the ghost of his father: ‘tutte le case [...] hanno gli spiriti. E non succede niente. Se la maledizione viene, è colpa nostra’ (Dino Buzzati, ‘La casa stregata’, in *I misteri d’Italia*, pp. 29-34 (p. 34)).

those cases in which the transcendental is so trivialized that it gives further arguments to those who, like Buzzati's niece's boyfriend in 'La camera chiusa', laugh at it.⁵³⁵ The dislike of superstition is sometimes expressed as an innocent mockery, as in 'Festa in villa col mago', where the paranormal is reduced to a pathetic form of entertainment. Here the presence of a magician at a party in a magnificent *villa veneta* is the pretext to portray the grotesque crowd of wealthy youth which participates to the event:⁵³⁶ 'nobili, sportmen, industriali, scrittori, medici, architetti [...], e fra le donne un campionario tremendo di bambole, sposine, putte, streghe giovinette [...]' (*MI*, pp. 148, 149) render the presence of the humble magician Bruno Lava – '[...] 45 anni, [...] geometra oltre che imprenditore edile' (*MI*, p. 149) – almost insignificant. Nobody cares about the absurdities that the evoked spirits utter, as when they announce that 'Mao Tse-tung [...] entro dieci giorni morirà' (*MI*, p. 152). The paranormal is minimized to the point of being only a form of amusement: '[...] la normalità era lui, Lava, il mago. I veri fantasmi erano gli altri, dissipate larve che a fiotti scendevano coi bicchieri di whisky [...]' (*MI*, p. 152). Somewhere else, the contempt for superstition is transmitted through the parody of a typical 'paranormal context' such as a séance, especially when practised as a pastime for bored people. A good example in this sense is 'Il veggente prende un granchio sulla data della propria morte', where 'parlare di spiriti' is described as 'uno dei giochi di società più divertenti, [...] sano e refrigerante svago dello spirito' (*MI*, p. 169). Here the victim of Buzzati's sarcasm is the colleague Vittorio Beonio Brocchieri, who published in 1964 the volume on spirits entitled *Camminare sul fuoco*.⁵³⁷ The setting is a 'villa in mezzo ai boschi del Ticino' (*MI*, p. 167), the electric light goes out and it is raining outside. The signals coming from the weather – 'si sentivano vagare nebbia, umidità e strane ombre' (*MI*, p. 167) – are mingled with the consideration that the evening 'minaccia di farsi barbosa' (*MI*, p. 167) so, elicited by the landlady, Brocchieri decides to talk about the 'paese degli spiriti' (*MI*, p. 168), which he apparently knows very well, in order to entertain the rest of the guests. Brocchieri is

⁵³⁵ Symptomatically, another great – and even more intrinsically linked to the supernatural – writer such as Lovecraft despised the most vulgar forms of credulity: '[...] many contemporary writers slip occasionally into some of the fleshy pastures of immature romanticism, or into bits of the equally empty and absurd jargon of pseudo-scientific 'occultism', now at one of its periodic high tides'. See Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York: Ben Abramson, 1945 [1927]), p. 88.

⁵³⁶ Dino Buzzati, 'Festa in villa col mago', in *I misteri d'Italia*, pp. 145-154.

⁵³⁷ Vittorio Beonio Brocchieri, *Camminare sul fuoco* (Milan: Longanesi, 1964).

successful, but makes an embarrassing mistake when he tries to forecast the date of his own death:

‘Mio padre andava dicendo: sono nato nel 1872, morirò nel 1953 perché sono rimasto 27 anni scapolo, 27 anni ammogliato e quindi resterò 27 anni vedovo. Morì infatti alla scadenza precisa’. Anche per lui, Vittorio, varrebbe un numero fatale, il 37. E Beonio ritiene di doverlo moltiplicare per due. Quindi 37 più 37 uguale 74’ (*MI*, pp. 171, 172). [...] Ma non si era accorto di aver fatto uno sbaglio. Vorrei infatti sapere perché la regola che valeva per suo padre non debba valere anche per lui. Il numero fatidico non va cioè moltiplicato per due ma per tre. Dunque: 37 più 37 più 37, uguale 111 (*MI*, pp. 171, 172).

Buzzati plays on the fact that 111 is a very unlikely age, and closes the article with a clever remark: ‘Nel 2013 I miei pronipoti spero che seguiranno il suo funerale’ (*MI*, p. 173).⁵³⁸ In this text the *topoi* of the literature on the paranormal are lowered to the role of entertainment for petty bourgeoisie. They are all listed in a paragraph which summarizes the ‘vasto dominio’ which constitutes the ‘paese degli spiriti’ of which Brocchieri claims to be an expert. Ghosts are put together with magic, but also with fortune-tellers, palmists, vampires, and zombies; mystery and spirits share the field with lemurs and werewolves. Buzzati grants Brocchieri a well-balanced scepticism towards both those ‘fanatici che interpretano ogni fenomeno come rivelazione di potenze sovrumane, quanto da coloro che vivono nel continuo terrore di ‘essere fatti fessi’ e ciò che esce dalle loro possibilità di razionale comprensione, lo eliminano *tout court* dicendo che sono tutte ciurmerie’ (*MI*, p. 169). However, both the tone of the narration and the setting reveal how Buzzati tried to transmit the idea of the trivialization of mystery in an age in which people who were supposed to be educated and open-minded were not capable of conceiving a role for the transcendent beyond that of mere pastime. In this way the parodic use of traditional *topoi* of literature on the paranormal completes a framework of reference which serves to express disdain for a modernity which has no place for transcendence. In the next section I will try to present in more details the philosophical implications of this evident appeal for the rediscovery of the spiritual dimension of life.

⁵³⁸ Brocchieri actually died on 14 April 1979, a few days before turning 77.

5.3 Materialism, Spiritualism, and Didacticism

Buzzati's interest in the paranormal, halfway between the 1950s and the 1960s, calls into question philosophical problems of difficult interpretations, especially if one considers the fact that Buzzati never referred to any specific and structured philosophical thought, nor explicitly mentioned that he was inspired by the oeuvre of any philosopher in particular. However, throughout an historical period in which the Italian cultural intelligentsia had a strong Marxist imprint and hence a decidedly materialist idea of the world which refused any form of transcendence, Buzzati's reference to phenomena like spirits and the paranormal seems to be linked rather clearly to a spiritual philosophical background. A further cautious signal in this direction is given by some of Buzzati's declarations about his profound appreciation for Pascal,⁵³⁹ who represented the cornerstone of a renewed interest in the spiritual dimension of existence which invested western philosophy between the nineteenth and the twentieth century.

Buzzati mentioned Pascal not as a philosophical model, but as the paradigmatic example of a writer who was able to combine a clear, synthetic style with an effective argumentative structure. Nevertheless, the idea of man as an entity with a precarious nature, afflicted by constant contradictions and by the lack of reference points which characterizes the *Pensees*, has several points of contact with the image of man offered by Buzzatian narrative.⁵⁴⁰ Pascal's man, torn between the infinity represented by the divinity and the smallness of temporal existence, is not that different from the man who populates Buzzati's texts, dubious about the meaning of his own earthly existence and about what is waiting for him after death. Also Pascal's critique of Descartes' rationalism and its blind faith in reason and intellect finds a confirmation in Buzzati's

⁵³⁹ Panafieu, *Un autoritratto*, p. 29: 'Non sono cattolico, ma quando leggo Pascal, rimango affascinato dal suo talento, che è straordinario...Lì c'è il genio. E caratteristica sua: scrive limpido come l'acqua!'. See also p. 162: 'Prendi un uomo come Pascal: per me è un esempio massimo. Se leggi Pascal, e anche passi che non ti interessano, rimani sbalordito! Sono evidenze strepitose! E quella semplicità, quell'umiltà con cui dice tutte queste cose!'

⁵⁴⁰ Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (London: Penguin, 1995), p.60: 'The whole visible world is only an imperceptible atom in the ample bosom of nature [...]. Returning to himself, let man consider what he is in comparison with all existence [...]. What is a man in the Infinite? But to show him another prodigy equally astonishing, let him examine the most delicate things he knows [...] what is man in nature? A Nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an All in comparison with the Nothing, a mean between nothing and everything'.

refusal of positivist faith.⁵⁴¹ Pascal's profound faith in the Catholic God is absent in Buzzati's poetic which, as I have argued before, remains of a secular nature notwithstanding being characterized by a constant search for the transcendental. The continuous attempts by catholic scholars to find within Buzzati's work a path that goes from an initial scepticism to a definitive redemption appear as a biased stretching of his texts. It is a slippery, nuanced territory, where certainties do not exist, but it is the text which is most quoted by the supporters of a 'catholic Buzzati' that seems to deny a definitive admission of faith by the author. The poem 'L'addio', recovered among Buzzati's personal diaries and whose first verse gave the title to the book of the same name published in 2006 by Lucia Bellaspiga says:

-Dio che non esisti ti prego
 [...]
 -Ma se non esiste perché lo preghi?
 -Non esiste fintantoché io non ci credo
 finché continuo a vivere come viviamo tutti
 desiderando desiderando
 ma se io lo chiamo...
 -Troppo tardi...
 -Per la forza terribile dell'anima mia,
 [...]
 se lo chiamo verrà...⁵⁴²

This dialogue does not seem to happen between Buzzati and another person or entity. It rather appears as a monologue: it is Buzzati himself that, coherently with what happened throughout his life and career, is trapped between a desire to believe, a longing for firm faith and the impossibility of it. That of Buzzati is a wish which is never fulfilled and which remains a wish up to the end. For this reason, while analyzing Buzzati's spirits and ghosts, we can not talk of a transcendent world governed by a god like that of whom Pascal speaks, but rather of a spiritual world that might or might not

⁵⁴¹ Pascal, *Pensees*, p. 330: 'I cannot forgive Descartes: in all his philosophy he would have been quite willing to dispense with God. But he had to make Him give a fillip to set the world in motion; beyond this, he has no further need of God'.

⁵⁴² Lucia Bellaspiga, *Dio che non esisti ti prego. Dino Buzzati, la fatica di credere* (Milan: Ancora, 2006), pp. 185, 186.

be dominated by a god and not necessarily a catholic one. Furthermore, this doubt contributes to strengthen the aura of mystery which is one of the main characteristics of Buzzati's 'other world'.

Buzzati's spiritualism can therefore be placed at the intersection of different philosophical influences which, in diverse ways, share a rejection of the materialist and rationalist pragmatism. As I have tried to demonstrate, in the articles on the paranormal this refusal takes both the form of a nostalgia for an era in which the transcendent still had a role in men's lives ('Spiriti', 'La camera chiusa'), and a mockery of modernity which has transformed spirits into a form of entertainment ('Festa in villa con mago'). However, there are also texts which propose a different approach to the spiritual dimension of existence and which add that didactic/moralistic aspect of Buzzati's narrative which has been present in all the journalistic contexts analyzed so far, from colonial articles to crime news. In this group of texts, the superficial form of superstition which leads us to believe in the paranormal because of ignorance or, worse, with the intention of doing harm to others, is severely attacked by Buzzati, who refuses it as much as he refuses blind faith in science and progress.

In 'La storia del bambino feticcio', Buzzati narrates the tragedy of Giovannino Lucci, who was abused as a child by his grandmother: the woman went mad after the illness of Giovannino's uncle, with whom she was in love, 'prende degli aghi [...] e li conficcava [...] nelle gambe, nelle braccia, nella schiena, nel petto dell'infelice [...]'. Il bambino era stato trasformato in feticcio [...]' (*MI*, p. 79). Buzzati describes Giovannino as 'un uomo uscito in carne ed ossa dalle tenebre del Medioevo [...]' (*MI*, p. 75), a victim 'di miseria, di ignoranza, di cupa superstizione [...]' (*MI*, p. 77). Here the condemnation of human cruelty and ignorance is ferocious: the paranormal is not something which can enrich the representation of reality anymore but is lowered to the level of petty superstition, used by evil people to pursue their goals. Somewhere else the condemnation of men's wickedness is subtler, as in 'Melinda, strega per forza', the piece that closes the inquiry *In cerca dell'Italia misteriosa*. In this reportage from Teramo, Buzzati alternates, even graphically, news and fiction by telling the story of Melinda, a witch of whom Franco Manocchia, a friend of Buzzati, was an acquaintance. The text alternates Manocchia's narrative with parts in italics in which Melinda herself talks about her life. These latter parts resemble the use of the first person narrator that is characteristic of both Hoffmann's and Poe's tales of horror and serve to cast doubts

upon the general reliability of the article. The plausibility of paranormal presences such as those called into question by magic is transmitted through Mannocchia's voice: "L'ho conosciuta" racconta Mannocchia. "Una classica strega abruzzese senza niente di románico: una che applica l'antico codice della stregoneria locale tramandato a voce di strega in strega [...]" (*MI*, p. 109). Mannocchia gives voice also to the scorn for the superstition of the people who exploited Melinda's uncommon abilities. What emerges is a portrait of the malevolent nature of those who took advantage of a condition they publicly despised: "La gente la odiava e la temeva; in fondo erano loro che l'avevano voluta così" (*MI*, p. 110). It is Melinda herself who explains how it was impossible to refuse the cruelest requests of her clients: "[...] cominciarono a venire dai paesi vicini perché avevano bisogno [...]. Quando mi chiedevano del male, appena possibile rispondevo di no; allora gridavano: che razza di strega sei?" (*MI*, pp. 110, 111). By the end of the text Melinda appears as a victim and the judgement on her is fundamentally positive: "[...] era una buonissima donna. Avrà magari ammazzato qualcuno [...], però so che era una buonissima donna, per quanto sembri assurdo" (*MI*, p. 110). In the dialogue of facts and fiction which tells the story of Melinda – 'settima femmina [...]' nata al settimo mese' and then 'fin da piccola condannata a fare la strega' (*MI*, pp. 107, 108) – Buzzati rationally explains, through Mannocchia, how what was once believed to be one of her enchanted juices used for a spell was actually a real poison: "Era un intruglio nerastro che ho voluto dare a un laboratorio da analizzare. [...] Mi hanno riferito che era veleno bello e buono" (*MI*, p. 112). However, the presence of a rational explanation provided by science does not have the aim of discrediting the seriousness with which Buzzati talks about extrasensory phenomena. On the contrary, magic and witchcraft are once again called into question in order to face the problem of the absence, in our modern world, of a space dedicated to spiritual events. Melinda is the last specimen of a lost world in which even witches have betrayed the spirits for the advantages of progress: "[...] è stata l'ultima vera strega d'Abruzzi [...]. Le altre ancora vive, dai loro paeselli, sono scese in città [...], si sono industrializzate, hanno aperto gabinetti di consultazione, mettono inserzioni sui giornali, piccole maghe imborghesite. È un mondo scomparso per sempre" (*MI*, p. 112).

