



Argonauta

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Your majesty the wheat

The early 1800s Charles Darwin states that plants are, for mankind, the most ancient food medium and that meat was never the main food.

Wheat has always been the fundamental element of nourishment for man, both for his physical sustenance and for the soul.

I

Weaves the spikes of the spool ear
dear mother, for her wheels
of the large counter and its sheets.
Pumpkin flowers, peas burned,
in the vegetable garden. The cherries were gone:
for San Giovanni they had the giannelli.
There were already the apples of the summer,
there were the plums of San Pietro.
The days become longer and longer,
the sun, tired, came back.

II

And blond in the wind the wheat murmured.
The slender swords were blooming
between the yellow stems; and they knew nothing but in vain.
There was a whisper as of words.
And he meant the praise that in time
he had the young offspring there.
Late he had made his nest, there on one side.
Oh! she loved the sun more than the nest!
Who knows? he wanted to do up there, with singing!
Now he could already hear the screech on the little ones

of the sickle; and admonished them to stay
squat down without giving a cry.

It said: Chiotte, against the ground, oh dear!
that not a speck, a stem moves!

I made you earth-coloured: it seems nothing else,
so, what earth, or born for heaven!

III

And the wheat in the wind roared; and he said
father to son: "We will reap.

You see: green is, yes, but I would not like to suffer.

Because the grain says: - I stand upright, and you sit down.

Here I fear the water, and the wind gives me trouble.

On the other hand, either sooner or later, or lying down or
standing,

if the stem is dry it will dry out the ear ."

(Giovanni Pascoli, Among the ears)

This is how the poet from Romagna, my fellow countryman, recounts "the murmur," a murmur like words: it is the wheat that sends a mysterious message to the wind.

The wheat, the fields bathed by the summer sun that illuminates them with golden reflections and the harvest, as the final partnership between human beings and nature.

The wheat in its ancient blondness,
wavy and dry, it asks for harvest,
for on top of his frail stature
hands each child a swollen ear.
The peasant mother yearns for it
standing in the short shadow of a haystack:

*how much to suffer before the miller
bring it back to him in soft flour!
The Christian raises her eyes to the fierce sun,
then she looks at the dripping children, the husband
hunchbacked in the furrow and with his black finger
he makes a great sign of the cross over the field.
(Giovanni Papini)*

Pascoli, like Papini, like Van Gogh: ripe wheat, the result of a long work that lasted months, the expression of triumph, vitality and the coincidence of the elements of nature.

Wheat fields, a landscape of the beautiful country, a cultural heritage, sometimes (too often) neglected, forgotten, despite being the expression of the traditions to be protected, for their historical value and economic potential, founding local development.

I Lilliputian, as in Jonathan Swift's novel, climb and discover the structure of his majesty: root of the collated type, the culm, empty in the soft wheat and full in the hard one, the leaves and finally the ear, made of flowers, kernels and spikelet.

It is a herbaceous plant, belonging to the *Triticum* genre, wheat or durum grain, microthermal in agronomy, literally defined cereal.

A safe contains, inside the fruit, which a pod protects: indehiscent is the adjective that identifies this property.

As in the alchemical process, where the well-known hermetic paradox shows "that only whom has become a 'hermaphrodite' can grasp the philosopher's stone," so the kernel of wheat reaches fertilization by indehiscence, then maturing into gold.

The processes that govern alchemical work refer by analogy to those that govern the work of the farmer in the fields: the key to entering a specific alchemical operation must be started in a particular period of the year, according to precise lunations, by choosing the use of a determined seed, in a land prepared with ritualistic specifications.

"The peasants entrust the grain to the fat land after having leafed through it with their rakes. Philosophers have taught us to scatter gold in snowy fields that have light sheets. To do this, look closely and in a mirror, you will see the way in which gold germinates."

(Michael Maier)

The fruits, arranged in neat rows, give shape to the golden ear.

