

THE CONNECTIONS WITH "HISTORY" ON THE STAGE
OF THAN HUSSEIN CLARK
BY RACHELE FERRARIO

"THE KISS WAS LONG, UNCONSCIOUS, LOST,
UNEXPECTED, ILLOGICAL, SUBLIME, COMING DOWN
FROM THE MOON, ARRIVING FROM THE SEA, FROM
THE DARKNESS, FROM THE STARS."¹

CONNECTIONS

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THAN HUSSEIN CLARK, BETWEEN REALITY AND FICTION, PAST AND PRESENCES, ODDITIES, CONTRADICTIONS. IN A STORY WHERE CHARACTERS AND PLACES ARE REAL, EXIST OR USED TO EXIST (FILIPPO TOMMASO MARINETTI AND HIS WIFE BENEDETTA CAPPÀ, FORTUNATO DEPERO, THAYAT, PIER PAOLO PASOLINI) AND THE FACTS TOLD ARE TRUE, THE DATES CAN BE FOUND IN THE PLACES OF THE OFFICIAL CULTURE: AS IN THE FRESCO BY PRIMO CONTI AT THE COURT OF MILAN, WHICH DEPICTS THE JUSTICE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH AND IN WHICH AT THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR THE FIGURE OF BENITO MUSSOLINI WAS CANCELED, REMOVED BY COVERING IT WITH AN ORANGE RECTANGLE.

FOLLOWED THE THREAD OF HIS MEMORY AS IT INTERTWINED WITH THAT OF THE EUROPEAN CULTURE FROM THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY UP TO THE SEVENTIES OF THE LAST CENTURY. HE SEARCHED AND FOUND TRACES AND USED THEM FOR INSPIRATION OR AS WORKS OF ART (THE BOOKS AND NOTEBOOKS OF THAYAT, A VISIONARY FUTURIST, ESOTERIC, WITH A PASSION FOR UFOLOGY SO AS TO FOUND C.I.R.N.O.S., INDEPENDENT RESEARCH CENTER FOR SPACE OBSERVATIONS, IN 1954).

THAN HUSSEIN CLARK CONCEIVED THE NEW KURA. SPACE LIKE A STAGE: IT DOES NOT INVITE US INTO THE AUDIENCE, BUT IN THE SPACE WHERE THE WORK ACTUALLY TAKES PLACE, AS IF WE WERE EXTRAS OR ACTORS OURSELVES. IT'S UP TO US TO CHOOSE. WE ARE FREE TO DECIDE WHICH PART TO INTERPRET AND WHICH INDIVIDUAL PATH TO TAKE: BETWEEN THE EARS OF BUDDHA, FROM WHICH PRECIOUS ENAMEL EARRINGS HANG, WHICH ARE NOT, HOWEVER, THE ONES THAT BUDDHA WORE; OR PIER PAOLO PASOLINI'S ALFA ROMEO, WRAPPED IN THE VERSES OF A POEM BY ADA NEGRI ("HO MALE DI LUCE, HO MALE DI TE, CAPRI SOLARE/... AZZURRA È LA TUA FOLLIA, CAPRI, NUBE DEL MARE/... S'IO DEBBA MORIRE DI TE, DAMMI LA MORTE AZZURRA"). ["I SUFFER FROM LIGHT, I SUFFER FROM YOU, SUNNY CAPRI/ ... BLUE IS YOUR MADNESS, CAPRI, CLOUD OF THE SEA / ... IF I MUST DIE OF YOU, GIVE ME THE BLUE DEATH."] FROM IL MALE AZZURRO, IN I CANTI DELL'ISOLA); WE CAN DECIDE TO STAND NEXT TO THE BIG UMBRELLA (ALSO IN BRONZE, MASTERFULLY CAST AS IF IT WERE THE AMBON OF A CHURCH) POPULATED BY THE SILHOUETTES OF RAVENS, WHICH STRUCK HIS IMAGINATION ON A TRIP TO SRI LANKA FOR THE QUANTITY OF EXCREMENT THAT THEY LEFT ON THE ISLAND OF TAPROBANE; TO LET OURSELVES BE ATTRACTED BY THE EQUESTRIAN STATUE (DEVOID OF A KNIGHT), REPRESENTED BY AN "EXPLODED"

BRONZE HORSE (A TRIBUTE TO THE GENIUS OF UMBERTO BOCCIONI AND HIS DRAMATIC ANTI-HERO TRAGEDY); OR TO LET OURSELVES BE ENVELOPED BY THE SPELLS OF THE BRONZE SILHOUETTES OF THE TRENCHES — DISTURBING AND AMBIGUOUS LIKE MANNEQUINS IN A SHOP WINDOW, OR RATHER APPARITIONS, SHADOWS THAT PARADE ON AN IMAGINARY CATWALK — EVOKING IN SLOW MOTION THE MAIN CHARACTER OF BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI'S FILM THE CONFORMIST, INSPIRED BY A NOVEL BY ALBERTO MORAVIA, WHICH TELLS THE STORY OF MARCELLO CLERICI, A PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY AND FASCIST SPY.