The feelings of dread and anguish transmitted by these texts arise, in Mario Mignone's words, from a 'senso dell'anormale, dell'indecifrabile, dell'al di là misterioso ed irrazionale delle cose [...], ossia dell'elemento misterioso

dell'esistenza'.⁵⁴³ The mystery which characterizes human existence is something which needs to be taken seriously: the risk of considering it trivial or linked to past ages which were not blessed by the advantages of science and technology is to create monsters such as Giovannino Lucci's uncle: 'il senso dell'assurdo che ispira [...] Buzzati non è di natura logica, ma fenomenica; non è ciò che è contraddittorio in sé e non resiste all'intelligenza, ma ciò che smentisce e mette in crisi le leggi dell'induzione' (p. 39). Stories such as 'La storia del bambino feticcio' and 'Melinda strega per forza' have the aim of teaching that the transcendent is neither something we can use to our advantage, nor one of the several products of our consumerist society which can be thrown away when we do not need it anymore.

Another mistake would be to consider mystery and the paranormal as something confined within the borders of fantastic literature. The idea of the use of the fantastic tradition as a 'literary space wholly dependent on the network formed by the books of the past [...]', as argued by Michel Foucault, is demonstrated by Buzzati not to be the only possibility left in modern times.⁵⁴⁴ Whereas for the French thinker 'this domain of phantasms is no longer the night [...] but, on the contrary [...] zealous erudition [...]' and 'fantasies are carefully deployed in the hushed library [...]' (pp. 105, 106), for Buzzati the fantastic is still an attribute of our reality and not only a literary device 'confined to the infinite murmur of writing' (p. 107). Rather than a phenomenon limited to the world of libraries and erudition, Buzzati's conception of spirits and the unfathomable is closer to Lovecraft's theorization according to which '[...] though the area of the unknown has been steadily contracting for thousands of years, an infinite reservoir of mystery still engulfs most of the outer cosmos'.⁵⁴⁵ It does not matter that science has been able to explain phenomena which were once considered inaccessible to reason: what is relevant is that they remain characterized by an aura of mystery, which Lovecraft defines as a 'residuum of powerful inherited associations' (p. 14) that makes them still able to transmit the idea that reason cannot decipher everything. Buzzati inserts in his journalism 'a [...] suspension [...] of those fixed laws of nature which are

⁵⁴³ Mignone, 'Anormalità e angoscia nella narrativa di Dino Buzzati', p. 18. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

⁵⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, 'Afterword to *The Temptation of St. Anthony*', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault (1854-1984)*, ed. by James D. Foubion, Paul Rabinow, and Rupert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1998), Vol. 2, pp. 103-122 (p. 106). Further references to this essay will be given in the text.

⁵⁴⁵ Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York: Ben Abramson, 1945 [1927]), p.14. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos': assaults that Lovecraft describes as the 'most terrible conception of the human brain' and that are 'expressed through a certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread' (p. 15).

However, a Buzzati's story is never what Lovecraft defined as 'a genuine tale of cosmic fear' because 'their intent is to teach or produce a social effect' (p. 16). Buzzati refuses the modern world as 'teso alla speculazione e indifferente se non rabbiosamente nemico dei valori spirituali' (*MI*, p. 29), but characters such as Melinda are used to teach also how to refuse some forms of patently ignorant views of the paranormal. Melinda's suffering is not so distant from that of other marginalized figures such as the old men persecuted in 'Cacciatori di vecchi', or simply victims of people's wickedness as in 'Non aspettavano altro'. In the former 'si erano formate delle specie di club, di compagnie, di sette, dominate da un odio selvaggio verso gli anziani [...]',⁵⁴⁶ whereas in the latter Antonio e Anna arrive in a city to pass the night before continuing their trip, but they are attacked and tortured by the villagers for no reason.⁵⁴⁷ As in these cases, in texts such as 'La storia del bambino feticcio' and 'Melinda strega per forza' the focus seems to shift and is not so much on the paranormal anymore but on the levels of cruelty that even apparently normal people are able to reach. Hence the critique of materialism and the presence of a strong spiritual element in Buzzati's articles of *I misteri d'Italia* and *Le cronache fantastiche* serve also to deliver a meaningful message and a lesson on the proper and improper ways in which spirits and magic should to be allowed in our lives.

5.4 Looking for Meaning

'Melinda, strega per forza' and 'La storia del bambino feticcio' are only two examples of how, for Buzzati, what is rationally unacceptable does not necessarily need to be looked for only in tales of horror or gothic stories, but is produced by the people who belong to our societies and communities. Buzzati's interest in the paranormal can be connected to several tendencies of the cultural and intellectual environment in which he worked throughout his career and, as I tried to show in the first section of this

⁵⁴⁶ Dino Buzzati, 'Cacciatori di vecchi', in *Il Colombre* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966), pp. 163-172, in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 1 *Delitti*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 153-159.

⁵⁴⁷ Dino Buzzati, 'Non aspettavano altro', in *Il crollo della Baliverna*, (Milan: Mondadori, 1954), pp. 326-340, in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 1 *Delitti*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 225-237.

chapter, has precise references in the cultural milieu which developed halfway between the nineteenth and twentieth century. However, the main reason for this interest lies in Buzzati's personal search for a meaning in the experience of men's lives within the contemporary world. Kathryn Hume's definition of 'meaning' is in this sense revelatory, because she describes it as 'a system of values that causes phenomena to seem related according to a set of rules, and [...] that makes them relevant to human concerns'.⁵⁴⁸ What is even more important is that 'fantasy [...] helps us envision possibilities that transcend the purely material world we accept as quotidian reality'.⁵⁴⁹ Buzzati constantly looks for phenomena which can make sense of human life, enrich it with further significance and, possibly, give us a clue as to what is waiting for us beyond the limit of death. In the light of this quest for 'meaning', the fact that the inquiry *In cerca dell'Italia misteriosa* was conducted in 1965 is significant: it is in the 1960s that the interest in occultism and the paranormal acquired a new boost in Italy. Between 1960 and 1980 the occult seemed to have become fashionable.

The reasons for this phenomenon are hardly identifiable, however the uncertainties of the postmodern age, the danger of a nuclear war, the progressive dominance of technology and the loss of faith in the answers of canonical religions and science might be some of the factors which pushed people towards a search for new ways to quell disorientation and fill voids. Moreover, this tendency was anything but limited to Italy. As explained by Margaret Thaler Singer, in the United States, the counterculture of the 1960s soon assumed the characteristics of a religious movement in which the spiritual dimension and the fascination with eastern philosophies played a not insignificant role.⁵⁵⁰ Influential and charismatic scholars such as the psychologists Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, famous for their experiments with psilocybin and LSD, developed a first-hand interest in eastern mysticism and spiritualism. The whole experience of an alternative lifestyle promoted by the so-called 'hippie culture' implied the transcendence of the self and the rejection not only of the social dynamics in force, but also of the traditional religions. Singer connects the attraction to the esoteric to a broader reaction to the policy of the American administration and especially to the

⁵⁴⁸ Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis. Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), p. 169.

⁵⁴⁹ Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, p. 196.

⁵⁵⁰ Margaret Thaler Singer, *Cults in Our Midst: The Continuing Fight Against Their Hidden Menace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995). See also Jean-Paul Corsetti, *Storia dell'Esoterismo e delle Scienze Occulte* (Rome: Gremese, 2003 [1st edition in French: 1992]).

refusal of the conflict in Vietnam. The rejection of the political and social powers in force became a symbol of the repudiation of traditional values and gave a boost to the birth of many sects. Buzzati seems somehow to have interpreted this particular moment in the evolution of popular culture and to have decided to narrate it as it was spreading and influencing people's lives in Italy. What is also relevant to notice is that the *Corriere della Sera*, long before Buzzati's arrival, had already showed a great interest in occultism by publishing as early as 1892 a series of articles dedicated to the medium Eusapia Palladino, and that another journalist of the *Corriere*, Luigi Barzini, had directly participated in the activities of the Milanese Società di Studi Psicici.⁵⁵¹

Once we acknowledge that Buzzati worked in a cultural and intellectual context which was far from being totally alien to the themes of the paranormal, what needs to be understood is the element of originality of his operation which consisted in approaching themes that, as late as the 1960s, were at the margins of the established 'high' culture and confined to the realm of folklore and superstition. At the beginning of this chapter we saw how the interest in the paranormal that Buzzati manifested with his 1965 inquiry had a sound cultural background in a tradition which extended from the nineteenth century to the twentieth-century avant-garde and Marinetti's Futurism. However, whereas between the nineteenth and the twentieth century the paranormal interested well-known authors and renowned intellectuals, in the years when Buzzati toured Italy to investigate the outcomes of the growing public interest in the occult and mystery, the paranormal and spirits had no place on the agenda of the cultural establishment. In Italy the influence of neorealism and Marxist criticism that had dominated in the postwar years was still too strong and the anti-realist experiments of the *neoavanguardia* were put into place primarily at a formal and linguistic level, with highly intellectual operations which little had to do with the popular beliefs which interested Buzzati. Occultism and spiritualism were successful, but they concerned a sort of 'subculture', labeled as compromised by superstition and fashion. Specifically the 1960s, as confirmed by Simona Cigliana, were the years in which a particular disapproval of the themes of the occult were exercised by Marxist critics:

⁵⁵¹ Cigliana, *Futurismo esoterico*, pp. 41-43.

[...] la storiografia e la critica del secondo dopoguerra, [...] impregnate di crocianesimo, non sono state senza responsabilità nell'aver perpetuato quella censura che Croce aveva già decretata [...].

[...] se il trionfo del crocianesimo aveva [...] determinato la convalida di un giudizio di valore negativo nei confronti di quegli aspetti eccentrici della vita intellettuale [...], cancellandoli quasi dalla ricostruzione del dibattito culturale, la critica di stampo marxista, lo strutturalismo, la semiologia, un interesse prevalentemente appuntato sugli aspetti linguistici e stilistici dei testi, contribuirono, negli anni '50 e '60 a ribadire [...] una sorta di censura ideologica (pp. 14-16).

Hence, Buzzati's operation appears now to be relevant not so much for its weak bonds with the contemporary intellectual establishment, but because it illustrates his tendency not to place filters between the reference to literary tradition and cultural forms commonly considered as secondary, typical of the not well-educated masses, in a word: 'lowbrow'. As I briefly pointed out in chapter four, Buzzati had no problems in taking inspiration from the most various and distant forms of art as long as they were functional to his project and, mostly, to help him build his fantastic 'other world'. This ability to mix together different levels of literary quality, distant genres, and diverse forms of expressions shows the seeds of a process that will bring 'attorno alla fine degli anni Settanta, in seguito all'espansione del mercato letterario e all'esaurimento dell'avanguardia' to focus more on the problem of the 'rapporto tra letteratura 'alta' e 'bassa' [...]'.⁵⁵² This relationship will be 'leggibile soprattutto sul terreno dei generi letterari, come gioco mutuale di scambi e contrapposizioni in risposta alle aspettative del pubblico e alle richieste del mercato'.⁵⁵³ On the one hand, Buzzati's choice was functional in giving an image as wide and comprehensive as possible of his narrative 'other world' so as to be able to use *topoi* of different narrative forms and literary genres. On the other, it was meant to help his search for 'meaning' which needed to have among its tools the possibility of considering as plausible (if not probable) the dialogue with a spiritual dimension of life. The absence of aesthetic prejudices in Buzzati, which manifested itself mainly in the articles and short stories concerning the paranormal, is also noticeable in his cultural formation, which ranged, as we have seen, over canonical authors, but included also eccentric interests. There was the passion for the paintings of the English artist Arthur Rackham that he discovered while reading *Rip*

⁵⁵² Ganeri, 'La teoria dei generi letterari dopo gli anni Settanta', pp. 30, 31.

⁵⁵³ Ganeri, 'La teoria dei generi letterari dopo gli anni Settanta', p. 31.

Van Winkle, a short story by the American writer Washington Irving; then the influence exerted by the British ‘The Studio’, an illustrated magazine appeared for the first time in 1893 and which was of fundamental relevance for the birth and growth of Art Nouveau.⁵⁵⁴ The passion for Egittology was developed, as explained by Luciano Simonelli, because of the fortuitous discovery, made with his friend Arturo Brambilla, of ‘un volume edito dall’Istituto di Arti Grafiche di Bergamo’, written by the French Egyptologist Gaston Maspéro and entitled *La storia dell’arte egiziana*.⁵⁵⁵ Finally, another seminal source for the fantastic images of the paranormal was Hieronymous Boch: as argued by Viganò, ‘il riferimento a[l] [...] pittore fiammingo del Quattrocento tanto amato da Buzzati, e alle figure immaginarie e mostruose che popolano i suoi quadri sempre celate in scene di vita quotidiana, è automatico’.⁵⁵⁶

As effectively affirmed by Kathryn Hume, ‘[...] belief is not really a factor. We know that what we read is not true in certain gross ways [...]. But successful fantasy persuades us to consider the situation as if it were possible [...]. Or it suggests us that a rich experience awaits us if we recognize the metaphoric ways in which the substitution or contradiction is true on a non literal level’.⁵⁵⁷ There is a passage in Ann Radcliffe’s famous essay ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ which explains even more clearly the value of the possibility of the paranormal: ‘I do not absolutely know that spirits may be permitted to become visible to us on earth; yet that they may be permitted to appear for very rare and important purposes [...] cannot be impossible, and I think, is probable. Now, probability is enough for the poet’s justification [...]’.⁵⁵⁸ It is the search for the ‘rich experience’ mentioned by Hume which encouraged Buzzati not to exclude the popular and the folkloric from his inquiry, and fantasy was essential to this operation because, as pointed out by Florian Mussgnug while paraphrasing the words of Giorgio Manganelli’s *La letteratura come menzogna*, ‘our dominant materialist world-view has banished the supernatural from scientific and religious discourse alike, displacing it into the circumscribed territory of the imaginary and into the ‘inner space’ of psychic life. As a consequence, only fantastic literature now preserves our profound longing for

⁵⁵⁴ See Viganò, ‘Introduzione’, p. XVI.

⁵⁵⁵ See Viganò, ‘Introduzione’, p. XVII.

⁵⁵⁶ See Viganò, ‘Introduzione’, p. XXIV.

⁵⁵⁷ Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, p. 167.

