

## Chapter 5

ANNA MARIA CIMINO

### **The Resistance of Memory, the Memory of Resistance: Stories of Italian Partisans through the Lens of the *Aeneid***

*‘Sembra in effetti che Virgilio abbia posseduto lungamente, soprattutto attraverso il suo Enea, la facoltà insieme esaltante e provocatoria di generare delle “mitologie” virgiliane, di tipo positivo e negativo, nel mondo a lui di volta in volta contemporaneo.’*

M. Barchiesi, *I moderni alla ricerca di Enea* (1981: 13)

By awarding the Nobel Prize for Literature to Bob Dylan, the members of the Swedish Academy made an exceptional decision. With this symbolic choice, they not only acknowledged the value of his art but also embraced the dynamics of mass and popular culture and to an extent they redefined the traditional meaning of literature.<sup>1</sup> This event has an importance on a global scale. It is also relevant

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This paper is the written version of the talk that I presented at the International Conference on *Classical Antiquity & Memory, from the 19th–21st centuries* (University of Bonn, 30 September 2017). I want to thank the organizers, Penelope Kolovou and Efstathia Athanasopoulou, for giving me the chance to take part in this enriching and stimulating event. I thank the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and Professor Gianpiero Rosati for the support and Professor Alessandro Schiesaro as well, for his suggestions. I cannot forget all my friends and colleagues, who helped me with their precious feedback, in particular Stefano Cianciosi, Francesca D’Andrea, Giorgia Cafici and Elena Giusti. A special thank goes to Tijana Okić, for proofreading the text.

- 1 To conclude the speech he delivered during the ceremony (10 Dec. 2016) Horace Engdahl (2016) stated: ‘Recognising that revolution by awarding Bob Dylan the Nobel Prize was a decision that seemed daring only beforehand and already seems obvious. But does he get the prize for upsetting the system of literature? Not really. (...) Chamfort observed that when a master such as La Fontaine appears, the hierarchy of genres – the estimation of what is great and small, high and low in literature – is nullified. “What matter the rank of a work when its beauty is of the highest rank?” he wrote. That is the straight answer to the question of how Bob Dylan belongs in literature: as the beauty of his songs is of the highest rank. By means of his oeuvre, Bob Dylan has changed our idea of what poetry can be and how it can work. He is a singer worthy of a place beside the Greeks *αἰδοί*, beside Ovid, beside the Romantic

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for my discussion as well since my contribution will focus on the activity of songwriting to show how this kind of production can re-construct and re-canonize the memory of classical antiquity.<sup>2</sup>

Among Italian songs, the rock ballad *Eurialo e Niso* offers an excellent case for the re-enactment of styles and topics that are inherited from the Latin literary tradition. Written by Massimo Bubola and released in 1993 by the folk band *The Gang* on the album *Storie d'Italia*, the song uses the lenses of the *Aeneid* in order to re-read and re-tell an episode drawn from the Italian Resistance.<sup>3</sup>

As its title suggests, the reference text is one of the most famous sections of the ninth book of the *Aeneid* (9.176–503), where Virgil narrates the heroic deaths of Euryalus and Nisus. In the poem, two young men, who got out from their settlement to warn Aeneas about a siege, infiltrate the enemy ranks and start massacring the soldiers. However, the unexpected arrival of Volcens' armed contingent surprises them: despite their resistance and all the attempts to find a shelter in the dark, Euryalus and Nisus are captured and brutally slaughtered. Leaving aside all its problematic implications, the story became very famous and important in art and literature for its moral contents and high poetic qualities.<sup>4</sup> Hence, only a comparison between the aforementioned song and the text of the *Aeneid* can reveal how the songwriter achieved his eccentric attempt of actualization.

One of the most remarkable phenomena of this modern re-construction of the poem is about transferring each detail from the ancient context to the historical reality of the Resistance. Changing the background, Euryalus and Nisus are transformed into a baker and a student respectively, who became partisans after the

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visionaries, beside the kings and queens of the Blues, beside the forgotten masters of brilliant standards. If people in the literary world groan, one must remind them that the gods don't write, they dance and they sing.'