THAN HUSSEIN CLARK INTERTWINES AND STAGES THE PLOT OF HIS STORY. HE IS CULTURED, BRAVE IN HIS CHOICES, HE KNOWS THAT CULTURE IS ALSO A MATTER OF LOOKS, ANGLES, INTELLIGENCE, COMMUNICATION AND IRONY.

THAN HUSSEIN CLARK IS ABLE TO CREATE A SHORT CIRCUIT BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT, REMINDING US OF HOW MARINETTI AND THE FUTURISTS WERE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE DEFENSE OF PRESS FREEDOM IN MILAN, WHICH WAS BECOMING ONE OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF PUBLISHING AND FREEDOM OF THOUGHT (THE 1913 TRIAL OF MARINETTI FOR HIS MAFARKA IL FUTURISTA [MAFARKA THE FUTURIST] IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THIS).

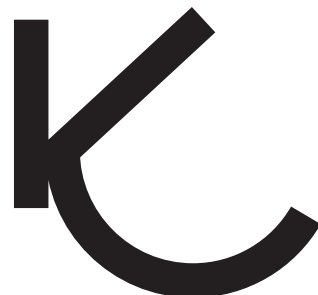
STYLES AND NEW CODES

IN THIS OVERABUNDANT AND MAGMATIC EXHIBITION, THAN HUSSEIN CLARK GOES BEYOND CLICHÉS AND ACTIVATES DIALOGUES IN WHICH "FACTS," RECOLLECTIONS OR PERMANENCES OF HISTORY AND OF OUR PRIVATE MEMORIES, ACTIVATE NEW RELATIONSHIPS, WHICH OFTEN ESCAPE OR HAVE ESCAPED OFFICIAL HISTORY. THEY ARE CONNECTIONS THAT ARE TRIGGERED WITHIN THE SAME CULTURE AND AMONG CULTURES AT DIFFERENT LATITUDES. THUS HE WAS ABLE TO GRASP THE EXISTENCE OF A SHARED TREND FOR THE "FANTASIE DI CYLON" [CYLON'S FANTASIES] BETWEEN CAPRI, VILLA LYSIS AND BARON JACQUES D'ADELSWARD-FERSEN, THE LAST "DANDY ADRIFT"; BETWEEN VILLA TORRICELLA, WHERE THE WOLCOTT-PERRY SISTERS LIVED AND THE VILLA BUILT IN 1927 BY COUNT DE MAUNY TALVANDE ON THE ISLAND OF TAPROBANE. "I DO NOT KNOW WHEN ALL THIS STARTED, IT DOES NOT MATTER WHEN IT HAPPENED, NOR HOW I NOTICED THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THESE TWO STORIES" — THAN TELLS US —; AND IT IS NOT AS RELEVANT AS THE CHALLENGE "TO THE DOGMA OF THE CONTEMPORARY, THAT TO SPEAK OF THE PRESENT ONE MUST USE THE LESSICON OF THE PRESENT DAY". HUSSEIN CLARK DOES NOT ONLY WANT TO BE MODERN, BUT OF A MODERN THAT LOOKS AND DRAWS NEW LIFE FROM THE PAST. THIS IS WHERE HE UNDERMINES STYLISTIC CODES. IN ADDITION TO A SENSE OF NARRATION, HUSSEIN CLARK HAS ONE FOR BEAUTY AND QUALITY.

