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Dagmar Reichardt

Giuseppe Bonaviri's *Book of Stone* (1984-2009)

## A Blueprint for Literary Glocalization

Der sizilianische Dichter und Romanautor Giuseppe Bonaviri – 1924 in Mineo bei Catania geboren und 2009 in Frosinone nahe Rom verstorben – gründete 1984 den öffentlichen Gedichtpark *Il libro di pietra* (dt. *Das Buch aus Stein*) in Arpino, dem Geburtsort des berühmten Staatsmannes, Redners und Rhetorikers Marcus Tullius Cicero. Zu diesem Anlass schenkte der seit 1980 wiederholt für den Nobelpreis vorgeschlagene, sein Leben lang auch als Arzt tätige und schon früh nach Mittelitalien ausgewanderte Schriftsteller der Stadt Arpino das Gedicht *Il bianchissimo vento* (1984, dt. *Der weißeste Wind*), das dort noch heute als Gründungsgedicht in Stein gemeißelt im öffentlichen Raum permanent ausgestellt ist. Der vorliegende Beitrag untersucht Bonaviris europäisches, kollaborativ angelegtes Kulturprojekt als Blaupause eines literarischen Glokalisierungsformats unter den Aspekten seiner Transkulturalität, dekolonialisierten Literarizität, weltliterarischen Parametern und kommunikativen Transmedialität. Bonaviris lokal verwurzeltes und zugleich kosmopolitisch ausgerichtetes, postmodernes Kulturkonzept verweist durch seine vielfältigen Synergieeffekte nicht nur auf die zeitlose Relevanz von Literatur und Lyrik, sondern auch auf die Schlüsselrolle einer transkulturell wirkungsmächtigen Kreativität und zukunftsorientierten *humanitas*.

### 1. Literary Glocalization and Transcultural Studies

If we want to define the term 'literary glocalization', we may state that we are dealing with a postmodern technical expression that could be considered a 'neologism of a neologism' (i. e., a blend forming a portmanteau with the words of 'globalization' and 'localization'). In fact, the notion of glocalization came up in the 1980s, gaining importance in the 2000s in a primarily socio-economical context. If we now add the attribute of 'literary' to the noun of 'glocalization' – thus speaking of 'literary glocalization' – our motivation, as cultural scholars, is to adopt and utilize the term glocalization for a third-party interest, so to speak.

By doing so, we move on towards a transdisciplinary field, fully aware of the fact that in the last decades the use of the term has been spreading particularly in the academic fields of business studies, economy, political science, sociology and media studies. From a critical point of view, the proposal to transfer the notion of glocalization in its slightly extended version of a 'literary' glocalization to the study field of literary research and analysis of aesthetics is highly tempting and might be of utter usefulness for literary

and comparative studies as a deconstructive, logical tool. This is all the more obvious, since the Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan already coined the term 'global village' (including *War and Peace in the Global Village*, 1968) more than fifty years ago, thus describing the cross-media-based interconnectivity in globalized times – also and explicitly in relation to books (*The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, 1962). Therefore, considering that, according to McLuhan, 'the medium is the message' (*The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*, 1967) – consequently predicting the world wide web nearly thirty years before it was invented – his approach might be useful not only for the specific case of Giuseppe Bonaviri, who chose the public space and the material of stone (instead of a book made of paper) to spread his literary message, but also for Transcultural Studies. More specifically, the term of glocalization, then, could be generally interpreted as *The Globalization of the Local Community* and add benefits to the interpretive range of both Media and Literary Studies, including all sorts of sub-categories (such as Sociology, Migration Studies, Psychology, History, Cultural Studies, Growth Management, Creative Industries, Digital Humanities, Medical Humanities, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, before trying to proactively apply the notion of literary glocalization to specific aspects of the work of the Sicilian-Ciociarian writer Giuseppe Bonaviri (1924-2009) in the next subchapter, let me pinpoint that the term 'glocalization' is a constitutive element of the process that the Cuban sociologist, ethnologist and politician Fernando Ortiz called "transculturation".<sup>2</sup> Independent from Ortiz' neologism coined in the 1940s, half a century later, the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch developed the umbrella term of 'transculturality'<sup>3</sup> that shows, on a methodological level, strong affinities with Postcolonial Studies, Migration Studies and Digitalization Studies. In fact, Transcultural Studies resort to categories that include diverse sociocultural aspects of a whole cluster of disciplines, such as: inter- and/or transdisciplinarity, diversity, hybridity, mobility, negotiability, transsectionality, reciprocity, incommensurability, ubiquity, simultaneity, digitization, mediality, power-relations, connectivity, conviviality, liminality, and/or nomadism. All these different concepts and approaches – and we could add many more – are principally based on comparative and 'glocal'