The brilliant golden colour when ripe inevitably recalls Spica, a star of the first magnitude, belonging to the constellation of Virgo, seen by the Ancients near the ear that the figure seems to carry, the brightest of the constellation (magnitude +1.04) and the fifteenth for brilliance in the night sky.

Dispenser of beauty, luck and honours, she pours out blessings in harmony with copious harvests.

The same zodiac sign of Virgo, placed in the heart of summer and of the harvest, is often depicted, in fact, with a bundle of ears in her lap. After all, among the most remembered Virgins in history, the Vestals, sacred figures to the goddess Vesta, for centuries used cereals during ritual sacrifices.

The womb of the Mother goddess, primordial female archetype, divinity closely linked to the work of the earth and the cyclical nature of time, like the womb of Mary in early Christianity, are the cradle to a Sacred Seed, destined to die, fertilizing with the dead Body, All Earth, bringing physical and spiritual nourishment.

"The earth that alone gives birth to all beings, nourishes them and then receives the fruitful germ again." (Aeschylus, *Coeore*, 127)

"Che ne sai tu di un campo di grano ... (What do you know about a wheat field)" sacred place of profane loves, music in the background of the beginning of a journey to discover the places of Italy, from the Alps to the islands, in a fantastic itinerary that the ship Argo, always protected by the goddess Hera / Juno, is about to embark in the research of the most precious gold trophy: Your Majesty the Wheat.

Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Lombardia and Piemonte cultivate just over 200,000 hectares of wheat, mainly soft, concentrated along the river Po. The most cultivated soft wheat varieties are Aubusson, Bologna, Blasco and Mieti, while among those of durum wheat Orobèl, Neodur and Normanno. Emilia-Romagna, the granary of Italy, is one of the most important Italian regions for the production of wheat.

The area cultivated with wheat is about 200,000 hectares. Cultivation is intensive, with particular attention to the fertilization and defense technique.

The most cultivated varieties are Bologna, Mieti and Serio among the soft wheats and Orobèl, Neodur and San Carlo among the durum wheats.

In Lazio, Tuscany and Sardinia the territory dedicated to wheat is about 320,000 hectares. The most cultivated varieties are Colosseo, Duilio, Iride, Orobèl for durum wheat, Bologna and Mieti for soft wheat.

Generally, wheat in this area, is cultivated in rotation with other crops.

In Abruzzo, Marche and Umbria, wheat is grown on approximately 300,000 hectares. Durum wheat prevails in the first two regions, while soft wheat is mainly grown in Umbria.

The most common varieties in Abruzzo are Duilio, Meridiano, Ofanto and Simeto while in the Marche and Umbria Duilio, Svevo, Orobèl, Iride, San Carlo, Rusticano and Claudio.

Puglia, Basilicata, Campania and Molise areas are around 700,000 hectares of durum wheat and about 14,000 hectares of soft wheat in Campania alone.

The most cultivated variety is Simeto then comes Ciccio, Duilio, Iride and Gargano. Calabria durum wheat of the Simeto variety also prevails, with a production that covers a total area of about 20,000 hectares.

In Sicily durum wheat prevails over soft wheat. The cultivated area extends over about 320,000 hectares.

The most common variety is Simeto followed by Arcangelo, Ciccio, Duilio and Mongibello. Wheat is mainly used to extract wheat flour or semolina (soft wheat for the first and durum wheat for the second).

Pasta is born from (durum) wheat, the best pasta in the world, the most loved, the Italian one, the only one that by law must contain only durum wheat and of quality ... and if Italian, gains even more value.

Durum wheat in name and in fact: its grains have a vitreous structure and from their grinding is obtained semolina, coarser and more angular than flour and with a characteristic amber yellow colour.

Today one out of four spaghetti in the world, three out of four in Europe, is produced in an Italian pasta factory.

Already 20 years ago the New York Times explained to the Americans that the real Italian spaghetti are those cooked "al dente."