- 2 For a survey on the reception of Classics in the musical production of the 1900s, see Meloncelli (2002: 443–466). He concludes his survey, limited to the finest repertoires of the Opera and Chamber music, pinpointing: 'come il classico in musica, sin dalle prime esperienze melodrammatiche, abbia seguito un itinerario costante nella creatività dei compositori di ogni tendenza e formazione, soprattutto per la sua componente fantastica e i contenuti morali e psicologici che particolarmente nel mito greco trovano la sua più interessante e geniale interpretazione' (466). Such a point of view denotes a taste and an aesthetics completely different from those expressed by Massimo Bubola in his peculiar experiment of re-canonization of classical antiquity. In fact, he doesn't consider the fantastic elements, but prefers the realism of the scenes that are set in contexts of wars: they are transformed into new myths for the audience which they were addressed to.
- 3 Listen to Bubola (1993/1996). Several versions of the song, performed by Gang and by Bubola solo, can be found on Youtube or Spotify; as for the lyrics see Bubola's official website: <https://www.massimobubola.it/album/amore-e-guerra/> [accessed 16 Mar. 2024].
- 4 See Barchiesi (1981) for a general survey on the reception of Virgil and his work in the extra-academic world of literary production.

Armistice, that was signed between Italy and the Allies and announced on the 8th of September 1943.<sup>5</sup>

*Nisus erat portae custos, acerrimus armis,  
Hyrtacides, comitem Aeneae quem miserat Ida  
uenatrix iaculo celerem leuibusque sagittis,  
et iuxta comes Euryalus, quo pulchrior alter  
non fuit Aeneadam Troiana neque induit arma,  
ora puer prima signans intonsa iuuenta.*

Nisus mounted guard at the gate, one of Hyrtacus' children,  
Quick with a spear and light arrows, an expert in handling weapons.  
Ida, that heaven for hunters, sent him as Aeneas's comrade.  
Close by, his own special comrade, Euryalus, stood. In Aeneas'  
Group, in the whole Trojan army, this boy had no rival in beauty.  
Face still unshaven, he just now was showing the first signs of  
manhood.

(Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.176–181)

Eurialo era un fornaio e Niso uno studente,  
Scapparono in montagna all'otto di settembre.

Euryalus was a baker, and Nisus was a student  
They had passed to the Partisans on the 8th of September  
(Bubola, 'Eurialo e Niso', vv. 5–6)

Then, in the song, the Rutulians – who fought with the two warriors in the poem – are identified with the members of a roadblock and in general the whole scene recalls the Nazi-fascist retaliations.

I boschi già dormivano, ma un gufo li avvisava:  
c'era un posto di blocco in fondo a quella strada.  
Eurialo fece a Niso, asciugandosi la fronte:  
'Ci sono due tedeschi di guardia sopra al ponte'.

The wood was sleeping but an owl warn'd them of danger,  
There was an armed roadblock just at the road end.  
Euryalus told Nisus drying up his forehead,  
'Look at the German watches just on the bridge ahead.'  
(Bubola, 'Eurialo e Niso', vv. 7–10)

In addition, the most intriguing transfer concerns the *galea*, stolen by Euryalus from Messapus, for its key role in the development of the dramatic plot. Indeed, the brightness of the object reveals the position of the man, who tries in vain to hide himself before the arrival of Volcens' soldiers. The song emphasizes the

5 The text of Vergil's *Aeneid* follows the edition by Mynors (1969); English translations are taken from Ahl (2007). The English version of Bubola's lyrics is by Venturi (2006).

shine of a helmet which finds its modern equivalence in a silver brooch depicting the Nazi eagle. So, the modern Euryalus imitates his Virgilian ancestor, putting the little booty of the enemy on his beret:

*tum galeam Messapi habilem cristisque decoram  
induit.*

Adding the well-fitted helmet and elegant plumes of Messapus.  
(Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.365–366)

*et galea Euryalum sublustri noctis in umbra  
prodidit immemorem radiisque adversa refulsit.*

Then in the night shadows' low luminescence, Euryalus' helmet  
Met and reflected a moonbeam, betraying its thoughtless possessor.  
(Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.373–374)

Una di loro aveva una spilla sul mantello,  
Eurialo la raccolse e se la mise sul cappello.  
La spilla era d'argento, un'aquila imperiale,  
brillava nella notte più di un'aurora boreale.