CAPRI — AND L'ISOLA DEI BACI
[THE ISLAND OF KISSES]

THERE IS ALSO A LITERARY ASPECT, WHICH INSPIRED HUSSEIN CLARK TO DEVELOP A THEME WITH THE TONES OF A DRAMA. A FEW YEARS

KURA.
THAN HUSSEIN CLARK
L'ISOLA DEI BACI
(DISAPPEARING ACTS)
3.04 — 20.06.19



AGO DURING HIS FIRST STAY IN CAPRI AT VILLA TORRICELLA, THE ARTIST DISCOVERED L'ISOLA DEI BACI, AN EROTIC-SOCIAL NOVEL, A CARICATURE IN THE FORM OF AN ANTI-HOMOSEXUAL, HOMOPHOBIC AND DERISIVE PAMPHLET FROM THE TIME OF FASCIST MACHISMO, WRITTEN IN 1918 BY FILIPPO TOMMASO MARINETTI (AND A PREFACE BY BRUNO CORRA). THIS TEXT INSPIRED BLUE MOON WITH VILLA DESIGN GROUP, WHICH IN TURN TRIGGERED THE "MONTAGE" OF THE DATA THAT WOULD HAVE LED HIM BACK TO CAPRI, THIS TIME ON THE TRAIL OF ICONOGRAPHIC SOURCES WHICH HAD INSPIRED THE LEADERS OF THE EUROPEAN ECCENTRIC CULTURE, WHO ON THE COSMOPOLITAN ISLAND THAT DWELLS OUTSIDE OF TIME HAD FOUND THE SECRET AND THE FULLNESS OF LIFE, THE OTHERNESS AND THE PLEASURE OF TRANSGRESSION, THE FREEDOM, THE SPLEEN AND THE TORPOR OF DISEASE, THE EVOCATIVE POWER OF NATURE IN CONTACT WITH THE BODY. HERE, BEFORE THE WORLD FACED THE CENTURY THAT WOULD HAVE BROUGHT THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE CENTER OF HIMSELF, MALE AND FEMALE DANDYISM, DANCES AND RITES OF THEOSOPHICAL COMMUNITIES WERE CELEBRATED (AS TOLD IN THE FILM BY SAVERIO MARTONE, CAPRI REVOLUTION), WHICH WOULD NOURISH THE CONTEMPORARY ART OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. IN A EUROPE THAT WAS BREAKING AWAY FROM THE LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY POSITIVISTIC CULTURE TO RUN TOWARDS MODERNITY, CAPRI BECAME A FAVORITE PLACE AND THE FREE TERRITORY FOR ART AND LITERATURE (WHILE THE SIRENAS, WITH LÉONIDE MASSINE BEFORE AND WITH RUDOLF NUREYEV LATER, WOULD BECOME THE EDEN OF DANCE).

CAPRI EXPERIENCED NOT ONLY AS AN "INITIATORY JOURNEY" OR A "SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION" INVOLVING BOTH "MORBID AND MYSTICAL" PRACTICES, BUT RATHER AS A TERRITORY OF EXPLORATION "OF POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC TRENCHES."² TO THE POINT THAT EVEN THE FUTURISTS LOVED THE ISLAND AND STAYED THERE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS (DEPERO WOULD ELABORATE THE BALLI PLASTICI [PLASTIC DANCES] WITH GILBERT CLAVEL THERE IN 1917, MARINETTI WOULD BE ONE OF THE ANIMATORS OF THE CONVEGNO SUL PAESAGGIO [LANDSCAPE CONFERENCE], ORGANIZED BY EDWIN CERIO, CAPRI'S AMPHITRYONIC MAYOR. IT WAS NOT BY CHANCE THAT SARTRE WROTE: "THERE WAS ALSO A FUTURISTIC CAPRI, WHEN MARINETTI ARRIVED ON THE ISLAND"). IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT 1922, THE YEAR IN WHICH MARINETTI LANDED THERE, COINCIDES WITH THE YEAR OF THE MARCH ON ROME, WHILE L'ISOLA DEI BACI HAD BEEN WRITTEN IN 1918, AT THE END OF THE GREAT WAR, IN A MOST LIKELY IMAGINARY BLUE CAVE, YET IN A EUROPE MORE THAN EVER REAL, WHICH LED MARINETTI AND CORRA TO WRITE: "IF ALREADY EQUIVOCAL IN TIMES OF PEACE, THIS GATHERING OF SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE HAS BECOME REALLY DANGEROUS SINCE THE BEGINNING

OF THE WAR."³ AN INTERESTING SHIFT BETWEEN REALITY AND FICTION. NON-FICTION FICTION BETWEEN SWITCHING AN-POST-EXPERIENCE

THAN HUSSEIN CLARK IS FAR FROM THE SPECTACULARIZATION OF ART OF THE PAST DECADES. HIS IS A STORY THAT PROGRESSES BY INTUITION. IN 1966 IN THE U.S. THE WRITER AND SCREENWRITER TRUMAN CAPOTE, FOR HIS DETECTIVE NOVEL COLD BLOOD, INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY, HAD INVENTED THE DEFINITION OF NON-FICTION NOVEL, A LITERARY GENRE HALFWAY BETWEEN A STORY AND AN ESSAY. CAPOTE HIMSELF IN AN INTERVIEW ON "THE NEW YORK TIMES" DEFINED HIS PROJECT FOR COLD BLOOD AS "A NARRATIVE FORM THAT EMPLOYED ALL THE TECHNIQUES OF FICTIONAL ART BUT WAS NEVERTHELESS IMMACULATELY FACTUAL".