But where does the wheat for Italian pasta come from? Since we produce a lot of pasta, much is the wheat that we need to cover the average requirement. Most of it is a national product.

The average production of 4 million tons per year, sufficient to cover 70% of the necessary, forces us to import wheat from abroad. The causes of insufficient production are climate-

environmental ones, but also "wrong" agricultural traditions. In some areas of the South, harvest yields may be high, but the wheat produced is low in protein: wheat is a plant that needs little water, but drought and irregular rains reduce its uptake from the soil of nitrogen and other nutrients, adversely affecting the nutritional value of the seed. Due to the tradition of burning fields to prepare for sowing by interrupting the nitrogen cycle, soils are structurally poor in organic matter.

Wheat, in addition to being used to produce flour (soft wheat) or semolina (durum wheat), can also be used in the form of wheat flakes, obtained by laminating and steaming the wheat grain (soft), present in soup preparations or for breakfast, and also as a wheat germ, active in whole grain products.

It is extracted by separating it from the flour with a sieve after

grinding the grain; it comes in the form of small whitish flakes and is consumed, along with other foods such as yogurt or other breakfast cereals.

With the pressing process, an oil rich in vitamin E and essential fatty acids is also obtained.

In some areas, bulgur, durum wheat, sprouted and steamed, dried then ground and reduced in small pieces is another variant of use, as well as couscous, which consists of grains of steamed semolina.

The fregula, on the other hand, is a typical Sardinian product that is presented as rolled balls of semolina and roasted in the oven.

By extracting gluten from wheat flour, a further product is obtained, seitan, which is high in protein and is often used as a replacement for meat.



Landscape

Davide Frisoni

With this large work the artist has returned after years to devote himself once again to the landscape theme.

Made in a single work seat, the painting shows from a slightly raised point of view a glimpse of the Romagna countryside and is based on an intense use of light and shadows, able to make the atmosphere suspended, dense, but at the same light, which is created immediately after a storm.

Among the clouds that still skim the sky and cast shadows on the olive trees, a ray of sun emerges, a source of light that punctuates the leaves of the trees with brilliant lighting effects created by small strokes of a spatula.

But in that opening of the clouds, in that glow of light, the mystery of nature is revealed and offers, to those who know how to observe and listen, the amazement and the sense of divine that is present in that moment.

*Nature as an end or nature
as a means.*

*Treat nature well according to ethics
or according to commandment?*

ACT III

Romagna:

(...) everything is expressed and is expressed in a concrete way, with corpulent images, with the coats of arms, the names of the lords, the rivers that bathe this land, the events of which it was the theatre..

Beniamino Croce

1000 years, from the fall of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance: the Middle Ages, dark centuries. Little happens in agriculture from the seeds point of view, while the mill, from a simple machine to transform wheat, becomes a symbol of power.

The milling activity, subject to continuous taxes, takes place under the strict control of the state authority and the Church, far from being run by free initiative. But something is changing.

The journey of the Argonaut moves from the fields to inside the walls of the fortresses and palaces, fully entering the Renaissance. Rimini, Urbino and their hinterland are the scene of wars, dramatic events, betrayals, great art.

These are the territories of the noble families Montefeltro and Malatesta.

An eagle, an imperial sign that from ancient Rome has crossed the ages, distinguishes the Montefeltro; an elephant, symbol of wisdom and command, the Malatesta.

“Allo Aliphante el cor l'Aquila morse” writes Giovanni Santi about the battle of Cesano, referring to the symbols of their respective families.

The one is called the “Count” and the other “Lord,” respectively Federico da Montefeltro, Count of Urbino and Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, both paintings by the great Renaissance artist Piero della Francesca.

Both are represented in profile: Sigismondo on a black background, thin lips, contemptuous look; the most colorful Count of Urbino, with a red cap and dress to stand out on a bright landscape, portrayed in his left profile, to hide the right, Defaced by a spear during a duel.