One of them had a silver pin on his soldier's greatcoat  
Euryalus picked it up and attached it to his beret.  
The pin with the imperial eagle shone so vivid and bright  
like an aurora it glitter'd in the darkness of night.  
(Bubola, 'Eurialo e Niso', vv. 15–18)

Beside the transpositions, we must consider the textual calques, namely the terms and the expressions slavishly drawn from the poem. For example, among the lexical parallels at the beginning of the song, we may identify the verb 'to go out', that produces the translation of the Virgilian *egredior*:

*Egressi superant fossas noctisque per umbram  
castra inimica petunt, multis tamen ante futuri  
exitio.*

Now they're outside, they are over the trenches, they're heading through ghostly  
Night to a camp that's determined to kill them but where they will slaughter  
Many before that occurs.

(Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.314–316)

La notte era chiara, la luna un grande lume  
Eurialo e Niso uscirono dal campo verso il fiume.

The bright moon like a big lamp in the sky it did quiver,  
Euryalus and Nisus went downhill to the river.  
(Bubola, 'Eurialo e Niso', vv. 1–2)

However, we come across the most interesting case just at the end of the song, in the verses that describe the deranged reaction of Nisus who saw the torture of Euryalus. After observing the scene from his shelter, driven by terror and rage, the warrior throws himself at the enemy.

*tum uero exterritus, amens,  
conclamat Nisus nec se celare tenebris  
amplius aut tantum potuit perferre dolorem.*

Now Nisus is frantic,  
Out of his mind, just shrieking in terror. For he can no longer  
Hide in the safety of shadows, endure such personal anguish.

(Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.424–426)

Niso stava nascosto spiando di paura (...).  
Niso dovette uscire ch e troppo era il furore.

Nisus kept well hidden for fear of being slain (...).  
Nisus jumped out and rush'd to them with all his wrath...

(Bubola, 'Eurialo e Niso', v. 22, v. 27)

Furthermore, in their transmission from the original to the modern, the key elements are accurately preserved, as we can see in the allusion to the Virgilian concept of *furor*,<sup>6</sup> expressed in the poetic dictation by the adjective *amens*. It is probably the most effective element that is adopted in the song for the psychological description of the characters.

Here I showed only some examples as evidences to the fact that the song actually reproduces and follows a classical model.<sup>7</sup> So, in order to understand the motives of the song, we can refer to a testimony of Bubola himself in an interview:<sup>8</sup>

'I wrote (he says) the text of this ballad to keep a promise I made to my father, chief of the partisan brigade "Adige" of *Giustizia e Libert a* when he was only 22. Because of his love toward the classical culture and Virgil in particular, I have tried to relate this story of love and war – set in the 1943 – with the episode of the *Aeneid*, in which the two Trojan soldiers Euryalus and Nisus raid on the Latin camp during the night.'

Beside the description of the content, these words prove the crucial role that memory played in the composition of the song and in the construction of its message. Through this and through the father-son relationship it describes, we are able to establish connections between two historical moments, that of the Resistance, in which the story and its characters are placed, and the contemporary time,

6 On this issue, see Hershkowitz (1998: 68–124).

7 In the artistic *panorama* of the last decade, this song represents one of the rare examples of fortune of the *Aeneid* (as reference for quotations), in general terms. Such peculiarity makes the lyrics a unique case in the dimension of the authorial song and, in general, in the popular culture of contemporary Italy.

8 See <https://www.antiwarsongs.org/canzone.php?id=74&lang=it> [accessed 16 Mar. 2024].

in which the memory of the Resistance persists. In the dialectic between the one who dedicates the song and the one to whom the song is dedicated, it is precisely the music as a popular cultural experience that enables the opening of the individual memory to the collective dimension, transforming familial and private experience into testimonies capable of recovering historical phenomena in the present.