1 Cf. Isaac Lerner. "Glocalization – The Globalization of the Local Community". *Local Identities – Global Challenges. Fall Conference Proceeding*, ACSA (Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture), 2011. P. 119-125.

2 Fernando Ortiz. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. New York: Vintage, 1970. P. 98.

3 Cf. Wolfgang Welsch. "Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today". *Spaces of Culture. City, Nation, World*. Ed. Mike Featherstone/Scott Lash. London et al.: Sage, 1999. P. 194-213.

parameters as well as on a postmodern, transversal rationality<sup>4</sup> directed against chauvinism and fundamentalism.<sup>5</sup>

Glocalization is, hence, a key parameter in various sociological disciplines that, among others, offers a useful toolbox that literary scholars are free to combine with other methodologies in order to reread and decode textual material. As a matter of fact, in globalized times, literary criticism is confronted with existential questions: due to digitization, traditional reading behavior is in decline. Moreover, because of the iconic turn – which states the primacy of images (versus words) – the ability of writing as a basic cultural technique and fundamental social skill also tends to be less significant or at least subject to changes. Finally, despite an accelerated globalization and mobility since the late 1980s, readers risk losing their orientation in terms of time, space and cultural identity in relation to their general cultural thoughtfulness, performance and attitude. For this latter reason, critics began to design maps conveying cartographies to the public, thus enriching also literary history in general, on a broader level.<sup>6</sup> Other scholars, writers and intellectuals consciously continued or started to publish single, locally coined books, scripts, novels or poems with the overall intention to locate and promote cultural activities, artifacts and metaphysical growth more precisely and effectively.

## 2. *The Book of Stone* (1984-2009): Local Literary Parameters

Since Homi K. Bhabha's seminal reflections about *The Location of Culture* (1994) that ponder local parameters of cultural (ergo 'global') phenomena, we have to ask ourselves where culture takes place in real time, where it emerges or concretely becomes manifest. If we then realize, in this context, that the notion of culture includes literature, the act of reading and writing, of talking and exchanging ideas about what was read or written in order to disseminate our literary knowledge, we literally *experience* our full immersion in a historical paradigm shift. We have to acknowledge the fact that

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4 A 'transversal reason' (or 'transversal rationality') would be a reason that goes beyond the principle of duality or any dual system, using, for example, more than the binary philosophical implications of deduction and induction or, more generally, thinking out of the box or *Against the Grain* (as the French writer Joris-Karl Huysmans put it in his novel *À rebours*, 1884).

5 Cf. Dagmar Reichardt. "On the Theory of a Transcultural Francophony. The Concept of Wolfgang Iser and its Didactic Interest". *Transnational '900. Novecento transnazionale. Letterature, arti e culture / Transnational 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Literatures, Arts and Cultures* 1/1 (2017): p. 40-56.

6 E.g., Franco Moretti. *Atlante del romanzo europeo: 1800-1900*. Torino: Einaudi, 1997.

the life-worlds (according to the concept of *Lebenswelt* coined by Edmund Husserl) of Western industrialized and digitized societies have completely remodeled our reading competences in the postmodern era.