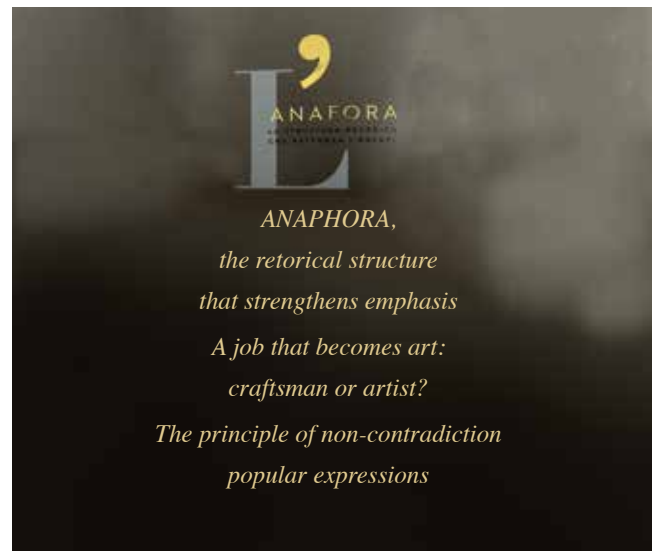
In common with the two nobles, in addition to the artist of their portraits, Piero della Francesca, being both natural children, but legitimized only at a later stage, and being bound by intricate kinship and mutual hatred.

In 1422, the year of Federico's birth, Urbino is still a county (it will later become a duchy), commanded by Guido Antonio da Montefeltro, his father, who will recognize it only later, with the favorable opinion of the Pope.

The family, linked to the Church, partly controls Umbria, Marche and Romagna.

Also, the lordship of Malatesta is linked to the Church with ties of vassalage and controls Cesena, with Domenico Novello, brother of Sigismondo, Rimini, some castles in the territories of Montefeltro and Fano, in the Marches, under the aegis of Sigismondo himself.

And it is precisely in Rimini that Sigismondo has his residence,



a fortress more than a palace, characterized by the drawbridge, the double-walled walls, by a dark and threatening air, which gives the name of Castello Sismondo, abbreviation of Sigismondo.

Sigismondo, descends from Giangiotto Malatesta, guilty of the murder of his brother Paolo and his wife Francesca, discovered in the betrayal from which one of the greatest tributes of literature of all time to love is born.

One of the greatest frescoes in verse that art has ever dedicated to feeling, recounted by Dante in his Divine Comedy, in Canto V: “Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona” (verse 103).

A Love that, even if recognized as wrong because adulterous, will survive for eternity.

On the contrary, Federico's residence in Urbino boasts elegance and beauty. In addition to intrigues and challenges in battle, the prestige of Renaissance princes is also measured by the splendor of the arts in their courts.

To Federico da Montefeltro, a cultured and refined man, the most ambitious project of the urban planning of Urbino, in order to make it the city of the prince, and the contemporary construction of the Ducal Palace.

“(...) the most beautiful you can find in all Italy; and with every fortune he provided it so well that it did not seem a palace, but a city in the form of a palace (...)”

(Baldassarre Castiglione)

Thanks to this magnificence that recalls the symbolic work of the Italian Renaissance, the ideal city, the creation of an unknown artist, Federico's fame spread throughout Europe.

With Federico, an enormous impulse is given to art that will bring talents such as Bramante and Raphael to the fore in the duchy.

In challenge, the architectural work of his rival, Sigismondo lord of Rimini is not a palace, but a church that he prefers to call “Temple.”

Bishop Francesco Lambiasi defines him in modern times: “(...) the face of God who does not present himself as a jealous rival and envious antagonist of Man, but as his powerful and merciful ally. He is a God who made us to fly high, towards him, with the two wings of reason and faith, as - in the same spacious hall of the cathedral - they propose the emblems of Greek wisdom through the mythological figures of sibyls, heroes, cherubs and muses, on the one hand, and, on the other, the images of the most genuine Christian vision: theological and cardinal virtues, saints, angels and stars.”