From this point of view, the song clearly offers many starting points for a fruitful discussion and paves the way for several possible interpretations. First of all, the life of Bubola's father among the Antifascists, which we follow in the song and in the brief interview, pursues an indirect testimony of the fortune of the *Aeneid*. From the singer's perspective, we can empirically describe a sort of *osmosis* between private and collective memory. Bubola, commemorating his father, creates a universal tale about the Resistance that mirrors the experiences of the partisans. Moreover, based on the analysis of the song, we can claim that the re-enactment of the Virgilian model is generated by a composition technique drawn upon the literary memory of the authors, namely the allusive procedure.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, the multiple implications of memory in our case study can be sketched out *vis-à-vis* the two formulations in the title. On the one hand, under the label of *the Resistance of Memory (of Virgil)*, we recognize the fortune of Virgil in a continuity of time, from the thirties to the present. On the other hand, we do observe that *the Memory of the Resistance* is re-mediated by the *Aeneid* in many literary works.<sup>10</sup>

According to the songwriter, his choice of the *Aeneid* as a reference text is inspired by the memory of his father, who was a great fan of Virgil. Such a biographical detail turns out to be useful in the historical analysis, especially if contextualized in the socio-cultural background of the fascist Italy.

Back then, Bubola's father went to school and received his knowledge of classical antiquity from the fascist institutions. Generally speaking, through these institutions, the *propaganda* of the Regime aimed to control the thoughts and actions of the members of society by imposing its cultural and ethical models.<sup>11</sup> The

9 Cf., in general, Pasquali (1942/1951) and Conte (1974). On the question of the imitation of the classics pursued by contemporary authors, Pedullà (2015: XXII-XXIII) has preferred expressing his thoughts in terms of "sensibilization (sensibilizzazione)".

10 According to Fo (2002: 181–182), Italian literature of the 1900s has been deeply influenced by Virgil's poetry. With his production, he has dictated forms and contents of those productions in poetry and narrative. In many cases, authors have addressed the figure of the poet reconstructing his biography, his character and his personality and cast a new and subjective light to them. Further, Fo (2002: 182) states: 'le connessioni a Virgilio e alla sua poesia avvengono per riflessioni e slittamenti simbolici sulla bellezza e sul dolore.'

11 Canfora (1976: 15–39) considers the ideological use of classics as part of this phenomenon. In particular, Cagnetta (1976: 139–167) underlines that the case of Augustus' model displays many peculiarities: it was a reference point for the Fascist Regime and its construction was a product of both the fascist propaganda and the cultural policy. As an inspiring model, it was recreated *ad hoc* and superimposed upon society through the systems of political communi-

Fascism had kept the legacy of the ancient world under its control and had adopted the myth of Rome as a means for its own legitimization and public image.<sup>12</sup>

Virgil himself fell victim to the fascist machine. The celebrations for his bi-millenary were held in Rome in 1930 and this event was used to enhance symmetries and similarities between the Augustan era and the fascist empire.<sup>13</sup> In particular on this occasion, the regime presented a despotic image of the poet and an interpretation of his works in line with its political aims. Acclaimed as a forerunner of the Christian religion because of the messianic readings traditionally associated to his poems, the figure of Virgil was utilized to celebrate the treaties signed by the State and the Catholic Church in 1929. Furthermore, the re-interpretation of the *Bucolics* and the *Georgics* offered an ideological archetype for the Fascist ruralism,<sup>14</sup> while the *Aeneid* was read as a poet of domination, in order to justify the imperialistic campaign in Africa.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, in opposition to these ideological manipulations,<sup>16</sup> the antifascists developed a counterculture, involving the heritage of classical antiquity as well. Actually, this counterculture embraced new values to express the discontent against the dictatorship.<sup>17</sup> But later, it offered its literary models to the most important authors of the Italian Resistance. Hence we can see how traces of classical antiquity survived in these literary expressions, free from the superstructures of the fascist ideology.