⁵⁵⁸ Ann Radcliffe, ‘On Supernatural in Poetry’, *The New Monthly Magazine*, 7, 1826, 145-152 (p. 148).

other, alternative worlds'.⁵⁵⁹ As for Manganelli, for Buzzati alike, 'fantasy literature marks the final stage of a dramatic repudiation of the supernatural in western Culture, first framed as witchcraft and magic and subsequently banished from dominant intellectual discourse'.⁵⁶⁰

What emerges from the analysis of the texts collected both in *I misteri d'Italia* and *Le cronache fantastiche* is that whereas in the 1950s and 1960s the fantastic and, as a consequence, the paranormal assumed the appearance of an intellectual game – which confirmed Foucault's idea of the fantastic as confined within the walls of libraries, useful at the outside for outlining the unfathomableness of the modern world – Buzzati, on the contrary, used the paranormal as a potential element of cognitive investigation. In this sense it is probably more than a coincidence that Foucault's ideas on the fantastic were expressed in his afterword to Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony* and that one of Buzzati's short stories is dedicated to that very same topic. In 'Le tentazioni di Sant'Antonio'⁵⁶¹ Buzzati takes the complex theme of the temptations, addressed by universally acclaimed painters such as David Teniers, Jan Brueghel, Paul Cézanne, Hieronymus Bosch, Max Ernst, and Salvador Dalí – and re-elaborated by Flaubert in 1874 – and makes it the topic of a short story which has as protagonist a common country priest engaged in a catechist lesson on sins to a distracted class of young pupils. After a quick but significant reference to magic and the end of summer, a moment in which '[...] dai ventosi valichi della montagna [...] con i loro enigmatici sacchi sulle spalle i primi maghi d'autunno scendono già [...]',⁵⁶² the narrator tells how Antonio, the priest, is tempted by progressively more and more attractive forms that the clouds take in the sky and that seem to challenge his faith. The increasing mystery and anxiety produced by the story are relaxed in the end, when the reader is left with the doubt that Antonio maybe only imagined those silly visions or that they were due to his tiredness. In short, Buzzati re-uses the tradition by introducing a culturally 'high' topic within the context of everyday, common life. He makes it 'low' because Antonio is not a saint, but a common humble priest, and because temptations are depicted by the fortuitous shapes assumed by clouds and not by a precious work of art by some important artist.

⁵⁵⁹ Florian Mussnug, *The Eloquence of Ghosts. Giorgio Manganelli and the Afterlife of the Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 98.

⁵⁶⁰ Mussnug, *The Eloquence of Ghosts*, p. 98.

⁵⁶¹ Dino Buzzati, 'Le tentazioni di Sant'Antonio', in *Il crollo della Baliverna* (Milan: Mondadori, 1954), pp. 213-220.

⁵⁶² Buzzati, 'Le tentazioni di Sant'Antonio', p. 213.

At the end of this fictional story we are left with the suspicion that Buzzati is deliberately merging facts and fiction, literary tradition and reportage, everyday life and imagination, art and literature: there is no ‘high’/‘low’ separation between different form of arts and genres, as long as they are useful in picturing the presence of the fantastic in life and in giving way to its spiritual dimension. In the case of the article ‘Un caso misterioso’ for example,⁵⁶³ in which to distinguish between fiction and facts is impossible, the world of art meets that of clairvoyance: Giorgio Lorria, a painter, ‘geniale artista, testa vulcanica e lingua corrosiva’ (CF2, p. 134), desperately asks for a solution to his problems to a magician, and the waiter who tells the narrator about the great success that the magician has in Venice when he arrives in the city every year plainly clarifies that ‘molti ci credono, anche gente istruita’ (CF2, p. 136). At the end of the text the narrator reveals that he has read, in the following morning newspaper, about Lorria’s death due to a stroke, which apparently happened one hour before the two had met: this disclosure adds an uncanny element to the narrative and renders impossible the placing of any limit between fantasy and facts. However, Buzzati’s choice to extend to ‘gente istruita’ not only the interest in but also the actual appeal to the paranormal not only confirms the inutility of applying the categories of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture to his aesthetic operation, but above all tells us that the search for ‘meaning’ is shared by people of every sort. Throughout this search the presence of the paranormal is not only justifiable, but also necessary, because ‘parafrasando Montale, si potrebbe dire che l’‘altro mondo’ di Buzzati è lo stesso nel quale viviamo, ma rovesciato, è la sua parte oscura, quella che c’è ma non si vede, che non viviamo, ma che è solo un po’ più in là, e che, forse proprio per questo, ci fa paura’.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶³ Dino Buzzati, ‘Un caso misterioso’, in *Le cronache fantastiche*, Vol. 2 *Fantasmì*, ed. by Viganò, pp. 134-139.

⁵⁶⁴ Viganò, ‘Introduzione’, p. XXV.

Conclusion

*Quando ero giovane ero romantico.
Disegnavo giovanotti romantici in pose romantiche.
Ora che sono passati tanti anni e che la vita mi ha disincantato,
sono romantico.
Dino Buzzati*

When asked to talk about Dino Buzzati, Indro Montanelli once said: ‘Quando, subito dopo la Liberazione, ci fu, al *Corriere*, l’inchiesta per epurare i collaborazionisti, Buzzati fu, a quanto pare, l’unico, fra quelli rimasti al lavoro dopo l’8 settembre, a non subire processi [...]. Quando io dalla prigione in cui mi trovavo rinchiuso gli mandai un biglietto per supplicarlo di astenersi dal lavoro, ora che bisognava svolgerlo sotto il controllo tedesco, mi rispose con un altro biglietto che conteneva solo questa parola: ‘Perché?’.’⁵⁶⁵ In chapters two and three, while discussing Buzzati’s production during Fascism, I tried to explain how declarations such as this one by Montanelli may be misleading because they suggest too much the idea of a naïve Buzzati, unable to understand the gravity of the political situation he was living in. However, Montanelli’s words acquire a clearer meaning when he adds that Buzzati ‘[...] non può concepire nemmeno un siluro se non sotto le sembianze di un delfino’.⁵⁶⁶ What Montanelli is trying to underline with his words is the impossibility of understanding not only Buzzati’s fiction, but the entire Buzzatian world, included his journalism, without the acceptance of fantasy within it as a constitutive element of reality.

The analysis I have tried to make in this work has been conceived with the aim of proposing an original way of reading the history of Buzzati’s ‘other world’ as it has been developed by his journalism. In order to meet this goal I used terms such as ‘genre’, ‘mode’, ‘kind’, and ‘fiction’ by giving considerable importance to their historical aspect so as to highlight the usefulness of such categories but also their mutability and dependence on the context. A different approach might have been applied: as has been explained by Remo Ceserani, after the strong effects produced on the history of literary criticism by movements such as Russian formalism, new criticism, and structuralism, still in the 1970s there remained the idea according to which ‘l’opera di letteratura è un *monumento*, non un *documento*; vale per quello che è,

⁵⁶⁵ Indro Montanelli, *La mia eredità sono io. Pagine da un secolo*, ed. by Paolo di Paolo (Milan: Rizzoli, 2008), p. 314.

⁵⁶⁶ Montanelli, *La mia eredità sono io*, p. 316.

non rimanda a nient'altro, non è *testimonianza* di niente' and 'la conoscenza della collocazione storica di un'opera d'arte svolge inevitabilmente una funzione minore, accessoria'.⁵⁶⁷ On the other hand, Ceserani argues that, again in the 1970s, 'la teoria letteraria e i problemi della storiografia letteraria hanno registrato [...] una inversione di tendenza, che ha portato a una lenta ripresa della discussione intorno ai principi della storia letteraria [...]'.⁵⁶⁸ My intention, as I have been arguing since my introduction, has been to consider the historical context as central to understanding the dynamics of Buzzati's 'other world' because I believe, with Ceserani, that 'una delle caratteristiche generali della situazione italiana' in which Buzzati worked throughout his life 'è che nella storia sociale, culturale e anche linguistica e letteraria del paese ci sono stati alcuni periodi 'forti', ben distinguibili, che segnano trapassi e modificazioni profonde [...]' (p. 89). When one of these events happen 'lo storico letterario [...] ha [...] il compito non solo di ricostruire in ogni circostanza il rapporto fra le idee e i fatti, ma anche di cercare di ricostruire tutte le forme di mediazione [...]' (p. 97). Buzzati experienced the effects of at least two of these periods: in the first part of his career he had to deal with the consequences of that 'ribaltamento' which marked the passage between the nineteenth and the twentieth century and the 'entrata nella modernità' (p. 89); then he was an eyewitness of 'un ribaltamento forse altrettanto forte' which, in the 1960s, was characterized by the 'generale cambiamento dei paradigmi economico-sociali, culturali e letterari' (p. 89). While trying to follow this approach and to combine the instruments of literary analysis with the relationship of Buzzati's work with its historical, social, and cultural context, I used the category of the literary 'modes' as 'procedimenti organizzativi dell'immaginario letterario che si concretizzano storicamente nei singoli generi' (p. 116). As the image Buzzati wanted to transmit of the world represented by his journalism, my intention has never been that of describing the 'real' course of events, but rather of offering an interpretation of the meaning of Buzzati's aesthetical operation by assuming that 'nell'universo della comunicazione letteraria le forme e cioè i tratti e i sistemi stilistici, i sistemi dei modi e dei generi sono sicuramente l'aspetto più importante [...], ma [...] i singoli fenomeni formali non sono mai di per sé portatori di

⁵⁶⁷ Remo Ceserani, *Raccontare la letteratura* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990), p. 13: here Ceserani quotes René Wellek's review of Claudio Guillen's *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History*, in *Yale Review*, LXI (Winter 1972), 254-259 (p. 258).

⁵⁶⁸ Ceserani, *Raccontare la letteratura*, p. 40. Further references to this volume will be given in the text.

significato. Essi [...] vanno a costituire significati in un rapporto ogni volta diverso con i sistemi tematici e i contesti sociali e culturali' (p. 119).

With these premises, I have tried to show in my thesis how the presence of fantasy in Buzzati's journalism was born from his peculiar way of looking at the surrounding world, but was also changed, adapted, and developed throughout his career according to the different contexts in which he had to work, the journalistic genres he was adopting, and the fictional genres he bent to the service of his journalism in order to challenge the idea of the objective representation of reality. I analyzed those journalistic contexts in which Buzzati merged fiction and non-fiction in order to build the image of an 'other world' that represents a reality in which imagination and fantasy have an active role in people's lives and that, despite the overwhelming presence of science and technology in modernity, there remains room for the spiritual dimension of existence. However, it is important to remind ourselves here that the reportage from the colonies, war correspondence, crime news, and the news about the paranormal do not represent the entire contribution that Buzzati made to Italian journalism. At least two more genres need to be added to this list: sport news and art criticism. The former has been widely studied especially in relation to Buzzati's passion for mountaineering: apart from the collections of articles dedicated to this topic such as *Le montagne di vetro* and the more recent *I fuorilegge della montagna*,⁵⁶⁹ several scholars have emphasized the strong relationship between Buzzati and the mountains and how this link found a fertile ground in his journalistic narrative by maintaining an intrinsic connection with the role that mountains have in the entire Buzzatian fictional production.⁵⁷⁰ Another interesting aspect of Buzzati's sport news is that dedicated to cycling and in particular to the reportage of the legendary *Giro d'Italia* of 1949, which was characterized by the rivalry between Fausto Coppi and Gino Bartali. These articles were collected in the

⁵⁶⁹ See Dino Buzzati, *Le montagne di vetro*, ed. by Enrico Camanni (Turin: Vivalda, 1990) and Dino Buzzati, *I fuorilegge della montagna. Uomini, cime, imprese*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2010).

⁵⁷⁰ See for example: *Montagne di vetro, di pietra, di carta: le montagne di Buzzati fra vissuto e rappresentazione* (Turin: Vivalda, 1994); Pierre Mazeaud, 'Dino Buzzati et la montagne', *Chaiers Buzzati*, 1979, 193-198; Gabriele Franceschini, 'Dino Buzzati: uno stile, un modello d'alpinismo', *Rivista mensile del Club Alpino Italiano*, CXII, 3 (1991), 28-31; Claudio Cima, 'Buzzati e le sue montagne', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 553-558; Maurizio Trevisan, 'Buzzati, un'estate', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 559-566; Maurizio Trevisan, 'Due temi alpinistici per un giornalista alpinista: la conquista, la sconfitta', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 277-294; Luigi De Anna, *Buzzati e il segreto della montagna* (Verbania: Tararà, 1997); Enrico Camanni, 'Alpinisti e montanari: dieci ritratti buzzatiani', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 295-304.

posthumous *Dino Buzzati al giro d'Italia*.⁵⁷¹ Yet Buzzati wrote also about boxing, golf, skating and skiing, as the articles collected in *Cronache terrestri* demonstrate.⁵⁷² Buzzati also followed for the *Corriere* the tragic deaths of almost the entire squad of A.C. Torino football team, who died in a plane crash in 1949 in the hills of Superga, near Turin, while returning from a game played in Lisbon.⁵⁷³

As far as art criticism is concerned, there is a characteristic in particular of this production which is linked at least to a part of the articles I took into account in my thesis. Many scholars, such as Antonella Montenovesi, Giorgio Soavi, and Antonio Donat-Cattin,⁵⁷⁴ have remarked on the originality of Buzzati's art criticism, and they have all underlined Buzzati's 'attenzione all'uomo della strada'.⁵⁷⁵ By refusing the supposed division between a cultural élite represented by intellectuals and academics on the one side and common people on the other, Buzzati brought into a technical area of journalism such as that dedicated to art criticism a plain style of linguistic and thematic simplicity. Merler writes about a clear 'influenza dell'attività giornalistica, in particolare nell'ambito della cronaca cittadina, sulla lingua di Buzzati critico [...]',⁵⁷⁶ and highlights how Buzzati's operation consisted in the fact that 'la mostra, l'opera, l'artista, la corrente vanno 'raccontate' con una prosa limpida e puntuale, che al limite può lasciare spazio a quelle che Altieri Biagi chiama 'virate al fantastico' [...]'.⁵⁷⁷ The reference to fantasy is not coincidental: fantasy can have a place in every kind of narrative, hence in every journalistic genre, art criticism included, because is part of every man's life, whereas the artificial complexity of academic writing is useless because it does not speak to everyone. These considerations about the style of Buzzati's art criticism may be regarded as a part of the broader issue of the opposition between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' culture which Buzzati denied throughout his entire career. In

⁵⁷¹ Dino Buzzati, *Dino Buzzati al giro d'Italia*, ed. by Claudio Marabini (Milan: Mondadori, 1981).

⁵⁷² Dino Buzzati, *Cronache terrestri*, ed. by Domenico Porzio (Milan: Mondadori, 1972).

⁵⁷³ See Dino Buzzati, 'Si schianta contro la basilica di Superga l'aereo che riporta in Patria i campioni d'Italia', *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 5 May 1949; 'Lagrime di donne affrante accanto alle salme consuete', *Corriere d'Informazione*, 5-6 May 1949; 'L'ultima voce dall'aereo: 'Ore 17.02 – Tutto bene grazie'', *Corriere d'Informazione*, 6 May 1949; 'L'ultima veglia di Torino ai trentun caduti di Superga', *Il Nuovo Corriere della Sera*, 6 May 1949.

⁵⁷⁴ See Antonella Montenovesi, 'Buzzati cronista d'arte', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 375-386; Giorgio Soavi, 'Dino Buzzati: il mestiere di scrivere d'arte', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 169-176; Antonio Donat-Cattin, 'Buzzati cronista di mostre', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 177-190. See also Augusto Macchetto, 'Il critico che andrà in America', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 525-532 and Anna Paola Zugni-Tauro, 'Buzzati e l'arte veneta: cronaca, critica e salvaguardia', in *Buzzati giornalista*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 199-216.