THAN DOES NOT MEAN TO AMAZE, BUT TO SHARE THE VORACITY OF HIS RESEARCH OF INTERRELATED WORLDS, OF DOCUMENTS, CORRESPONDENCE, REPORTS OF TRIALS FOR THE FREEDOM OF BEHAVIOR AND THOUGHT, OF DISCOVERIES THAT LEAD TO RETHINKING HISTORY - HISTORIES - FROM OTHER POINTS OF VIEW; TO BRING TOGETHER APPARENTLY DISTANT BUT INSTEAD CONNECTED MOMENTS SUCH AS THE QUESTION OF HOMOSEXUALITY DURING FASCISM AND THE FIGURE OF PIER PAOLO PASOLINI A FEW MONTHS BEFORE BEING KILLED, THE AUTHOR ON THE PAGES OF THE "CORRIERE DELLA SERA" OF THE ARTICLE "IL VUOTO DEL POTERE" OVVERO "L'ARTICOLO DELLE LUCCIOLE" ["THE VACUUM OF POWER" AKA "THE ARTICLE OF THE FIREFLIES"].

JUST AS A SCREENWRITER OR A WRITER CONSTRUCTS A PLOT IN A SEQUENCE OF FRAMES OR CHAPTERS, SO THAN PROPOSES A METHOD OF ANALYSIS AND PRODUCTION IN SERIES IN HIS SETS, WHICH HAVE MUCH IN COMMON WITH THE EVER-CHANGING WORLD OF FASHION SHOWS. ANOTHER TRESPASSING INTO A DIFFERENT CODING.

BEING IN OTHER TIMES AND OTHER GEOGRAPHIES ("TO BE OUT OF JOINT" [T.N. IN ENGLISH IN THE ORIGINAL ITALIAN TEXT]) IS WHAT APPEALS TO THAN HUSSEIN; TO "SURF" BETWEEN IMAGES, TO "SWITCH" BETWEEN CODES, TO CONNECTS POINTS IN ORDER TO GENERATE STORIES, TO CROSS, TO MIX, TO REDUCE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL DISTANCES. "THERE IS A SORT OF PHILOLOGICAL ARCHEOLOGY IN WHAT I DO, IN USING FICTION TO BRING IT INTO REALITY. I SEEK EMPATHY WITH HISTORY," HE WARNS US. IT WORKS. IN FACT, OUR PRESENT TODAY IS MORE THAN EVER A MIXTURE OF DIFFERENT TIMES, FROM WHICH THE PAST CANNOT BE BANNED. AFTER ALL, CLOSING ONESELF IN THE MOURNING OF THE BARBARISM THAT CROSSED THE LAST CENTURY NOT ONLY MAKES NO SENSE BUT PREVENTS US FROM READING AND UNDERSTANDING OUR PRESENT. WHAT HUSSEIN CLARK IMPLEMENTS IS A VORTEX OR A GAME OF MIRRORS. IT RESEMBLES THE TIME WITHOUT BARRIERS OF "POST-EXPERIENCE" AS ALESSANDRO BARICCO DEFINED IT IN HIS THE GAME: "SPEED, SUPERFICIALITY, ENERGY." BEING IN THINGS IS A MOVEMENT: "YOU ARE IN MANY PLACES AT THE SAME TIME, AND THIS IS YOUR WAY OF LIVING IN ONLY ONE, THE ONE YOU ARE LOOKING FOR"; TO RESUME IT AS IF IT WERE A "SORT OF VIBRATION," A NEW STARTING POINT FOR RECONSTRUCTING THE MEMORY.

1 FILIPPO TOMMASO MARINETTI, BRUNO CORRA, L'ISOLA DEI BACI. ROMANZO EROTICO-SOCIALE, EDIZIONI LA CONCHIGLIA

2 L. VERGINE IN CAPRI 1905/1940, FRAMMENTI POSTUMI, FELTRINELLI, 1983

3 FILIPPO TOMMASO MARINETTI, BRUNO CORRA, L'ISOLA DEI BACI. ROMANZO EROTICO SOCIALE, EDIZIONI LA CONCHIGLIA