While the changed reading and writing behavior appears to be a challenge on the educational level today, it assumed shape by becoming an artistic vision in the work context of the Italian poet, playwright and novelist Giuseppe Bonaviri. He had already started to put into practice his core idea about what could be called a 'literary glocalization process' in a small but history-charged village at the dawn of postmodernity, back in 1984. Arpino – a village of some 7,000 souls and the native town of the famous Roman orator, politician and philosopher Cicero the Younger, gently embedded in the historic landscape of the Ciociaria – is situated close to the city and province of Frosinone. Bonaviri lived there from 1957-58 onwards, spending most of his life in Ciociaria, and he also passed away in the provincial capital Frosinone in 2009. In these surroundings, Bonaviri created a poem-park or 'poetic garden' ("giardino poetico")<sup>7</sup>, as he himself called it, in the context of an international literary project that the writer and his local co-promotor in Arpino, senator Massimo Struffi, gave the heading *The Book of Stone* (in the Italian original: *Il libro di pietra*).<sup>8</sup> The author inaugurated the project in 1984 by donating his poem *Il bianchissimo vento* (Engl.: *The Whitest Wind*)<sup>9</sup> to the town, carved on a boulder and installed in the public space of Arpino, right beside the Porta Napoli city gate.

This oeuvre – a hybrid of a sculpture, a monument and a work of literature – was the first of a total of 20 single poems<sup>10</sup>, 19 of them to follow and authored by other poets, but more or less similar in appearance, carved in stone-tablets or pieces of rock, all strategically displayed throughout and around Arpino. For over 25 years, until the very end of his productive life, Bonaviri dedicated much of his energy, time and persuasiveness to this unusual plan. Indefatigably, he used his local and international bonds of friendship with other poets (among them: Sandy Hutchison, Lars Forssell, Fadhila Chabbi, Valentin Berestov, and Ursula Koziol) all over the world with the objective of organizing invitations to Arpino, hosting these poets in the

7 Massimo Struffi (Ed.). *La Ciociaria di Bonaviri. Con un intervento di Marcello Carlino*. Arpino: Provincia di Frosinone, 2007. P. 6.

8 I am quoting the English translation of the project's title according to Massimo Struffi (Ed.). *Giuseppe Bonaviri. Arpino e il Libro di Pietra. Scritti. In memoria di Giuseppe Bonaviri (1924-2009)*. Arpino: Arpinata Stampa, 2009. P. 39ff.

9 The original wording of Bonaviri's poem in Italian – *Il bianchissimo vento* (1984) – and its English version (translated by Sandy Hutchison) – *The Whitest Wind* – as well as its German translation (by Dagmar Reichardt) – *Der weißeste Wind* – are first published at the end of this essay.

10 Cf. Massimo Struffi (Ed.). *Il Libro di Pietra. In memoria di Giuseppe Bonaviri*. Arpino: Arpinata Stampa, 2009. P. 33-34.