In general, adverse usages of shared repertoire of symbols and knowledge that Italy inherited from its ancient past was subjected to a re-semantization<sup>18</sup> in a situ-

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cation.

12 Giardina (2000: 213–214, 227), Nelis (2007: 404).

13 Especially see Cagnetta (1976: 139–167) and Giardina (2000: 212–287): they showed that the efforts of the propaganda aimed at constructing a collective memory similar to the myth of Rome that could challenge eternity. On this issue, see also Belardelli (2002: 327) and Nelis (2007: 391–415).

14 On the contiguity between the fascist representation of Virgil and the public advertising related to the measures for the recovery of Italian agriculture enacted in 1929/1930, see Cagnetta (1976: 165–167) and Belardelli (2002: 325–358).

15 For further information about the representation of Rome under the fascist regime, see Giardina (2000: 212–287). I cite this work because it recollects the different shades of Virgil's image produced during the fascist era. As Canfora (1980: 104–132) observed, intellectuals and especially the classicists supported the regime and helped it to find a way in the appropriation of the heritage of the ancient world.

16 Already in the premise, Canfora (1976: 15–39) depicts the role of classics and its centrality among the cultural sources of the Fascism. In particular, he aims at defining the ways in which the regime has turned this repertoire of knowledge into a kind of mass ideology, owing to the contribution of intellectuals and the best classicists of the time.

17 Mignone (2014: 137–150) presented a brilliant example for this phenomenon, discussing the political act of the *Secessione dell'Aventino* (June 27, 1924), pursued by the opposition after the assassination of the deputy Giacomo Matteotti (June 10, 1924).

18 On the polysemy of the myth of Virgil and the *Aeneid*, see Barchiesi (1981).

ation in which the community expressed the need to re-appropriate its own cultural heritage and assigned new meanings to that; intellectuals fought their own Resistance, challenging the interpretative system superimposed upon classics by the fascist *propaganda* and offering new interpretations for those works that they, willingly or unwillingly, wanted to preserve as their models.

Perhaps, one of the most important examples of this process is provided by a partisan and a writer, Beppe Fenoglio.<sup>19</sup> Among the most outstanding narratives of his literary production, we can highlight that of the young partisans, Set and Tarzan, who were captured during a fascist raid. Their brief story appears in *L'imboscata*, an incomplete novel, in the tale titled, *L'erba brilla al sole*,<sup>20</sup> and in the final chapters of *Il libro di Johnny*.<sup>21</sup>

Gabriele Pedullà, curator of the most recent edition of this work, argued that in all the re-narrations of this tale it is possible to notice some similarities with Euryalus and Nisus' episode in the *Aeneid*.<sup>22</sup> To confirm this statement, we can recall a passage taken from the novel in which there is an allusion to their capture:

'E qualcosa doveva essere accaduto a Settimo, perché urlò e *dropped* la sua arma e con ambo le mani si sollevò la gamba destra e al coperto del camion Tarzan stava prendendosi a spalla e cautamente, con immensa fatica, lo ritirava oltre il fossato.' (Fenoglio, *Il libro di Johnny*, 2.41, p. 774)

In addition, Pedullà demonstrated that the greatness of this novel resides precisely in its genuine epic nature and Virgilian imprints in the definition of the narrative structures.<sup>23</sup> The two sections of *Il libro di Johnny*, 'Primavera di bellezza' and 'Il partigiano Johnny', imitate the inner partition of the *Aeneid*. As we can see in the poem, the first part, focused on the development of the main character, is fol-

19 Beppe Fenoglio [1922–1963], writer, translator, and playwright, served the Italian Resistance. This experience left a mark in his life and inspired his main work, *Il partigiano Johnny*, which was published posthumously in 1968.