⁵⁷⁵ See Gianluca Merler, 'Dino Buzzati "cronista d'arte"', *Studi buzzatiani*, (16) 2011, 69-84 (p. 73).

⁵⁷⁶ Merler, 'Dino Buzzati "cronista d'arte"', p. 69.

⁵⁷⁷ Merler, 'Dino Buzzati "cronista d'arte"', p. 77.

the same way as he opposed conformism and political extremism, that is subtly and through his narrative rather than directly participating to any public debate, Buzzati challenged not only the idea of the possibility of representing a sole, objective reality, but also many of the firm beliefs of modernity. One of these beliefs was that of a necessary division between a restricted group of intellectuals who represented high culture and the masses. I dealt with this topic while analyzing in particular Buzzati's interest in the paranormal, but it is important here to draw a conclusion on the meaning of such a position when compared to what was happening in the literary world, both at a national and international level, in the years in which Buzzati wrote.

The distaste that modernist intellectuals had for journalism, of which I wrote in chapter one and that marks a first point of originality of Buzzati's aesthetical operation, when compared to his contemporaries, is one of the symptoms of a broader rejection by the literary intelligentsia of the increasing role of the masses which, by the beginning of the 1940s, had become an undeniable fact. Buzzati's openness to genres commonly judged as 'lowbrow' such as comics, but above all his choice of adopting a clear, concise and jargon-free style, demonstrate the decisive intention of favouring the needs of those masses from whom the academic and intellectual élite was trying to differentiate itself. As argued by John Carey, 'the purpose of modernist writing [...] was to exclude [...] newly educated (or 'semi-educated') readers, and so to preserve the intellectual's seclusion from the 'mass'''.⁵⁷⁸ Buzzati refused the idea that 'giving the public what it wants' was ominous and to 'believe in giving the public what intellectuals want; that, generally speaking, is what they mean by education'.⁵⁷⁹ In a traditionalist and conservative context such as that of Italian journalism, Buzzati seemed much more aligned to the position of those pioneers such as Alfred Harmsworth and William Maxwell Beaverbrook who, between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, had started an 'alternative culture which bypassed the intellectual and made him redundant' by the invention of popular newspapers.⁵⁸⁰ It is no coincidence that in 1951, when asked by his editor to propose new ideas for the renewal of the *Corriere d'Informazione*, the only newspaper Buzzati explicitly mentioned in his notes as a possible point of reference was Beaverbrook's *Daily*

⁵⁷⁸ John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), p. VIII.

⁵⁷⁹ Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, p. 6.

⁵⁸⁰ Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, pp. 6, 7.

Express: still in 1951 the British paper, which in the 1930s was selling over two million copies a day, represented a novelty for Italians.⁵⁸¹ This is not to say that Buzzati tried to favour the phenomenon of mass culture, of which he could not but despise the most conformist and banal manifestations: the meaning of his refusal of an elitist literature was coherent with his refusal of linking linguistic and formal experimentations, which first characterized modernism and then the *neoavanguardia* of the 1960s, to a ‘high’ view of narrative. If modernism and then the *neoavanguardia* abandoned realism as ‘the sort [of narrative] that it was assumed the masses appreciated’ and decided to cultivate ‘irrationality and obscurity’,⁵⁸² then Buzzati tried to demonstrate that a narrative which was able to go beyond the limits of realism but that could nonetheless be read by everyone was possible.

Buzzati’s representation of reality was then challenged by the insertion of a fictional element which put into question our perception of the visible, but this operation was conducted through the use of a language and a style which made journalism and literature one. The scientific study of this language has been undertaken since the beginning of the 1980s, as I mentioned in my introduction, and has produced seminal contributions by different scholars on the peculiarity of Buzzati’s fictional prose. However, as recently argued by Fabio Atzori, one of the most influential and prolific linguists who have worked on Dino Buzzati, there is still the necessity of ‘ricerche mirate sulla lingua’ of Buzzati’s journalism ‘che ne registrino le escursioni, legate ad esempio al genere’.⁵⁸³ One of the most fertile grounds that remains to be explored is precisely that of a stylistic confrontation not only between Buzzati’s journalism and his fiction, but above all within the journalistic production itself, in order to understand how and why, for example, ‘la libertà di cui gode il commentatore di fatti di costume è certo superiore a quella del cronista di nera’. On the contrary, Atzori explains, the usual tendency is different: ‘spesso, nel confrontare giornalista e scrittore, siamo fermi ad una visione del giornalista a una sola dimensione, piatta, che non distingue; quando addirittura non leggiamo gli articoli, le corrispondenze, i reportage senza tenere conto della loro specificità, ricorrendo a quella che a me pare una formula

⁵⁸¹ See *Dino Buzzati, il giornale segreto*, ed. by Giangiacomo Schiavi (Milan: Fondazione Corriere della Sera, 2006).

⁵⁸² Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, p. 17.

⁵⁸³ Fabio Atzori, ‘Qualcosa era successo. Il paradosso di Bologna’, in *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent’anni di promozione di studi dell’Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010), pp. 85-90 (p. 90).

di comodo: il giornalista Buzzati che piega i fatti, le necessità della cronaca alle sue fantasie di scrittore'.⁵⁸⁴ I hope to have been able in this thesis to demonstrate the specificity of every journalistic genre used by Buzzati, especially in relation to his idea of representation, but also to his fiction and the building of his 'other world'. Besides, my intention was precisely that of showing how in Buzzati's articles was not the news that was meant to be bent 'alle fantasie dello scrittore', but rather the opposite: fantasy was merged and adapted to the description of a complex and contradictory reality which had in the fantastic a further option of investigation of the human condition. Yet Atzori's remark on the necessity of further analysis of the characteristics of this journalism is justified, especially as far as its stylistic and rhetorical core is concerned.

Another of Atzori's suggestions which may be linked to the results of my research, especially in relation to my attempt to connect Buzzati's aesthetical choices with his historical and cultural context, is that of research 'che misurino affinità e differenze tra Buzzati e altri giornalisti (e giornalisti-scrittori) della sua generazione, dal più conosciuto Montanelli a Emilio Radius, a Enrico Emanuelli ecc.'.⁵⁸⁵ I would add to this proposal the fact that the originality of Buzzati's journalism, and the issues regarding realism that it raises, can be seen also in the similarities and differences between his 'fantastic news' and the production of a considerable number of American authors who published their major works during the 1960s and who are usually grouped under the label 'new journalism'. Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote and Joan Didion – only to mention the most important names – had in common the idea of crossing the limits imposed by mainstream objective journalism using forms and techniques borrowed from fictional prose. The definition New Journalism is actually a *post factum* title, chosen by Tom Wolfe and used for the first time in the introduction to his first collection of articles, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, published in 1965.⁵⁸⁶ As underlined by Ronald Weber, Wolfe realized

⁵⁸⁴ Atzori, 'Qualcosa era successo', p. 90.

⁵⁸⁵ Atzori, 'Qualcosa era successo', p. 90. Atzori writes also about the possibility of working more closely on the 'restauro filologico dei testi', Buzzati's poetry, theatre, and on the 'censimento dei materiali documentari, fra cui l'elenco completo degli articoli apparsi sul *Corriere*'. With reference to this last point, I worked on the recovery of the complete list of articles Buzzati published in the *Corriere della Sera* during his period aboard Italian Navy Ships. The results of this work can be found in an article which is presently under examination by the editorial board of *Italian Studies* and which provisional title is 'The Missing *Buttafuoco* and 'Vittoria invisibile': Fantasy in Buzzati's War Reportage'.

⁵⁸⁶ Tom Wolfe, 'Introduction' to *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, in Ronald Weber, *The Reporter as Artist: A Look to the New Journalism Controversy* (New York: Hastings House Publisher, 1974), pp. 29-34.

for the first time that there was something new in the American journalistic panorama at that time after reading an article by Gay Talese which had appeared in *Esquire* in 1962.⁵⁸⁷ Wolfe tried to give a theoretical basis to what he called New Journalism first in the pages which preceded his 1965 collection and then, in a more organic way, in 1972, when he edited with E.W. Johnson an anthology of the main exponents of the movement.⁵⁸⁸

Wolfe summarized four main characteristics which should define the perfect new journalist, in order to give the impression of a unified production which in fact comprehended very different, often quite incomparable authors. The devices grouped by Wolfe included the need to tell a story using scenes rather than historical narratives; reporting dialogue in full using a conversational speech rather than quotations inserted in the text by an omniscient narrator; giving a particular importance to the alternations of different viewpoints; and recording all possible details of the environment and characters' lives. What Wolfe was trying to do was to give a theoretical basis to a new way of writing, by taking as a primary example the nineteenth-century realistic novel, and adding a strict adherence to factual events reported by daily newspapers. New Journalism was supposed to distinguish itself both from the emerging fabulist novels whose referents were authors such as Kafka and Borges, and from the unliterary homogeneous style of common reporters. The avowed aim was to give journalism the chance to enter the high realm of literature from which it had been banished.⁵⁸⁹

However, despite Wolfe's theorization, John Hellmann suggested that a real adherence to the techniques of the realistic novel can be found among this group of writers only in a few cases. New Journalistic works, and especially Wolfe's, are new where they are able to merge the reporting of factual subjects and the fabulist fiction which it tried to react against.⁵⁹⁰ What is interesting to me about this controversial but still very influential cultural movement is that it gave birth to a kind of writing in journalism which has been connected to Dino Buzzati by critics, even though in a very

⁵⁸⁷ Ronald Weber, 'Some Sort of Aesthetic Exitement', in Weber, *The Reporter*, pp. 13-26.

⁵⁸⁸ Tom Wolfe, 'Introduction' to *The New Journalism*, ed. by Tom Wolfe and E.W. Johnson (New York: Harper, 1973), pp. 3-52.

⁵⁸⁹ See Wolfe, 'Introduction', in Weber, *The Reporter*, p.67: '[...] the New Journalism is the use by people writing non-fiction of techniques which [...] had been thought of as confined to the novel or to the short story, to create in one form both the kind of objective reality of journalism and the subjective reality that people have always gone to the novel for'.

⁵⁹⁰ John Hellmann, *Fables of Fact: The New Journalism as New Fiction* (London: University of Illinois Press, 1981), pp. 1-17.

sporadic way. In particular, in both Buzzati's 'fantastic news' and in the production of writers such as Mailer and Capote, news became something more than mere information: journalism became what Phyllis Frus described as a chance to activate an 'exchange of ideas' that could deny the existence of 'a world as objectively there'.⁵⁹¹ The problem of the representation of modern reality was engaged by both New Journalism and Buzzati's poetical experience in a way that gave journalism the ability to reflect on our historical, social, and political reality. The role of the reader was changed as well: the absence of a positivist objectivity required not a passive reader anymore, but an active, open minded one, who needed to be able to see beyond the empirical recording of facts from a detached point of view. If, as Frus argues, 'the attempt to practice objective journalism reinforces the status quo' and 'objectivity reinforces the relations we think of as naturally existing between words and things',⁵⁹² then Buzzati's merging of journalism and fantasy appears to be an even more original narrative when compared to the chronologically more recent experience of the New Journalism, which chose the realistic novel as its literary reference.

Alberto Papuzzi, while tracing a history of the relationship between journalism and literature, writes about the New Journalism that its merit was to give a more creative energy to news, being less objective through a personification of the event reported, and that it was able to entertain the reader.⁵⁹³ Moreover, Franco Zangrilli in *La penna diabolica*, while talking about Buzzati, states that 'spesso la mescolanza del fantastico e del giornalismo porta alla creazione di racconti innovativi che anticipano di molti anni quelli degli scrittori giornalisti americani degli anni '60 [...] che formarono il movimento del New Journalism [...]', and proposes also a comparative study of Buzzati's *Il Buttafuoco* and Norman Mailer's non-fiction novel *The Armies of the Night* by arguing that *Il Buttafuoco* 'per molti aspetti sembra precedere e rivaleggiare con il romanzo di guerra venuto di moda negli anni post-bellici soprattutto per merito degli scrittori-giornalisti americani come Norman Mailer'.⁵⁹⁴ Although there are differences between New Journalistic writers and Dino Buzzati – starting from the historical period in which they wrote their war, social and political reportage to their different ideological backgrounds – the common outcome of a narrative which was able to place into

⁵⁹¹ Phyllis Frus, *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives, The timely and the Timeless* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 91.

⁵⁹² Frus, *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives*, p. 107.

⁵⁹³ Alberto Papuzzi, *Letteratura e Giornalismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1998), pp. 27-38.

⁵⁹⁴ Franco Zangrilli, *La penna diabolica: Buzzati scrittore-giornalista* (Pesaro: Metauro, 2004), p. 59.

dialogue the forms of fiction and journalism is worth mentioning and deserves to be further investigated in the future. Furthermore, in both Buzzati and in the best products of the New Journalism, there was an attempt to go beyond the standard professional journalism which represented history and reality as a progression towards an objective, tidy picture of a supposedly coherent and undeniable truth.

A further option of investigation of the role of Buzzati's journalism within the Italian literary panorama would be to emphasize the similarities and differences of his production with that of Massimo Bontempelli: whereas the relationship with the latter's *realismo magico* has been studied (see chapter one), a comparison with his journalistic production is missing. In *L'avventura novecentista* in particular Bontempelli reveals an interesting point of contact with Buzzati's belief in the necessity that literary prose has to learn from journalism to be clear and effective. For example in the paragraph entitled 'Giornalismo', written as early as in 1932, Bontempelli writes that 'chi commenta in un breve elzeviro o corsivo un fatto saliente della cronaca quotidiana, anche se il suo commento è poggiato su idee generali ricche della più profonda filosofia, non si lascerà facilmente distrarre verso le nuvole [...]'.⁵⁹⁵ With a patently provocative tone Bontempelli then argues that 'proprio dalla collaborazione giornalistica' he expects the 'rinnovamento della nostra letteratura' and 'i quattro quinti di ciò che il nostro tempo va producendo di meglio, son diventati libro dopo essere passati per il giornale, vera prova del fuoco'.⁵⁹⁶ Finally, and almost as in a prediction of what the first rushed opinions on Buzzati's prose would have been, Bontempelli defines as an 'errore gravissimo' that of those who 'disprezzano i libri 'fatti di articoli di giornale'. [...] Quell'errore è correlativo dell'altro, di coloro che dicono 'prosa da giornalista' per dire prosa affrettata e di poca resistenza'.⁵⁹⁷ However, beyond journalism there are also at least two further points that could be expanded regarding the similarities and differences between Buzzati and Bontempelli. The first is the study of the relationship between the presence of metaphysics and transcendent within reality in Buzzati and the idea of metaphysics which Bontempelli developed in his work. The latter was used, as Simona Storchi argued, in Arbasino's sense of 'everything that is a continuum of reality and goes beyond the visible surface of reality itself' and indicates the artist's capability to see

⁵⁹⁵ Massimo Bontempelli, *L'avventura novecentista* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1974), p. 50.