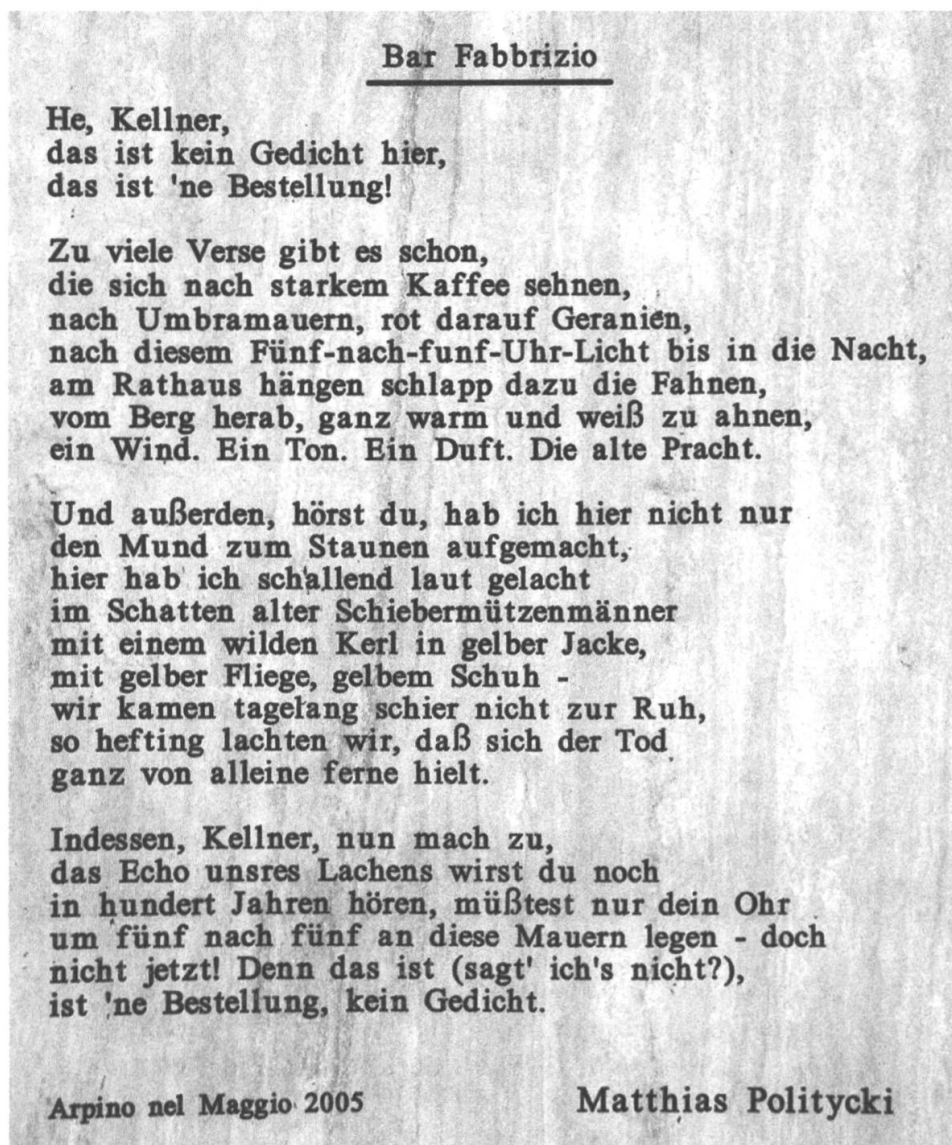
town, showing them around, making them familiar with the regional surroundings, cultural backgrounds and natural beauty of the landscape. Based on these stimuli and local inspirations, the poets were asked, after an approximately weeklong stay in Arpino, to write a poem that they would then send to Bonaviri after a reasonable amount of time, usually after they returned home. Once the poem was delivered, Bonaviri would deliver it to the mayor's office in Arpino, and its artistic and urbanistic realization process would begin, materializing the poet's lyrics in stone.



Poem *La musica dell'arpa* (both in Chinese and Italian translation on one stone, cut in the shape of a harp) by Lei Shuyan.  
*Il libro di pietra*, Arpino, 1998 © courtesy Piero Luigi Albery

In this way, over the years, Bonaviri extended his literary heritage with more and more marble plates, displaying lyrics in thoughtfully considered places and corners of his neighboring municipality of Arpino. The poems were

all spontaneously composed by friends and artistic colleagues near and far under his aegis. They are written in – following the chronological order from 1984 onwards – Italian, Russian, Swedish, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Czech, English, French, Polish, Romanian, German, Hungarian, as well as in Portuguese, and as a final counterpoint, in 2009, in the local dialect of Arpino itself. All of them try to capture the atmosphere and moods of their Arpino experience, i. e., the *genius loci*, and to relate it to their own work-immanent aesthetic discourses: for example, the Chinese poet Lei Shuyan associated the Ciociarian landscape with harp-playing, Fadhila Chabbi from Tunisia wrote about Arpino's spirit of water, while Ioan Flora from Romania was inspired by the town's most famous Mannerist painter, Giuseppe Cesari, called *Cavaliero d'Arpino* (verbatim: 'Cavalier' or 'Knight of Arpino').



Poem *Bar Fabbrizio* (on stone) by Matthias Politycki.  
*Il libro di pietra*, Arpino, 2006 © courtesy Piero Luigi Albery

Their messages still reach us on site today: all poems have been published on stone both in their original language and in their Italian translation, sometimes on two or more separate stones, thus implementing a cosmopolitan, plurilingual and *global* cultural flair in the streets, alleys and on the *local* squares of Arpino. The lyric lines that the writers in residence invented for these places were always a result of an amical, close collaboration between Bonaviri, the invited poet and a changing team of local politicians, networkers and helpers.