Designed by Leon Battista Alberti, however, it remained unfinished. The facade is reminiscent of the Roman arches and the large niches



The rush of water, the force that turns into a dance of the wheels, of the millstones that drag the grain to itself, in a metamorphosis of substantial state.

Man may suspect that daily eroticism hides repetition, monotony.

The woman knows that it can be an experience that each time is renewed, changeable and exciting.

Two viewpoints, two mental and physical starting points, two Universes.

Diversity follows and follows in a sensual dance.

With the body attached to the body of the partner, the woman embraced remains to enjoy the contact of his skin, of the breath of his breath.

Turning the love dance into a carnal and soul fusion, continuous vibration from which desire and its amazing fulfillment are reborn.

In The Flower Field

Filippo Manfroni

The dimension of the dream is investigated in this work by Filippo Manfroni where, as usual, he brings to the fore his research on man and his relationships. Immersed in a surreal landscape on which stands a gloomy sky, almost overwhelming, a man holds a woman who surrenders completely to his grip. At their feet an expanse of colored flowers traced with quick brushstrokes that concur to increase the unreal atmosphere of the scene.

While a precise painting, almost meticulous, although free, defines the bodies of the two figures emphasizing their physicality and presence, as well as the play of light on their bodies increases the realism of the two figures. And precisely the body, in its power and in its physicality, becomes a vehicle through which feelings become evident and a means through which man can return to "touch" the other physically and spiritually, breaking the boundaries of his own loneliness.

should have collected the tombs of Sigismund and his wife Isotta.

The recovery of classical forms is common in Renaissance works, but what is surprising here is the absolute lack of religious elements." Sigismondo built in Rimini a noble temple in honour of Saint Francis, but he filled it so full of images and symbols of the gentiles that it seemed a temple not of Christians, but of infidel worshippers of demons, And in it he set up a sepulchre for his concubine, most elegantly adorned with artistic sculptures, and added an inscription to it in Mò dei Pagani, which sounded like this: I dedicated to the diva Isotta."

So the Pope Pius II, born Enea Silvio Piccolomini, writes in his Commentaries.

A temple with strange and ambiguous signs, zodiac signs, cupids, almost a challenge to Christianity and the Pope, a challenge that will mark its destiny.

The clashes between the two families are continuous and are weighed down by the fact that their possessions are the scene of the wars between Rome, Milan and Venice for the supremacy in the territories: the two houses the arduous decision to choose one side instead of another, to secure the future of each other's dynasties.

The abandoned mills

*And one day I have to go
at the bottom of the mountain crevice
to look at myself in the ditch that brings water to
the Marecchia;
you have to put your nose
inside the abandoned mills
where the charcoal burners with black hands
broke the hot loaves
to eat with cheese.
The wheels are standing there
the walls with floured nails
but the air moved by butterflies
will smell like bread
and of the life that never dies.
(Tonino Guerra, poet and screenwriter,
my fellow citizen)*

Precisely the Rocca di San Leo, which Dante Alighieri mentions in his work (life imprisonment at the end of the 18th century, for the adventurer and esotericist Count of Cagliostro), is the subject of one of the most fascinating chronicles of the Renaissance.

It is located between Romagna and Marche, along the border that separates the territories, and is the starting place of a duel that lasted 22 years between the two families, without stopping, with some sporadic respite, often not respected. Even today, history

is strongly present in the castles, in the fortresses and in one of the characteristics of the Val Marecchia area: the mills.

The same places became the soul places of the poet and screenwriter Tonino Guerra.

The ancient structures used the power of water, of which the valley is rich, to move the heavy wheels to move the millstones.

These mills, which have now become museums (such as the Widespread Museum of Poggio Torriana), are of extreme historical importance, the result of the cultural and museum meeting of the territories, very well preserved specimens of an art, the milling one with water blades, in danger of extinction.