⁵⁹⁶ Bontempelli, *L'avventura novecentista*, p. 51.

⁵⁹⁷ Bontempelli, *L'avventura novecentista*, p. 51.

beyond and through reality.⁵⁹⁸ This use of the concept of metaphysics derives apparently from the ‘strong analogies between the theorization of Metaphysical painting developed by Alberto Savinio, Giorgio De Chirico and Carlo Carrà between 1918 and 1921 (particularly in the periodical *Valori Plastici*) and the theoretical foundation of the periodical *900*, edited by Bontempelli between 1926 and 1929’.⁵⁹⁹ The interest of Buzzati and Bontempelli in metaphysics, understood in particular in its relationship with the empirical world, ‘engages with [...] issues of self-perception and knowledge, the creation and perpetuation of a cognitive system, the relationship between language and representation, reality and fiction, the human and the non-human, man and society’.⁶⁰⁰ In conclusion, another possible point of convergence between the two writers – which is found in particular both in Bontempelli’s *Eva ultima* and in Buzzati’s *Il grande ritratto* – is the figure of the ‘androide’ that casts an uncanny light on modernity and progress through the animation of a machine. In Bontempelli’s story, Eva, the young and innocent protagonist, lives a series of adventures among which there is the encounter with the marionette Bululù. In Buzzati’s novel the protagonist builds an android shaped in the memory of his wife. The woman/robot designed by Endriade in *Il grande ritratto* shares with Bululù the fact of being a ‘liminal creature who challenges both the boundaries between reality and imagination and the limits of human knowledge and self-understanding’.⁶⁰¹

However, beyond all the possible connections with other journalistic and literary experiences, what I have tried to demonstrate throughout my thesis is that Buzzati’s aesthetical experience marks his originality by posing an existential interrogative of the kind which Alvaro Biondi called ‘interrogativo metafisico’ (see chapter one). Human existence is conceived as a constant struggle between the need, on the one hand, of an order which may help in finding a meaning in life through specific rules, and on the other hand, the desire to liberate the imagination, which entails the risk of getting lost in an indiscriminate chaos. Against this background stands the image of death as the final moment of our earthly journey, when all the doubts about the meaning of existence might finally be dissolved. However, if death may be the catharsis of existence, then it

⁵⁹⁸ Simona Storchi, ‘Conquering the City: the Representation of Milan in Massimo Bontempelli’s ‘La vita operosa’’, in *Modern Italy*, 7.2 (2002) 189-199 (pp. 189, 190).

⁵⁹⁹ Storchi, ‘Conquering the City’, p. 198.

⁶⁰⁰ Simona Storchi, ‘Massimo Bontempelli between De Chirico and Nietzsche: Mannequins, Marionettes and the De-Humanized Subject’, in *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio and Eva ultima, Romance Studies*, 27.4 (2009), 298-310 (p. 301).

⁶⁰¹ Storchi, ‘Massimo Bontempelli between De Chirico and Nietzsche’, p. 307.

also threatens to reveal a void which may be consistent with the definitive certainty of life's meaninglessness. Hence in the entire Buzzati's oeuvre death is feared, exorcised, deceived, but also respected as being what makes life worth living by enriching it with passions, feelings, hopes and fears. For these reasons, hell is often portrayed as a world very similar to our own, but infinitely more boring, devoid of stimuli because immutable. The 'other world' described by Buzzati never represents another universe which is separated from the real one: it is a dimension which is connected and intersected to the visible reality. It is a world which is richer than that described by contemporary journalism, because it is complicated by the fantastic element of representation, that is what our minds require us to exclude in order not to lose control of a visible reality which suits us as being the only possible and 'objective' reality. On the contrary, the truth is that fantasy reminds us that what we consider to be excluded from the 'real' world for reasons of the presumed immutable laws of nature, it is only what we have decided to consider as expendable in order to avoid the chaos towards which imagination might lead us.

The questions asked by Buzzati on the meaning of existence and the role of death seem to be particularly consistent with those that Florian Mussgnug, while referring to Giorgio Manganelli and by building on Giulio Ferroni's work, defined as 'the two central assumptions of post-romantic culture: the certainty of individual death and the artist's profound fascination with posterity and immortality'.⁶⁰² Especially in the light of the role that death plays both in his more strictly literary works and in his journalistic production, Buzzati's narrative transmits what Ferroni has defined as the 'carattere 'postumo' dello scrittore' whose works present themselves as 'paradossali conservatrici e precursori di vita dopo la morte'.⁶⁰³ Through this theoretical approach Buzzati has indicated several times along the arc of his career the anxiety of failing to write 'il capolavoro', that is the work that would have allowed him to survive the test of time.⁶⁰⁴ Ferroni effectively argued that 'quando questo senso della rovina inevitabile penetra

⁶⁰² Florian Mussgnug, *The Eloquence of Ghosts. Giorgio Manganelli and the Afterlife of the Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 172.

⁶⁰³ Giulio Ferroni, *Dopo la fine. Sulla condizione postuma della letteratura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), p. 3. Further references to this book will be given in the text.

⁶⁰⁴ In 1957 Buzzati wrote a letter to Andrea Rizzoli to decline the proposal of working as editor of a new weekly magazine. One of the reasons to decline was: 'Io ho già 50 anni suonati e tempo buono per scrivere non me ne rimane molto. Solo che io dedichi 4-5 interi anni come minimo al nostro nuovo settimanale accantonando necessariamente i vari progetti di capolavori; dopo, non sarà troppo tardi?'. See Lorenzo Viganò, 'Non ho l'età per un rotocalco, ora scrivo libri', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 September 2006.

entro la scrittura [...] si passa [...] alla scelta di generi che di per sé escludono ogni chiusura [...] all'accumulo di frammenti' (p. 22). And what could represent the ephemeral, the fragmentary, and the perishable in Buzzati better than news? It is in this sense that Buzzati's different narrative productions, either fictional or not, 'contengono in sé il segno di quell'introduzione che tronca la vita, alludono ai confini insuperabili del vivere e a quel *dopo* in cui ogni opera verrà a collocarsi e a vivere fuori dalla finitezza della vita dell'autore' (p. 25). As a consequence, Buzzati is a true 'romantic' for two main reasons: in his opposition to a technological modernity the 'rivoluzione romantica' against the new 'possibilità tecniche offerte dalla prima rivoluzione industriale' (p. 45) comes to life again and, as happened in the literature of romanticism with the novel, 'una nuova travolgente ossessione della morte [...], un nuovo contatto fra la scrittura e la finitudine dell'esistenza' (p. 46) emerges, this time through the fragmentary forms of the short story and the journalistic article.

Buzzati's work of recovery of the fantastic tradition may be inserted in a broader process of description of the 'dimensione postuma' which literature assumes in the twentieth century: Buzzati tries to 'save' the fantastic from the modernity which has refused it. In the same way as, according to Ferroni, happened with Pier Paolo Pasolini and popular traditions, dialect poetry and all those traditional forms of expression threatened by capitalist society, also Buzzati, with reference to the fantastic, 'si è collocato da un punto di vista 'postumo', come di chi ha dovuto sperimentare la fine di ciò che amava e in cui riponeva il senso più profondo dell'esistenza' (p. 85). However, in Buzzati there is not an actual *requiem* of fantasy, now definitely lost and which belongs to a past that has become unreachable: fantasy lives again in the daily life of news as a warning to those men who have forgotten the spiritual dimension of existence. In Buzzati, the fascination with posthumous fame – when seen as a redemption from the harshness of life and which is supposed to be realized through the immortality of literary work – remains and sometimes emerges as a reason for the anxiety of not being completely satisfied with the work already produced. In the light of this situation, Buzzati places himself anachronistically with respect to his time, in which the idea of an everlasting *post-mortem* fame had lost power in the face of the frenetic pace of change of the modern world. On the contrary, in Buzzati the romantic idea of fame after death persists and appears both in the longing for a fantastic 'other world' and in the hope of leaving a mark in the world of the living.

Bibliography

Primary Materials:

Dino Buzzati's Novels and Collections of Short Stories

- *Barnabo delle montagne* (Milan and Rome: Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1933).
- *Il segreto del bosco vecchio* (Milan and Rome: Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1935).
- *Il deserto dei Tartari* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1940).
- *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942).
- *La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1945).
- *Il libro delle pipe* (Milan: Antonioli, 1945).
- *Paura alla Scala* (Milan: Mondadori, 1949).
- *In quel preciso momento* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1950).
- *Il crollo della Baliverna* (Milan: Mondadori, 1954).
- *Esperimento di magia* (Padua: Rebellato, 1958).
- *Sessanta racconti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1958).
- *Siamo spiacenti di* (Milan: Mondadori, 1960).
- *Il grande ritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1960).
- *Un amore* (Milan: Mondadori, 1963).
- *Il Colombre* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966).
- *La boutique del mistero* (Milan: Mondadori, 1968).
- *Poema a fumetti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969).
- *Le notti difficili* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971).
- *I miracoli di Val Morel* (Milan: Garzanti, 1971).

Posthumous

- *Cronache terrestri*, ed. by Domenico Porzio (Milan: Mondadori, 1972).
- *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by Giuliano Gramigna (Milan: Milano, 1975).
- *I misteri d'Italia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1978).

- *Dino Buzzati al giro d'Italia*, ed. by Claudio Marabini (Milan: Mondadori, 1981).
- *180 racconti*, ed. by Carlo Della Corte (Milan, Rome, Naples: Theoria, 1982).
- *Cronache nere*, ed. by Oreste Del Buono (Rome and Naples: Theoria, 1984).
- *Il reggimento parte all'alba*, ed. by Indro Montanelli and Guido Piovene (Milan: Frassinelli, 1985).
- *Lettere a Brambilla*, ed. by Luciano Simonelli (Novara: De Agostini, 1985).
- *Il meglio dei racconti*, ed. by Federico Ronconi (Milan: Mondadori, 1990).
- *Le montagne di vetro*, ed. by Enrico Camanni (Turin: Vivalda, 1990).
- *Lo strano Natale di Mr. Scrooge e altre storie*, ed. by Domenico Porzio (Milan: Mondadori, 1990).
- *Bestiario* (Milan: Mondadori, 1991).
- *Il Buttafuoco. Cronache di guerra sul mare* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992).
- *L'Africa di Buzzati*, ed. by Marie-Hélène Caspar (Paris: E. Univeristé Paris X, 1997).
- *Opere scelte*, ed. by Giulio Carnazzi (Milan: Mondadori, 1998).
- *La 'Nera' di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2002).
- *Le cronache fantastiche*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2003).
- *Il panettone non bastò* (Milan: Mondadori, 2004).
- *I capolavori di Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005).
- *I fuorilegge della montagna. Uomini, cime, imprese*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2010).

*: underlined volumes are those that include, entirely or in part, journalistic prose.

Single Articles

- Buzzati, Dino, 'Apposta dall'Inghilterra per visitare Nomadelfia', *Corriere della Sera*, 12 May 1949.
- Buzzati, Dino, 'Fecero di giorno notte gli Inglesi alla seconda Sirte', *Corriere della Sera*, 4 April 1953.
- Buzzati, Dino, 'L'ammiraglio Cunningham narra come si combatté in Mediterraneo', *Corriere della Sera*, 25 November 1953.

- Buzzati, Dino, 'La tempesta salvò gli inglesi nella seconda battaglia della Sirte', *Corriere della Sera*, 4 April 1947.
- Buzzati, Dino, 'La verità sulla guerra navale: Matapan', *Corriere della Sera*, 4 March 1947.
- Buzzati, Dino, 'Le case di Kafka', *Corriere della Sera*, 31 March 1965.
- Buzzati, Dino, 'L'usignolo di Nomadelfia', *Corriere della Sera*, 30 May 1965.
- Buzzati, Dino, 'Un ammiraglio ispeziona i mari dove si combatté', *Corriere della Sera*, 11 December 1947.

Secondary Materials (Criticism on Dino Buzzati):

- Afeltra, Gaetano, 'Buzzati, in quel preciso momento', *Corriere della Sera*, 13 March 1997.
- Airoidi Namer, Fulvia and Panafieu, Yves, 'Riflessioni su spazio e tempo in Bontempelli e in Buzzati', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 75-108.
- *Album Buzzati*, ed by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2006).
- Altieri Biagi, Maria Luisa, 'Aspetti sintattici della scrittura narrativa di Buzzati', in *Norma e lingua in Italia: alcune riflessioni fra passato e presente* (Milan: Istituto Lombardo di scienze e lettere, 1997), pp. 147-165.
- Altieri Biagi, Maria Luisa, 'L'incipit cronistico nei testi narrativi di Buzzati', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 369-390.
- Arslan, Antonia, *Dino Buzzati tra fantastico e realistico* (Modena: Mucchi, 1993).
- Arslan, Antonia, 'Le novelle rifiutate di Dino Buzzati', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi), pp. 219-232.
- Arslan, Antonia, *Invito alla lettura di Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1993 [1974]).
- Atzori, Fabio, 'Barnabo delle montagne': la magia del ritmo', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 1 (1996), 79-85.
- Atzori, Fabio, 'Ma è giusto anteporre la cronaca all'articolo?'. Buzzati in guerra per il 'Corriere della Sera', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 2 (1997), 147-163.

- Atzori, Fabio, 'Alias in via Solferino: la lingua del primo Buzzati (1928-1940) tra giornalismo e letteratura', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 423-452.
- Atzori, Fabio, 'Qualcosa era successo. Il paradosso di Bologna', in *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent'anni di promozione di studi dell'Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010), pp. 85-90.
- Bahuet-Gachet, Delphine, 'Problemi di comunicazione e potere della parola in alcuni racconti di Buzzati', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 453-470.
- Baratto Trentin, Franca, 'Le lingue di Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 1 (1996), 123-128.
- Barberi Squarotti Giorgio, 'La fortezza e la forma: 'il deserto dei Tartari'', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvis Fontanella (Florence: Olschi), pp. 139-156.
- Basili, Sonia, 'Buzzati e i nuovi fenomeni di costume', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 5 (2000), 69-93.
- Bellaspiga, Lucia, *Dio che non esisti ti prego. Dino Buzzati, la fatica di credere* (Milan: Ancora, 2006).
- Bertacchini, Renato, 'Buzzati cronista terrestre', *Italianistica*, 5 (1976), 309-319.
- Bertoldi, Silvio, 'Buzzati e Dio, l'ultima intervista', *Corriere della Sera*, 21 September 1994.
- Bertoldin Tiziana, 'Tecnica, modernità e natura nell'immaginario di Dino Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani* 5 (2000), 47-68.
- Biaggi, Pietro, *Buzzati. I luoghi del mistero* (Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 2001).
- Biondi, Alvaro, 'Metafora e sogno: la narrativa di Buzzati fra 'Italia magica' e 'surrealismo italiano'', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 15-60.
- Biondi, Alvaro, *Il tempo e l'evento. Dino Buzzati e l' 'Italia Magica'* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010).