Today, one can read and marvel at this extraordinary collection while strolling through the village, encountering striking familiar and unfamiliar words here and there, for instance in a solemn Italian poem, written for Bonaviri's project and exhibited in public on the acropolis of Arpino's old town (Acropoli di Civitavecchia) in 2004 by none less than the Polish Pope John Paul II (Karol Józef Wojtyła) with the title *Dio dell'Alleanza* (the title means: 'God of Unity'). But following the literary track through Arpino one may also discover the opposite when suddenly reading the contrasty, self-ironic, humorous, yet almost sarcastic homage to Arpino that followed in 2005, penned by German poet Matthias Politycki.<sup>11</sup>

Politycki positioned the outcome of his poetry in a self-confident manner directly on the town hall square (Piazza Municipale), with the plain cross-linguistic title of *Bar Fabbrizio*. The permanent installation of this literary work, fixed directly on the external wall of the building next to the bar, shows – as all the other stone plates do more or less as well – two big stone plates. They remind the viewer of oversize pages, on which the poem has been engraved in black and white (one in German, one in its Italian translation), roughly inspired by the pattern of those marble plates that serve as solid street signs all over in Italy.<sup>12</sup>

11 We reproduce Matthias Politycki's poem *Bar Fabbrizio* on the photograph taken by – and by courtesy of – Piero Luigi Albery that goes with this essay.

12 For further details about the international literature project and European park of poems *Il libro di pietra* in Arpino cf. Dagmar Reichardt. "L'emigrante dello stetoscopio anziché della zappa. Eine Relektüre Giuseppe Bonaviris als Gründungsvater der zeitgenössischen italophonen Migrationsliteratur". *Migration et identité*. Ed. Thomas Klinkert. Freiburg i. B./Berlin: Rombach, (*Freiburger Romanistische Arbeiten*, vol. 7), 2014. P. 195-212; as well as: Struffi. Giuseppe Bonaviri (as note 8); Reichardt. L'emigrante (as note 12); and online: [www.arpinoturismo.it/it/arte-e-musei/musei/il-libro-di-pietra.html](http://www.arpinoturismo.it/it/arte-e-musei/musei/il-libro-di-pietra.html). A video of the making of the stones is available here: [www.facebook.com/185327393335/videos/1586984190842](https://www.facebook.com/185327393335/videos/1586984190842). Pictures of the project can be found here: [www.flickr.com/photos/cmnit/albums/72157634846226531](https://www.flickr.com/photos/cmnit/albums/72157634846226531).



### 3. The Global – and Glocal – Literacy in Public Space

The literacy of Bonaviri's highly qualified initiative is not in the focus here – neither his own literary production nor the work of the poets that he selected.<sup>13</sup> It is rather the synergetic effect of this *collaborative writing* and *exhibit process*, practiced over a time span of some two decades, which we intend to examine, using it as a lens through which to explore a possible literary-glocalization-effect and/or a manifestation of a Transcultural-Studies-phenomenon (according to my introductory remarks). The format of a public space, open sphere, park or 'garden' chosen by the writer for a literary total work of art is certainly an unusual venue: its main idea is to interpret a local town as an organism or a 'social sculpture' according to Joseph Beuys, similar to Christoph Schlingensief's project of a *Village Opera* in Burkina Faso.<sup>14</sup> In terms of the medium and the format chosen by the author, *The Book of Stone* is probably the most unconventional *Book* that Bonaviri left us, and so is the material: stone. With a slightly ironic undertone, Bonaviri's gesture of coordination, gathering and polyphonic orchestration refers to the medium of lettering as such: it points out the very beginnings of European civilization and literature as well as Roman antiquity and the power of centuries-old traditions in Bonaviri's homeland Italy. He himself was not only a private collector of stones that he picked in the countryside and stored in

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13 Bonaviri published novels, short stories, and plays in conventional book formats with Italy's largest publishing houses. His main poet collections contain original lyrics, most very complex, close to nature, universal topics and philosophically holistic, but some are more momentaneous, pretty much down-to-earth and sometimes even provocative, mischievous, and/or frivolous. The titles of Bonaviri's volumes of poetry (some of them mixed with short texts of prose) in a chronological order are: *Il dire celeste* (1976), *Il dire celeste ed altre poesie* (1979; 1993), *Di fumo cilestrino. Poesie giovanili* (1981), *Quark* (1982), *O corpo sospeso* (1982), *Poesie* (1984), *L'asprura* (1986), *Lip to lip* (1988), *Il re bambino* (1990), *Apologhetti* (1991), *Poemillas españoles ed altri luoghi* (2000), *I cavalli lunari. Poesie* (2004) and posthumously *L'arcobaleno lunare* (2009).