20 *L'imboscata*, an unfinished novel, was published for the first time by Dante Isella in 1992. The tale *L'erba brilla al sole*, instead, appeared for the first time in 1961, in a miscellaneous volume titled *Secondo Risorgimento* and issued during the celebrations for the centenary of Italian Unification. Now it is part of the collection edited by Luca Bufano and published in 2007 (pp. 193-206, further details on the publication can be found at p. 584). Generally speaking, there are several parallels between the tale and the chapters thirteen and fourteen of the novel in which the two partisans, who incarnate the model of Euryalus and Nisus, are presented with the names of Gilera e Maté.

21 Pedullà (2015: LXXV).

22 *Il libro di Johnny* (2015) is the final result of Gabriele Pedullà's philological study on both *Primavera di bellezza* and *Il partigiano Johnny*, published respectively in 1959 and 1968. His efforts have demonstrated that these two novels were intended by Fenoglio as two sections of a single editorial project, inspired to the *Aeneid* (see the Introduction, pp. V–LXXXVII).

23 As discussed by Pedullà (2015: XXII), the adhesion to the Virgilian model allows Fenoglio to employ an epic composition in his novel.

lowed by a second one dealing with the adventures of the adult hero, who fights for the land promised him by the Fate. The break in the *Aeneid* that splits the Iliadic and the Odyssean units, corresponds in Fenoglio's novel to the events of the 8th of September, when Italy signed the Armistice and dissolved its army. Actually, Johnny, the protagonist of the novel, had served in the army himself, and after wandering all over fascist Italy, came back to his homeland, the city of Alba in Piemonte, to join the Resistance. This effort, embracing the experiences of all the partisans, has been linked by Pedullà to Aeneas' story:<sup>24</sup>

‘Come dunque l’*Eneide* è la storia di una rifondazione dopo la perdita della patria (un tema del tutto assente in Omero, dove l’*Odissea* mette in scena un ben più lineare viaggio di ritorno verso casa), così *Il libro di Johnny* cova in sé il sogno di una rinascita che, all’indomani di un evento non meno traumatico quale il Fascismo, sappia traghettare nel mondo di domani una parte del mondo di ieri.’

This same interpretation of the Resistance,<sup>25</sup> understood as a tragic and heroic conflict aiming to re-discover and re-construct a lost identity, animates also the poetry of Giorgio Caproni,<sup>26</sup> who wrote the collection *Il passaggio di Enea*.<sup>27</sup> In an interview, published in the Italian journal *La fiera letteraria*, he defined the Virgilian hero as follows:

‘il simbolo unico di tutta l’umanità moderna, in questo tempo in cui l’uomo è veramente solo sopra la terra con sulle spalle il peso di una tradizione ch’egli tenta di sostenere mentre questa non lo sostiene più, e con per mano una speranza ancor troppo piccola e vacillante per potercisi appoggiare e che tuttavia egli deve portare a salvamento’.

The two authors, who witnessed the Fascism and the Resistance, made use of classical antiquity that is free from its authoritative connotations, in order to construct a new epopee for a country that had won its freedom.<sup>28</sup> In this new wording of the epic genre,<sup>29</sup> the partisan becomes the heir of the fugitive hero who must

24 Pedullà (2015: XXVII).

25 For a general description of the Italian literature about the Resistance, in particular in fiction, see Mei (1955: 209–214).

26 Giorgio Caproni [1912–1990] was an Italian poet, literary critic, and translator. He was called to arms in 1939 and sent to France. After the 8th of September, he supported the Resistance and did community services. For his biographical profile see Frabotta (1993: 63).

27 On Caproni's literary production, see Frabotta (1993: 76–85) and Dei (1992: 92).

28 Pedullà (2015: LXXV–LXXVI), who pinpointed the adaptation of the same model by both of the authors, suggested: ‘Quello che importa è che *Il libro di Johnny* ci consente finalmente di verificare come Fenoglio e Caproni, il massimo narratore in prosa e il massimo narratore in versi della Resistenza, abbiano trovato – più o meno in contemporanea – nello stesso mito di esilio e fondazione la chiave migliore per raccontare la storia della propria generazione dal tracollo dell’8 settembre alla riscossa della lotta partigiana e oltre.’