- Biondi, Alvaro, 'Una lunga fedeltà. Dino Buzzati e l' 'Italia magica' ', in *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent'anni di promozione di studi dell'Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010), pp. 139-156.
- Bizzotto, Lorena, 'Buzzati e il ritratto eroico: 'Un comandante'', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 471-480.
- Bo, Carlo, 'Buzzati e il tarlo della verità', *La Nuova Antologia*, 1468 (1933).
- Bo, Carlo, 'In quel preciso momento', *La Fiera Letteraria*, 7 January 1951.
- Bo, Carlo, 'Poetica pura', *Omnibus*, 21 April 1949.
- Bocca, Giorgio, 'I rischi e i timori di un reazionario', *Il Giorno*, 27 October 1971.
- Bonifazi Neuro, 'I mantelli di Buzzati e il 'fantastico'', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi), pp. 233-246.
- Brambilla, Alberto, 'Il 'Giro d'Italia' di Buzzati', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 305-336.
- *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000).
- Buzzati, Almerina and Le Noci, Guido, *Il pianeta Buzzati* (Milan: Apollinare, 1974).
- Calvino, Italo, 'Quel deserto che ho attraversato anch'io', *La Repubblica*, 1 November 1980.
- Calvino, Italo, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio* (Milan: Mondadori, 2000 [1985]).
- Camanni, Enrico, 'Alpinisti e montanari: dieci ritratti buzzatiani', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 295-304.
- Caputo, Rolando, 'Communicating Vessels: 'Il Deserto dei Tartari': Literature and Film', in *Spunti e Ricerche*, 13 (1998), 111-122.
- Carnazzi, Giulio, 'Buzzati critico: raccontare i libri degli altri', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 263-276.

- Caspar, Marie-Hélène, 'Buzzati in Etiopia: un cronista scrittore', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto, (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 75-128.
- Caspar, Marie-Hélène, 'L'organizzazione spaziale nei racconti di Dino Buzzati', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982). pp. 121-138.
- Caspar, Marie-Hélène, 'Vergani, Malaparte e Buzzati corrispondenti del 'Corriere della Sera' in Etiopia (1937-1940)', *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 112-210.
- Caspar, Marie-Hélène, *Fantastique et mythe personnel dans l'oeuvre de Buzzati* (La Garenne-Colombes: Editions Européennes Erasme, 1990).
- Caspar, Marie-Hélène, *Le fantastique dans l'oeuvre narrative de Dino Buzzati* (Paris : Université Sorbonne, 1988).
- Cassol Francesco, Pietro Baggi and Nella Giannetto, "'Ma c'è qualcosa in fondo?' Il mistero e la problematica religiosa nell'opera di Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 5 (2000), 143-158.
- Cavallari, Alberto, 'Buzzati journaliste', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 267-272.
- Cavallari, Alberto, 'Le journaliste confronté au merveilleux quotidien', *Cahiers Buzzati*, 6 (1985), 59-65.
- Cavallini, Giorgio, *Buzzati. Il limite dell'ombra* (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 1997).
- Cecchi, Emilio, 'Evoluzione di Buzzati', in Emilio Cecchi, *Di giorno in giorno* (Milan: Garzanti, 1954), pp. 95-98.
- Cecchi, Emilio, 'Nuovi racconti di Buzzati', in Emilio Cecchi, *Letteratura Italiana del Novecento* (Milan: Garzanti, 1972), pp. 1006-1011.
- Cecchi, Emilio, 'Racconti di Buzzati', in Emilio Cecchi, *Libri nuovi e usati* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1958), pp. 133-138.
- Cima, Claudio, 'Buzzati e le sue montagne', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 553-558.
- Colombo, Angelo, 'Un linguaggio universalmente comprensibile'. *Correzioni e varianti nei primi racconti di Buzzati* (Seren del Grappa: Edizioni DBS, 1996).

- Corradi, Daniele, 'Excursus tra le antologie degli scritti giornalistici di Dino Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 14 (2009), 77-100.
- Crotti, Ilaria, *Dino Buzzati* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1977).
- Crotti, Ilaria, *Tre voci sospette. Buzzati, Piovene, Parise* (Milan: Mursia, 1994).
- Cruciana, Maria Antonietta, 'Dino Buzzati a la 'Domenica del Corriere'', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 481-494.
- D'Agostino, Paul, 'Buzzati's Spiral: Judgement, Solitude and the Absurd', in *Studi Buzzatiani*, 7 (2002), 53-66.
- D'Agostino, Paul, 'L'ideologia anacronistica: Buzzati e la politica apolitica', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 193-201.
- Dalla Rosa, Patrizia, 'Al di sopra dei lucernari e delle guglie': gli 'altrove' intravisti da Dino Buzzati', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 127-143.
- Dalla Rosa, Patrizia, 'Immagini della città nel linguaggio del Buzzati narratore', *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 111-124.
- Dalla Rosa, Patrizia, *Dove qualcosa sfugge: lingue e luoghi di Buzzati* (Pisa: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2004).
- De Anna, Luigi, *Dino Buzzati e il segreto della montagna* (Verbania: Tararà, 1997).
- De Michelis, Cesare, 'Buzzati e l'esperienza del rotocalco d'attualità fra Longanesi, Pannunzio e Benedetti', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 337-346.
- De Turrís, Gianfranco, 'Un'intervista a Buzzati di trent'anni fa', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 3 (1998), 151-158.
- Debenedetti, Giacomo, 'Dino Buzzati, premio Strega', *La Fiera Letteraria*, 20 July 1958.
- Del Buono, Oreste, 'Presentazione', in Dino Buzzati, *Cronache nere*, ed. by Oreste Del Buono (Turin: Teoria, 1984), pp. 5-9.
- Deon, Valter, 'Strategie d'uso dei tempi verbali in tre racconti di Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 1 (1996), 129-135.
- Di Bella, Franco, 'Buzzati giornalista e la cronaca', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 21- 28.

- Di Santo, Sara Emilia, 'Al di là dei dogmi...Dino Buzzati e Zeno Saltini: un'amicizia inedita', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 14 (2009), 49-76.
- Di Santo, Sara Emilia, *Il coraggio della bontà. Dino Buzzati e don Zeno Saltini* (Empoli: Ibiskos, 2010).
- *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982).
- *Dino Buzzati, il giornale segreto*, ed. by Giangiacomo Schiavi (Milan: Fondazione Corriere della Sera, 2006).
- *Dino Buzzati: la lingua, le lingue (Atti del Convegno internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 26-29 settembre 1991)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1994).
- *Dino Buzzati: un écrivain européen. Problèmes de traduction et d'analyse textuelle*, in *Chaiers Buzzati*, 9 (1994).
- Dissera Bragadin, Giorgio, 'Dino Buzzati: Inviato a bordo delle grandi navi', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 347-350.
- Donat-Cattin, Antonio, 'Buzzati cronista di mostre', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 177-190.
- Donazzolo, Paolo, 'Regolamento e sublime', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 3 (1998), 95-122.
- Esposito, Edoardo, '“Il Sacrilegio” o la presa di distanza dal catechismo', in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 229-240.
- Fanelli, Giuseppe, 'Buzzati, la critica e il fantastico', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 387-398.
- Fanelli, Giuseppe, *Dino Buzzati. Bibliografia della Critica* (Urbino: Quattroventi, 1990)
- Farnetti, Monica, 'Buzzati in India', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 145-156.
- Farnetti, Monica, 'Leggere il mondo per dimostrare i libri. Il personaggio-scrittore nell'opera di Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 3 (1998), 7-26.

- Federici, Corrado, 'The Temporal Motif of Dino Buzzati', *L'Anello che non tiene*, 1 (1), Fall 1988, 41-53.
- Fekete, Monica, 'L' 'oltretomba' buzzatiano. Lettura di 'Viaggio agli inferni del secolo'', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 73-84.
- Festarazzi, Roberto, 'Una lettera d'amore col sigillo del Papa', *Jesus*, September 1994, 106-109.
- Finco, Aldo, 'Buzzati's Poetic Solitude', *The South Central Bulletin*, 43 (4), Winter 1983, 105-106.
- Finocchiaro Chimirri, Giuliana, 'Dalla 'terza pagina' al volume: un lavoro 'in progress'', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 359-368.
- Franceschini, Gabriele, 'Dino Buzzati: uno stile, un modello d'alpinismo', *Rivista mensile del Club Alpino Italiano*, CXII, 3 (1991), 28-31.
- Frangia, Terri, 'Cosmophantasies: Humanistic Visions of Immortality in Science Fiction', in *Immortal Engines: Life Extension and Immortality in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, ed. by George Slusser, Gary Westfahl and Eric S. Robkin (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 158-169.
- Garofano, Delia, 'Review of Franco Zangrilli, *La penna diabolica: Buzzati scrittore-giornalista* (Pesaro: Metauro, 2004)', in *Studi buzzatiani*, 12 (2007), 130-134.
- Geerts, Walter, 'Forma, spazio, visione', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 157-168.
- Geerts, Walter, 'Le metonimie di Buzzati', in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 61-68.
- Geerts, Walter, 'Strutture retoriche del giornalismo buzzatiano: l'esempio delle cronache del caso Fort', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 29-44.
- Geiger, Ada, 'Scrittori in terza pagina al tempo di Buzzati', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto, 2000), pp. 411-422.

- Giacomazzi, Giuseppina, 'Cronaca e racconto nei 'Misteri d'Italia' fra scetticismo e tensione metafisica', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 495-512.
- Gianfranceschi, Fausto, 'Buzzati postmoderno', in Dino Buzzati, *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984 [1942]), pp. 5-10.
- Gianfranceschi, Fausto, 'Buzzati: la sua religiosità e i suoi critici', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 15-22.
- Gianfranceschi, Fausto, *Dino Buzzati* (Turin: Borla, 1967).
- Gianfranceschi, Fausto, 'Introduzione', in Dino Buzzati, *I sette messaggeri* (Milano: Mondadori, 1984).
- Giannetto, Nella and Paola Lagomanzini, 'Indice degli articoli e dei racconti apparsi sul 'Corriere della Sera'', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati (Atti del convegno internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 12-15 ottobre 1989)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 569-594.
- Giannetto, Nella, '“Di solito ciò che si scrive su di me mi annoia terribilmente...”: una lettera inedita di Buzzati sul libro dedicatogli da Gianfranceschi', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 2 (1997), 164-170.
- Giannetto, Nella, 'Alle origini della scrittura buzzatiana: i primi articoli, i primi racconti', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 5-20.
- Giannetto, Nella, 'Dino Buzzati e la letteratura inglese', *Spunti e Ricerche*, 13 (1998), 38-58.
- Giannetto, Nella, 'Presentazione', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 7-11.
- Giannetto, Nella, 'Uno scambio di lettere fra Buzzati e Calvino', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 1 (1996), 99-112.
- Giannetto, Nella, *Il coraggio della fantasia. Studi e ricerche intorno a Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Arcipelago, 1989)
- Giannetto, Nella, *Il sudario delle caligini. Significati e fortune dell'opera buzzatiana* (Florence, Olschi, 1996).

- Gramigna, Giuliano, 'Buzzati: giornalismo e narrazione', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 347-352.
- Gramigna, Giuliano, 'Prefazione', in Dino Buzzati, *Romanzi e Racconti*, ed. by Giuliano Gramigna, pp. XI-XLV.
- Gramigna, Giuliano, 'Tecniche del pensiero magico', in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 241- 250.
- Gramone, Antonella, 'Dino Buzzati's Journalism: Reporting from the Borderline', *Neohelicon*, 1, 27 (2000) 179-190.
- Hipkins, Danielle, 'Evil Ambiguities: The Fantastic Fight for Interpretation in Dino Buzzati's 'Il Deserto dei Tartari' and Paola Capriolo's Early Fiction', *Spunti e Ricerche*, 13, 1998, 81-98.
- *Il Pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992).
- Ioli, Giovanna, *Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1988).
- Jacomuzzi, Stefano 'I primi racconti di Buzzati: il tempo dei messaggi', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982). pp. 99-120.
- Jacomuzzi, Stefano, 'I due sergenti: i 'racconti militari' di Buzzati e Bonsanti', in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto, (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 109-136.
- Lacroix, Jean, 'Utopie buzzatiane: il racconto dell'altrove', in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 199-218.
- Lagomanzini, Paola, 'Appunti su Buzzati giornalista', in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 431-445.
- Lagoni Dranstrup, Aase, 'Buzzati e Calvino: due scrittori e due concezioni del fantastico', in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 137-150.
- Lagoni Dranstrup, Aase, 'Dino Buzzati et le rapport dialectique de la littérature fantastique avec l'individu et la société', *Cahiers Buzzati*, 3, 1979, 71-115.

- Lanzoni Remi, 'The Function of Memory in Buzzati's 'Congedo dalla nave'', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 6 (2001), 51-65.
- Lazzarin Stefano, *Il Buzzati 'secondo'. Saggio sui fattori di letterarietà nell'opera buzzatiana* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2008).
- Lazzarin, Stefano, "Ed è per questo che gli spiriti non vogliono vivere con noi": Buzzati e la linea 'nostalgica' nella letteratura fantastica del Novecento', in *Buzzati d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, ed. by Angelo Colombo and Delphine Bahuët-Gachet (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2008).
- Lazzarin, Stefano, *Fantasmî antichi e moderni. Tecnologia e perturbante in Buzzati e nella letteratura fantastica otto-novecentesca* (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2008).
- Lazzarin, Stefano 'Il punto sul fantastico italiano: 1980-2007', *Moderna*, IX, 2 (2007), 215-252.
- Lazzarin Stefano, 'Nani sulle spalle dei giganti. Buzzati e la grande tradizione del fantastico', *Italianistica*, 1 (2002), 103-119.
- Le Gouez, Brigitte, 'Buzzati e il mare nel 'Buttafuoco'', *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 34-42.
- Macchetto, Augusto, 'Il critico che andrà in America', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 525-532.
- Marabini, Claudio, 'Buzzati al giro d'Italia', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 273-284.
- Marabini, Claudio, 'Buzzati e l'elzeviro', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 353-358.
- Mares, Cinzia, 'Conversazione con Almerina Buzzati', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 7 (2002), 127-137.
- Mares, Cinzia, 'Il punto su Buzzati', *Bollettino '900*, 2 (2002),
<<http://www3.unibo.it/boll900/numeri/2001-ii/w-bol/Mares/Mares.html>>.
- Martin, Stephen, 'Exploring the Intertextual: Buzzati and his Readers of 'I Sette Messaggeri'', *Italica*, 72 (1), Spring 1995, 70-82.
- Masuyama, Kyoko, 'Le corrispondenze di Dino Buzzati da Tokyo', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 129-144.