14 While the German theatre director, performance artist, and filmmaker Schlingensief focused on music and on a collaborative opera format in Burkina Faso, though, transforming a village into a place for artistic and social experiments, Bonaviri's *leitmotif* is literature. Both Schlingensief and Bonaviri intended to implement global issues and universal themes in a local surrounding (in an African village and in Arpino, respectively) in order to enhance a town's potential as a place of encounter and exchange, connecting people and cultures as well as different horizons and disciplines. All implementations from outside – i. e., in Bonaviri's case: the lyrics written by international poets and then engraved into stone – were not meant to be foreign objects but were meant to use art and literature as a way to enhance human self-awareness and confidence.

the family's apartment in Frosinone. All stony material also reminded him of his childhood and of a legendary, ancient, and vernacular erratic block called *The Stone of Poetry* (*Pietra della poesia*) located on the open plateau of Camuti, in Sicily, close to his hometown of Mineo.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, though, this project spans countries, languages and cultures, transmitting future-oriented impulses to the viewer. In reality, Bonaviri – as a representative of a contemporary 'Italian' writer at the turn of the millennium – uses apparently primitive means in order to present to the public his sophisticated personal network of friends and his private community of colleagues, in Italy and abroad, on such an *eternal* scale, to which everybody has access. Meanwhile, the involved poets did not participate in the project by merely interacting with Giuseppe Bonaviri privately on the base of their friendship, but they also dealt intensively with Arpino as *location*, before their words were cut into stone. Conserving and somehow 'freezing' his individual relationships and collaborative exchange processes on the meta-level of a park, Bonaviri obviously wanted to interweave his autobiographical interests and writings with a cross-cultural, syncretistic facet, which he often applies in his own oeuvre. *The Book of Stone* is meant to play with parameters of identity (as 'sameness') and alterity (as 'otherness'), with the subjective impressions that the poets in residence gain from Arpino and their local materialization in the town's public sphere, with the contingency of subjects, time, and places – in short: experimenting simultaneously with both local *and* global factors.

Bonaviri's local, permanent and public exhibition of literature eternized in stone altogether radiates a global message: think differently or transversally, combine discrepancies and make them work, create a "third space"<sup>16</sup> or "in-between space"<sup>17</sup> or *tertium quid*, joining, finally, a coherent and possibly harmonious, socially acceptable synthesis. From this angle, *The Book of Stone* is, paradigmatically speaking, as much an oxymoron as the notion of globalization itself on a theoretical scale: it sounds controversial but entertaining and covers, in the end, facings of an absolute truth, related to human values such as cohesion, team spirit, ethical disposition, transcultural understanding, creativity, or self-reflection. This insight certainly contains a philosophical or anthropological and general sociocultural connotation, but it

15 Cf. Dagmar Reichardt. "Giuseppe Bonaviris globale Lyrik: 'Der weißeste Wind'". *Kultur-Port.de*. 11 February 2021 (online: [www.kultur-port.de/blog/literatur/16962-giuseppe-bonaviris-globale-lyrik-der-weisseste-wind.html](http://www.kultur-port.de/blog/literatur/16962-giuseppe-bonaviris-globale-lyrik-der-weisseste-wind.html)).

16 Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. P. 36: "The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You [...]. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space".

17 Ibid. P. 7: "Such art [...] renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present".

also features, again, a specific congruency and artistic fitting with Bonaviri's vision itself. Through almost every piece written by this Sicilian emigrant, central-Italian immigrant and wanderer between different worlds blows the 'white wind of change' that the lyrical subject visualizes in Bonaviri's founding poem for *The Book of Stone*, that is to say, in *Il bianchissimo vento*. It captures a "cosmic" nimbus and "blend of [...] fantastic materials"<sup>18</sup> with the help of the metaphor of a clean, pure but also strong and intensive – either very hot, cold or bright – *Whitest Wind*.