29 The revival of the epic genre characterized the whole *Novecento* and this style was shared by Caproni and Fenoglio. Frabotta (1993: 79–80) stated: ‘...la rettifica del passato archetipico ostinatamente vivo nella fantasia poetica può balenare tra i barlumi della quotidianità illumina-

reconstruct the destroyed land at the end of the war. The same Virgil, used by the Fascists to celebrate the glory of the empire, becomes the model of remembering in this counterculture to narrate the sufferings of the war<sup>30</sup> and to exalt, with the tools of the epic genre, the sacrifices of the Resistance. In short, while the Fascism adopted the classical antiquity as a status symbol of power – so as to invoke the greatness of the Roman past – postwar Italy employed the very same model to build the myth of its own liberation in the aftermath.

The re-semanticization has been rendered possible thousands of men, among which we can count the father of Massimo Bubola, mentioned earlier in this contribution. While the success of works like *Il libro di Johnny* and *Il passaggio di Enea* allowed the authors to share their interpretation and their ideas about the Antiquity on the wider canvas of social and collective memory, the efforts of Bubola's father were devoted to the private and individual sphere of his job and his family, with the father-son conveyance of the passion for Virgil. In the end, it was Massimo Bubola himself who was “assigned” with a task: to give back the community the value of those symbols and knowledge, rendering it even more public and immediate than novels of Fenoglio and poems of Caproni could have done, given the difference between the medium of music and literature.

In conclusion, I would like to re-consider some of the questions about the re-canonization of classical antiquity, in order to show how and why the song ‘Eurialo e Niso’ could represent one of the most effective cases in this phenomenon.

1) How is cultural memory constructed as a form of opposition or as a survival technique by making use of classical antiquity?

All the works that have been examined highlight the existence of a diverse memory of classical antiquity, thanks to which this repertoire is functioned to voice and narrate the opposition to the fascist regime and promote the values of the Resistance. Intellectuals, and writers in particular came up with new interpretations of the ancient world. Thus, they didn't demonize the past that the fascist regime glorified, but instead endowed it with new meanings and made it one of the cornerstones of the identity of new Italy, born with the Liberation.

2) What is the connection between personal literary canon and collective cultural memory, especially in times of crisis when there is a blatant lack of founding myths?

The ideas of personal literary canon, collective memory, and times of crisis are valid for Bubola and his father as well. For them (and for Caproni and Fenoglio) the reading of Virgil was a private activity, yet fundamental for the construction of a collective memory. The father and the son, thanks to their individual readings

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nandola dei bagliori solari del mito o, viceversa, sconsfortarci con i falsi raggi di un'illuminazione artificiale che, per quanto indice di progresso, sarà pur sempre il segno di un'omologazione della realtà alla sua apparenza fenomenica'.

30 See Surdich (1990: 50–57).

of the literature, contributed to keeping the message of the *Aeneid* and the remembrance of its author alive. Thus, the poem itself, offering a narrative paradigm for all the stories of reconstruction and re-foundation after the crisis brought by the war became (thanks to these writers) a founding myth for the Italy of the Resistance.

3) How is the classical world (re)mediated – as a dead corpse or as a living organism – and what aspects make Antiquity relevant to our social, moral, artistic, and intellectual world?

Finally, in this play of people who remember other people, Virgil is a kind of *fil rouge*. Every story finds its place in his poetry and the episode of Euryalus and Nisus becomes a model for the tales of the young partisans killed during the Resistance. Therefore, Bubola makes a great favor to Virgil, fostering his memory in the present and securing a place for him in contemporary popular culture. He once again keeps the promise of Vergil, who, in the literary fiction, addresses Euryalus and Nisus and assures them that their memory will survive the time (*Aeneid* 9.446–449):

*Fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina possunt,  
nulla dies umquam memori uos eximet aeuo,  
dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum  
accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.*

Fortune has blessed you both! If there's magical charm in my verses,  
No day will ever delete you from time's recollection, as long as  
Sons of Aeneas shall live on the Capitol's motionless bedrock,  
Long as the Father of Rome shall retain his command over peoples.

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