- Mattiati, Emmanuel, 'Ecrivains-journalistes sous le fascisme. Le cas de Dino Buzzati et du 'Corriere della Sera'', *Narrativa*, 18 (2000), monographic issue.
- Mattiati, Emmanuel, 'Gli eserciti fantasma nell'opera di Dino Buzzati. Dalla mitologia al mito personale', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 145-165.
- Mattiati, Emmanuel, 'Le recours au mythe dans les articles africains de Dino Buzzati (1933-1940)', *Narrativa*, 6, (1994), 211-245.
- Mazeaud, Pierre, 'Dino Buzzati et la montagne', *Chaiers Buzzati*, 1979, 193-198.
- Mellarini, Bruno, 'Tra favolismo e allegorismo, Ricerca e perdita del mito in due racconti buzzatiani degli anni Quaranta', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 14 (2009), 101-135.
- Merler, Gianluca, 'Dino Buzzati 'cronista d'arte'', *Studi buzzatiani*, (16) 2011, 69-84.
- Mignone, Mario, *Anormalità e angoscia nella narrativa di Dino Buzzati* (Ravenna: Longo, 1981).
- Milano, Paolo, 'Dino Buzzati o il brivido borghese', *L'Espresso*, 20 July 1958.
- Moc, Anna, 'Dal fatto di cronaca alla cronaca di fatti umani', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 29-36.
- *Montagne di vetro, di pietra, di carta. Le montagne di Buzzati fra vissuto e rappresentazione* (Turin: Vivalda, 1994).
- Montanelli, Indro, 'Buzzati giornalista e la politica', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 19-20.
- Montanelli, Indro, *La mia eredità sono io. Pagine da un secolo*, ed. by Paolo di Paolo (Milan: Rizzoli, 2008).
- Musarra, Ulla, 'Mondi possibili' e strategie narrative', *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 101-110.
- Musarra-Schrøeder, Ulla, 'Immagini di città. Dino Buzzati e la tradizione moderna-postmoderna', *Narrativa*, 23 (2002), 59-71.
- Nerenberg, Ellen, 'Tartar Control: Masculinity and impegno in Buzzati's *Il deserto dei Tartari*', *Italica*, 74, 1995, 217-234.
- Oppo, Andrea, "'Qualcosa era successo..'. Per una lettura filosofica del giornalismo di Buzzati', in *XÁOS. Giornale di confine*, 1 (June 2005, 2006),
<http://www.giornalediconfine.net/n_4/11.htm>.
- Panafieu, Yves, 'Aspetti storici, morali e politici del discorso sull'impotenza', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 23-48.

- Panafieu, Yves, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1973).
- Panafieu, Yves, *Janus: Propositions pour un décryptage sociologique et idéologique de l'oeuvre de Dino Buzzati* (Paris: Laffont, 1989).
- Parisi, Luciano, 'Dino Buzzati: l'ambiguità della fantasia', *Forum Italicum*, 1 (2005), 83-89.
- Pedullà, Walter, 'Buzzati scivola nel buonsenso', *Avanti*, 28 June 1966.
- Peruško, Tatjana, 'La realtà deforme. La presenza del grottesco nei racconti di Dino Buzzati', in *Studi Buzzatiani*, 2 (1997), 112-135.
- Polcini, Valentina, *Dino Buzzati and Anglophone Culture: The Re-use of Visual and Narrative Texts in His Fantastic Fiction*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Exeter, 2010. Print.
- Polcini, Valentina, 'The Fantastic in Dino Buzzati's Christmas Stories', *Modern Language Review*, 105 (3), July 2010, 713-731.
- Polesana, Mariangela, 'Buzzati e l'animazione degli oggetti: dai mobili alle automobili', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 2 (1997), 93-111.
- Porzio, Domenico, 'L'interrogazione religiosa nell'opera di Dino Buzzati', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvis Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 67-76.
- Pozzi, Emilio, 'Con Dino Buzzati a 'La Domenica del Corriere': storie di vita quotidiana e cultura della notizia', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 7 (2002), 139-143.
- Pozzi, Emilio, 'Dino Buzzati a Radio Lugano: l'ultima intervista', in *Studi Buzzatiani*, 6 (2001), pp. 101-112.
- Prandin, Ivo, 'Buzzati e le catastrofi', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 53-62.
- Pugliese, Cristina, 'Waiting for the Borders: A Comparative Study of Dino Buzzati's 'Il Deserto dei Tartari' and J.K. Coetzee's 'Waiting for the Barbarians'', *Italian Studies in Southern Africa*, 14 (2), 2001, 57-79.
- Rawson, Judy, 'Dino Buzzati', in *Writers and Society in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Michael Caesar and Peter Hainsworth (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), pp. 191-210.
- Rawson, Judy, 'La lingua dei colori in Buzzati', in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto, (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 285-293.

- ‘Repertorio bibliografico ragionato sul fantastico italiano (1980-2007)’, ed. by Felice Italo Beneduce, Eleonora Conti, Fabrizio Foni, Rita Fresu, Stefano Lazzarin, and Claudia Zudini, *Moderna*, IX, 2 (2007), 253-270.
- Riegel, Leon, ‘Waiting for War to BreakOut: Junger, Buzzati and Gracq’, in *Literature and War*, ed. by David Bevon (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), pp. 97-108.
- Sandrini, Giuseppe, ‘Presenza di Leopardi nel primo Buzzati’, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 6 (2001), 7-20.
- Scarsella, Alessandro, ‘Aspetti del ‘caso’ Buzzati: Premesse storico-critiche e studio del fantastico in Italia’, in *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent’anni di promozione di studi dell’Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010), pp. 127-138.
- Scarsella, Alessandro, ‘Buzzati e il mito della città nella letteratura italiana contemporanea’, in *Il pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 431-446.
- Scarsella, Alessandro, ‘“Una paura senza soggetto”: l’inviato Buzzati a caccia di misteri’, in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto, 2000), pp. 63-74.
- Schettino, Franco, ‘The Dream-Like technique in ‘Il Deserto dei Tartari’: the Reader’s Delight and the Critic’s Nightmare’, in *The Anxious Subject: Nightmares and Daydream in Literature and Film*, ed. by Moshe Lazar (Malibu: Undena, 1983), pp. 69-88.
- Siddell, Felix, ‘Buzzati e la luna’, in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 157-168.
- Siddell, Felix, ‘Introductory Essay. Buzzati and Genre: Waiting for an Answer’, *Spunti e Ricerche*, 13 (1998), 5-8.
- Siddell, Felix, ‘Surveillance in ‘Il Buttafuoco’’, *Studi Buzzatiani*, 3 (1998), 52-63.
- Siddell, Felix, *Death or Deception: Sense of Place in Buzzati e Morante* (Leicester: Trobadour, 2006).
- Soavi, Giorgio, ‘Dino Buzzati: il mestiere di scrivere d’arte’ in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 169-176.

- Spagnoletti, Giacinto, 'Verso il fantastico. Buzzati', in *La letteratura italiana del nostro secolo* (Milan: Mondadori, 1985), pp. 557-561
- St. Ours, Kathryn, 'Religion and Religiosity in the Short Fiction of Dino Buzzati', *Forum Italicum*, 36 (2), Fall 2002, 297-315.
- Tarantino, Anna, 'Il Buttafuoco': osservazioni di un lettore ordinario', *Narrativa*, 6 (1994), 34-42.
- Toscani, Claudio, *Guida alla lettura di Buzzati* (Milan: Mondadori, 1987).
- Trevisan, Maurizio, 'Buzzati, un'estate', in *Il Pianeta Buzzati. Atti del convegno internazionale Feltre-Belluno. 12-15 ottobre 1989*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), pp. 559-566.
- Trevisan, Maurizio, 'Due temi alpinistici per un giornalista alpinista: la conquista, la sconfitta', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 277-294.
- *Un gigante trascurato? 1988-2008: vent'anni di promozione di studi dell'Associazione Internazionale Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Patrizia Dalla Rosa and Bianca Maria Da Rif (Pisa and Rome: Serra, 2010).
- Venuti, Lawrence, 'Dino Buzzati's Fantastic Journalism', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 28 (1982), 79-91.
- Vergani, Guido, 'Buzzati inviato speciale', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 45-52.
- Vergani, Leonardo, 'La guerra dei mostri marini: Buzzati inviato speciale', *Corriere della Sera*, 26 November 1992, p. 36.
- Viganò, Lorenzo, 'Introduzione', in *Le cronache fantastiche di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), pp. IX-XXXIX.
- Viganò, Lorenzo, 'Introduzione. Dino Buzzati: la vocazione per la "nera"', in *La "Nera" di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milan: Mondadori, 2002), pp. IX-XXXIX.
- Vigorelli, Giancarlo, 'Buzzati, la morte, Dio', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvise Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 83-86.
- Winner, Anthony, 'Authenticity, Authority, and Application: Buzzati, Kundera, Gordimer', *Kenyon Review*, 20 (3-4), Summer-Fall 1998, 94-120.

- Wood, Sharon, 'Dino Buzzati', in *Italian Novelists since World War II, 1945-1965*, ed. by Augustus Pallotta (Detroit and Milan: Thomson Gale, 1997), pp.75-84.
- Wood, Sharon, 'Love and Death in the Later Work of Dino Buzzati', *Forum Italicum*, 26 (2), Fall 1992, 333-343.
- Zambon, Patrizia, 'I racconti di Natale di Buzzati', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 391-410.
- Zangrandi, Silvia, 'Una certa residua consistenza. I fantasmi buzzatiani e la tradizione fantastica italiana del Novecento', *Studi Buzzatiani*, 12 (2007), 11-34.
- Zangrilli, Franco, *La penna diabolica: Buzzati scrittore-giornalista* (Pesaro: Metauro, 2004).
- Zanzotto, Andrea, 'Per Dino Buzzati', in *Dino Buzzati (Atti del convegno di Venezia, Fondazione Cini, 3-4 novembre 1980)*, ed. by Alvisè Fontanella (Florence: Olschi, 1982), pp. 77-82.
- Zugni-Tauro, Anna Paola, 'Buzzati e l'arte veneta: cronaca, critica e salvaguardia', in *Buzzati giornalista (Atti del congresso internazionale, Feltre e Belluno, 15-21 maggio 1995)*, ed. by Nella Giannetto (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 199-216.

Theory and Texts on the Relationship between Literature and Journalism

- Ardiss, Ann and Collier, Patrick, 'Introduction', in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 1-12.
- Ardiss, Ann, 'Staging the Public Sphere: Magazine Dialogism and the Prosthetics of Authorship at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 30-47.
- Bertoni, Clotilde, *Letteratura e giornalismo* (Rome: Carocci, 2009).
- Brake, Laurel, 'Journalism and Modernism Continued: the Case of W.T. Stead', in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 149-166.
- Brosnan, Leila, 'Monarch on the Drab World: Virginia Woolf's Figuring of Journalism as Abject', in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity. From Hazlitt to*

- Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 191-210.
- Campbell, Kate, 'Introduction: On the Perception of Journalism', in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity. From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 1-14.
 - Campbell, Kate, 'Matthew Arnold and publicity: a Modern Critic as Journalist', in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity. From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 91-120.
 - Capote, Truman, *In Cold Blood* (New York: Random House, 1966).
 - Carey, John, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992).
 - Cecchini, Luigi, *Dieci grandi processi di amore e di morte* (Milan: De Vecchi, 1965).
 - Costa, Giuseppe and De Giovanni, Neria, *Giornalismo e letteratura* (Alghero: Namapress, 2000).
 - Croce, Benedetto, 'Il giornalismo e la storia della letteratura', in *Problemi di Estetica e contributi alla Storia dell'Estetica Italiana* (Bari: Laterza, 1910), pp. 130-133.
 - Davis, Lennard J., 'A Social History of Fact and Fiction', in *Literature and Society*, ed. by Edward W. Said (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1980), pp. 120-147.
 - Frus, Phyllis, *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives, The Timely and the Timeless* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
 - Hamilton, Mark, 'Representing the public Sphere: the New Journalism and Its Historians', in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 15-29.
 - Hartley, John, *Popular Reality: Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture* (London: Arnold, 1996).
 - Hellmann, John, *Fables of Fact: New Journalism as New Fiction* (London: University of Illinois Press, 1981).
 - Hemsteadt, Geoffrey, 'Dickens's Later Journalism', in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity. From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 38-53.
 - Huyssen, Andreas, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, (London: Macmillan, 1986).

- Jensen, Joli, *Redeeming Modernity: Contradictions in Media Criticism* (London: Sage, 1990).
- *Journalism, Literature and Modernity. From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).
- Lasch, Christopher, 'Journalism, Publicity, and the Lost Art of Argument', *Gannet Center Journal*, Spring 1990, 1-11.
- Leham, Richard, *Literary Modernism and beyond: the extended vision and the realms of the text* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).
- Papuzzi, Alberto, *Letteratura e giornalismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1998).
- Roth, Philip, 'Writing American Fiction', *Commentary*, 31 (Mar. 1961), 223-233.
- Sage, Lorna, 'Foreword', in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity. From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. IX-XI.
- Smith, Anthony, 'The Long Road to Objectivity and Back Again', in *Newspaper History: From the 17th Century to the Present Day*, ed. by George Boyce, James Curren, and Pauline Wingate (London: Constable, 1978), pp. 153-171.
- Schiller, Dan, *Objectivity and News: the Public Rise of Commercial Journalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).
- *The New Journalism*, ed. by Tom Wolfe and E.W. Johnson (New York: Harper, 1973).
- Tuchman, Gaye, 'Objectivity as Strategic Ritual', *American Journal of Sociology*, 77 (1973), 660-679.
- Underwood, Doug, *Journalism and the Novel: Truth and Fiction, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- Weber Ronald, *The Reporter as an Artist: a Look of the New Journalism Controversery* (New York: Hasting House Publisher, 1974).
- Weiss, Ignazio, *Il potere di carta* (Tourin: Utet, 1965).
- Zangrilli, Franco and Costa, Giuseppe, *Giornalismo e letteratura. Simposio tra due mondi – Journalism and Literature. Symposium between two worlds* (Caltanissetta: Sciascia, 2005).

Philosophy, Literary and Critical Theory

- *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. by Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan, and Ralph Miliband (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).
- Airoidi Namer, Fulvia, *Massimo Bontempelli* (Milan: Mursia, 1979).
- Arnold, Matthew, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in *Selected Poems and Prose*, ed. by Miriam Allot (London: Dent, 1978), pp. 189-202.
- Ascari, Maurizio, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction: Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
- Barberi Squarotti, Giorgio, 'Il romanzo fantastico negli anni 1930-1940: Buzzati, Morovich, Terracini, Delfini', in *La cultura degli anni 1930-1945 (Omaggio ad Alfonso Gatto), Atti del convegno di Salerno, 21-24 aprile 1980* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1984), Tomo I, pp. 47, 48.
- Barthes, Roland, 'Structure of the *Fait-Divers*', in *Critical Essays*, trans. by Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972 [1st edition in French: 1964]), pp. 185-195.
- Benjamin, Walter, *One Way Street and Other Writings* (London: NLB, 1978).
- Bloom Clive, 'Introduction', in *Gothic Horror: a reader's Guide from Poe to King and Beyond*, ed. By Clive Bloom (Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p. 2.
- Bonifazi, Neuro, *Teoria del fantastico e il racconto fantastico in Italia: Tarchetti, Pirandello, Buzzati* (Ravenna: Longo, 1982).
- Bontempelli, Massimo, *L'avventura novecentista* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1974).
- Burdett, Charles, 'Italian Fascism, Messianic Eschatology and the Representation of Libya', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11 (1), 3-25.
- Burdett, Charles, 'Nomos, Identity, and Otherness: Ciro Poggiali's *Diario AOI 1936-1937* and the Representation of the Italian Colonial World', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 79 (2011), 329-349.
- Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Penguin, 1998 [1757: second edition, 1759]).

- Calvino, Italo, 'Introduzione', in *Racconti fantastici dell'Ottocento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1983), pp. 5-14.
- Calvino, Italo, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio* (Milan: Mondadori, 2000 [1985]).
- Castle, Terry, 'Introduction', in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 3-20.
- Ceserani, Remo, *Raccontare la letteratura* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990).
- Ceserani, Remo, *Il fantastico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996).
- Chandler, Daniel, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory', 1997, <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf>.
- Cigliana, Simona, *Futurismo esoterico. Contributi per una storia dell'irrazionalismo italiano tra Otto e Novecento* (Naples: Liguori, 2002).
- Cohen, Ralph, 'History and Genre', *New Literary Theory. Interpretation and Culture*, 17 (2) Winter 1986, 203-218.
- Contini, Gianfranco, *Italia Magica, racconti surreali moderni scelti da Gianfranco Contini* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), trans. of Gianfranco Contini, *Italie Magique, contes surréels modernes choisis par Gianfranco Contini* (Paris: Aux Portes de France, 1946).
- Cornwell, Neil, *The Literary Fantastic* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).
- Corsetti, Jean-Paul, *Storia dell'Esoterismo e delle Scienze Occulte* (Rome: Gremese, 2003 [1st edition in French: 1992]).
- de Boer, Minnie, 'Riflessioni intorno ad una tipologia di giallo storico', in *Memoria in Noir. Un'indagine pluridisciplinare*, ed. by Monica Jansen and Yasmina Khamal (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 251-265.
- Della Coletta, Cristina, *World's Fairs Italian Style: The Great Exhibitions in Turin and Their Narratives, 1860-1915* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2006).
- Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997 [1974, 1st edition in French: 1964]).
- Derrida, Jacques, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1981 [1978]), pp. 278-293.
- Derrida, Jacques, 'The Law of Genre', *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1) Autumn 1980, 55-81.
- Ferroni, Giulio, *Dopo la fine. Sulla condizione postuma della letteratura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996).

- Fludernick, Monika, 'Genre, Text Types, or Discourse Modes? Narrative Modalities and Generic Categorization', *Style*, 34 (2) Summer 2000, 274-292.
- Foucault, Michel, 'Afterword to *The Temptation of St. Anthony*', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault (1854-1984)*, ed. by James D. Foubion, Paul Rabinow, and Rupert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1998), Vol. 2, pp. 103-122.
- Foucault, Michel, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans by A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1st Edition in French: 1969]).
- Foucault, Michel *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock, 1970) [1st Edition in French: 1966]).
- Fowler, Alastair, *Kinds of Literature. An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).
- Freud, Sigmund, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003 [1899]).
- Frye, Northrop, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957).
- Ganeri, Margherita, 'La teoria dei generi letterari dopo gli anni Settanta: il superamento dell'approccio normativo', *Allegoria*, 23 (1996), 25-35.
- Greenblatt, Stephen and Catherine Gallagher, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- Greenblatt, Stephen, 'Towards a Poetics of Culture', in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veesser (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1-14.
- Gutting, Gary, 'Michel Foucault', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta,
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/foucault/>>.
- Heidegger, Martin, 'What is Metaphysics?', in *Existence and Being*, ed. by Werner Brock (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1949), pp. 325-349.
- Hume, Kathryn, *Fantasy and Mimesis. Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984).
- *Italian Modernism: Italian Culture between Decadentism and Avant-Garde*, ed. by Luca Somigli and Mario Moroni (London, Buffalo, and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).
- Jackson, Rosemary, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981).
- Jansen, Monica, *Il dibattito sul postmoderno in Italia* (Florence: Cesati Editore, 2002).

- Knight, Stephen, 'Introduction', in *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 1-7.
- Lazzarin, Stefano, *Il modo fantastico* (Bari: Laterza, 2000).
- Lovecraft, Howard Phillips, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York: Ben Abramson, 1945 [1927]).
- Manzoni, Alessandro, 'Sul Romanticismo', in *Opere di Alessandro Manzoni*, ed. by Michele Barbi and Fausto Ghisalberti (Milan and Florence: Casa del Manzoni-Sansoni, 1942-50), Vol II, pp. 601-622.
- *Modernism*, ed. by Michael H. Whitworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).
- Mondello, Elisabetta, 'Il noir italiano. Appunti sul romanzo nero contemporaneo', in *Noir de Noir*, ed. by Dieter Vermandere, Monica Jansen, and Inge Lanslots (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 23-31.
- Mussnug, Florian, *The Eloquence of Ghosts. Giorgio Manganelli and the Afterlife of the Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010).
- Mussnug, Florian, 'Between *Novissimi* and Nuovo Romanzo. Literary Genre Categories in the works of the Gruppo '63', in *From Eugenio Montale to Amelia Rosselli: Italian Poetry in the Sixties and Seventies*, ed. by John Butcher and Massimo Moroni (Leicester: Troubadour), pp. 21-40.
- Myers, David Gersham, 'The New Historicism in Literary Study', *Academic Questions* 2, Winter 1988-89, 27-36.
- Nelson, Victoria, 'Grotto, an Opening', in Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 1-23.
- Nelson, Victoria, 'Is This Real or Am I Crazy?', in Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 163-173.
- Nelson, Victoria, 'Leopardi's 'Mystical Mummies'', in Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 67-69.
- Nelson, Victoria, 'Preface', in Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. VII-XI.
- *New Keywords: a Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, ed. by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 249-251.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1st edition in German: 1883-1885]).

- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967).
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1st edition in German: 1873-1879]), pp. 57-123.
- Orlando, Francesco, 'Statuti del soprannaturale nella narrativa', in *Il romanzo*, Vol. 1, ed. by Franco Moretti (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), pp. 195-226.
- Orlando, Francesco, *Per una teoria freudiana della letteratura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973).
- Pascal, Blaise, *Pensees* (London: Penguin, 1995 [1st edition in French: 1670]).
- *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*, ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009).
- Radcliffe, Ann, 'On Supernatural in Poetry', *The New Monthly Magazine*, 7, 1826, 145-152.
- Saccone, Antonio, *Massimo Bontempelli. Il mito del '900* (Naples: Liguori, 1979).
- Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, 'Aminadab or The Fantatic Considered as a Language', in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. by Annette Michelson (New York: Collier Books, 1968 [1955]), pp. 56-72.
- Schwarz Lausten, Pia, 'Un virus nel corpo sano della letteratura? Il nuovo *noir* italiano e l'impegno', in *Noir de Noir*, ed. by Dieter Vermandere, Monica Jansen, and Inge Lanslots (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 57-72.
- Segre, Cesare and Martignoni, Clelia, *Testi nella storia. La letteratura italiana dalle origini al Novecento*, ed. by Gianfranca Lavezzi, Clelia Martignoni, Pietro Sarzana, and Rossana Saccani (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), Vol 4, *Il Novecento*.
- Selden, Raman, Widdowson, Peter, and Brooker, Peter, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (Hemel Hempstead : Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).
- Simmel, Georg, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903), in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, tr. and ed. by Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964 [1950]), pp. 409-417.
- Singer, Margaret T., *Cults in Our Midst: The Continuing Fight Against Their Hidden Menace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995).
- Storchi, Simona, 'Conquering the City: the Representation of Milan in Massimo Bontempelli's 'La vita operosa'', in *Modern Italy*, 7.2 (2002) 189-199.

- Storchi, Simona, 'Massimo Bontempelli between De Chirico and Nietzsche: Mannequins, Marionettes and the De-Humanized Subject', in *La scacchiera davanti allo specchio and Eva ultima*, *Romance Studies*, 27.4 (2009), 298-310.
- Storchi, Simona, 'Realism beyond Mimesis: Massimo Bontempelli's *Novecentismo*', *Spunti e Ricerche*, 19 (2006), 107-121.
- Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic, a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973 [1970]).
- Vermandere, Dieter, Jansen, Monica, and Lanslots, Inge, 'Introduction', in *Noir de Noir*, ed. by Dieter Vermandere, Monica Jansen, and Inge Lanslots (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 9-19.
- Warner, Marina, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Warner, Marina, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors and Media into the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- White, Hayden, 'Anomalies of Genre: the Utility of Theory and History for the Study of Literary Genre', *New Literary History*, 34 (3), 2003, 597-615.
- Williams, Raymond, *Keywords* (London: Fontana, 1988).
- Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- Williams, Raymond, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001 [1st edition: 1961]).
- Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud, *The Mythopoeic Reality. The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

Historical Framework:

- Abate, Tiziana, *Soltanto un giornalista* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2002).
- Bagnasco, Erminio, *In guerra sul mare. Navi e marinai italiani nel secondo conflitto mondiale* (Parma: Alberelli, 2005).
- Barrera, Giulia, 'Patrilinearity, Race, and Ideology: The Upbringing of Italo-Eritreans during Italian Colonialism', in *Italian Colonialism*, ed. by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp. 97-108.

- Bergamini, Oliviero, *Specchi di guerra. Giornalismo e conflitti armati da Napoleone a oggi* (Bari: Laterza, 2009).
- Bernotti, Romeo, *La guerra sui mari nel conflitto mondiale* (Livorno: Società Editrice Tirrena, 1947).
- Bonsaver, Guido and Gordon, Robert S. C., 'State, Culture, Censorship: An Introduction' in *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver and Robert S.C. Gordon (London: Legenda, 2005), pp. 2-8.
- Bonsaver, Guido, *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2007).
- Cannistraro, Philip V., 'Mussolini and the Italian Intellectuals', in *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver and Robert S.C. Gordon (London: Legenda, 2005) pp. 34-41.
- Cannistraro, Philip V., *La fabbrica del consenso: Fascismo e Mass-media* (Bari and Rome: Laterza, 1975).
- Capriotti, Giuliano, *Morte per acqua a Capo Matapan* (Milan: Bompiani, 1977).
- Cesari, Maurizio, *La censura nel periodo fascista* (Naples: Liguori, 1978).
- Cremonesi, Lorenzo, *Dai nostri inviati. Inchieste, guerre ed esplorazioni nelle pagine del Corriere della Sera* (Milan: Fondazione Corriere della Sera, Rizzoli, 2008).
- Cunningham, Andrew Browne, *A Sailor's Odissey* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1952).
- Davies, Norman, *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- De Donno, Fabrizio and Srivastava, Neelam, 'Editorial', *Interventions. International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8 (3), 2006, 372-379.
- De Donno, Fabrizio, 'La razza Ario-Mediterranea. Ideas of Race and Citizenship in Colonial and Fascist Italy, 1885-1941', *Interventions. International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8 (3), 2006, 394- 411.
- Del Boca, Angelo, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale. Vol. 2: La conquista dell'impero* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996 [1976]).
- Del Boca, Angelo, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale. Vol. 3: La caduta dell'impero* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996 [1976]).
- Del Boca, Angelo, *Gli italiani in Libia. Vol. 2: dal fascismo a Gheddafi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997).
- Del Boca, Angelo, 'I crimini del colonialismo fascista', in *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 232-255.

- Del Boca, Angelo, *La guerra d'Etiopia. L'ultima impresa del colonialismo* (Milan: Longanesi, 2010).
- Detti, Tommaso and Gozzini, Giovanni, *Storia contemporanea, Vol. 2: Il Novecento* (Milan: Mondadori, 2002).
- Dunnett, Jane, 'Anti-Fascism and Literary Criticism in Postwar Italy', in *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver and Robert S.C. Gordon (London: Legenda, 2005), pp. 109-117.
- Fioravanzo, Giuseppe, *La Marina Italiana nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale. Vol IV: La guerra nel Mediterraneo - Le azioni navali: dal 10 giugno 1940 al 31 marzo 1941* (Rome: Ufficio Storico della Marina Militare, 1959).
- Forgacs, David, 'How Exceptional were Culture-State Relations in Twentieth-Century Italy?', in *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver and Robert S.C. Gordon (London: Legenda, 2005) pp. 9-20.
- Forgacs, David, *Italian Culture in the Industrial Era, 1880-1980* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).
- Gentile, Emilio, *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1993).
- Gentile, Emilio, 'The Fascist Anthropological Revolution', in *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver and Robert S.C. Gordon (London: Legenda, 2005) pp. 22-33.
- Gozzini, Giovanni, *Storia del giornalismo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2000).
- Iachino, Angelo, *Guado e Matapan* (Milan: Mondadori, 1946).
- Iachino, Angelo, *Le due Sirti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1953).
- Isnenghi, Mario, 'Il sogno africano', in *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 49-72.
- Mattesini, Francesco, *La battaglia di Capo Teulada*, (Rome: Ufficio Storico della Marina Militare, 2000).
- *Ministri e giornalisti: la guerra e il Minculpop*, ed. by Nicola Tranfaglia (Turin: Einaudi, 2005).
- Mozzati, Marco, 'Gli intellettuali e la propaganda coloniale del regime', in *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 99-111.
- Murialdi, Paolo, *La stampa del regime fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1986).

- Murialdi, Paolo, *Storia del giornalismo italiano. Dalle gazzette a Internet* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006).
- Rainero, Romain, *Propaganda e ordini alla stampa: da Badoglio alla repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007).
- Rochat, Giorgio, 'Le guerre coloniali dell'Italia fascista', in *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 173-196.
- Rhodes, Anthony, *Propaganda: the Art of Persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea HP, 1976).
- Santarelli, Enzo, 'L'antifascismo di fronte al colonialismo', in *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 73-98.
- Sbacchi, Alberto, 'I rapporti italo-etioptici tra il 1935 e il 1941', in *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, ed. by Angelo Del Boca (Bari: Laterza, 1991), pp. 469-500.
- Sbacchi, Alberto, *Il colonialismo italiano in Etiopia. 1935-1940* (Milan: Mursia, 1980).
- Tranfaglia, Nicola, Murialdi, Paolo, and Legnani, Massimo, *La stampa Italiana nell'età fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1980).
- Vittoria, Albertina, 'Fascist Censorship and Non-Fascist Literary Circles', in *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver and Robert S.C. Gordon (London: Legenda, 2005) pp. 54-63.