#### 4. Decolonized Glocalization, World Literature and the Collaborative New European

Migration issues deeply characterize Bonaviri's life and family history. His grandmother sewed shirts in a factory in New York. His father, Settimo Emanuele, who later worked as a tailor (and poet) in Bonaviri's Sicilian hometown Mineo (close to Catania, on the east coast of Sicily), returned home to the island in 1947, after World War II, from Asmara – the capital of Italian East Africa (*Africa Orientale Italiana*, 1936-1941), where the Fascist regime had founded an Italian colony. Amongst the few things he could carry, Settimo Emanuele brought some precious pepper and a typewriter to his family<sup>19</sup>, on which Bonaviri's sisters would type the manuscript of Bonaviri's debut novel *Il sarto della stradalunga* (1954; the title means: 'The Tailor of the Main Street').

Bonaviri wrote this polyphonic portrait of his father's life after his return from Africa between July 1950 and April 1951, before Elio Vittorini accepted Bonaviri's autobiographical triptych for his prospering book series *I Gettoni* under the Turin publisher Einaudi, publishing it in 1954. In 1957/58, Bonaviri obtained an employment as public health officer in Frosinone, emigrating from the island of Sicily – after a short interlude as Captain of the Medical Force in Casale Monferrato, Piedmont – to the mainland close to Italy's capital Rome. He worked for the rest of his occupational career at the General Hospital of Frosinone as a doctor specialized in cardiology, married the Neapolitan painter Raffaella (Lina) Osario and founded a family in Frosinone, blessed with two children (Emanuele and Giuseppina Bonaviri), and later with four grandchildren, before he passed away in Ciociaria in 2009. At the same time, after his first success with *Il sarto della stradalunga* (1954), Bonaviri also started a life-long career as a poet and writer publishing

18 Italo Calvino. "Introduzione". Giuseppe Bonaviri. *Notti sull'altura*. Milano: Rizzoli, 1978. P. i-ii. [my translation, D. R.].

19 Cf. Giuseppe Bonaviri. *La ragazza di Casalmoferrato*. Ed. Sarah Zappulla Muscarà/Enzo Zappulla. Catania: La Cantinella, 2009 (= *Demetra*, vol. 5). P. 19.

over the following fifty years some sixty books – from novels with the biggest Italian publishing houses (e.g., Einaudi, Mondadori, Rizzoli, Sellerio) to small singular editions and numbered collectibles printed by local manufacturers – among them no less than 13 collections of poems. For having accomplished this respectable life's work, during a couple of years around the turn of the millennium, he figured repeatedly among the last five candidates for the Literary Nobel Prize, missing it in 2004 by just one vote.<sup>20</sup>

In the fantasy of the artist<sup>21</sup>, the hilly, mountainous landscape of the Ciociaria southeast of Rome always recalled to his mind his southern Sicilian homeland and native mountain village Mineo on the island's eastern border. Over the years in his memory and imagination, these two layers of scenery and territory began to melt, creating a 'blend' (as the renowned author Italo Calvino put it) on the text level or, to come back to Homi K. Bhabha, a *third space*, i.e., a synthesizing, fantastic, artistic projection. In this light, Bonaviri's texts can be assigned to exile literature, that helped the author – paraphrased as an 'emigrant with a stethoscope instead of with a pick'<sup>22</sup> – not only to therapeutically overcome his migration trauma<sup>23</sup>, but also to aesthetically create the main theme of his literary production. If asked about his literary role models or beacons in the face of his extraordinary rich work of lyric and prose, on his reading tours through Europe, Bonaviri used to answer with utmost modesty that his readings were neither Proust, nor Dante, nor Goethe, but the rain, the sun, the wind, stars and moon over Mineo.<sup>24</sup>

Through his writing practice, Bonaviri developed a complex transmigratory, metaphorical concept that includes the mixing of natural science and fantastic literature as well as the constant description of hybrid life-worlds and realities. As a result, his literary output reflects glocalized parameters beyond space and timelines, oriented towards a decolonized and decentral-ized blueprint for transcultural societies in the making. He thus aesthetically envisioned a new idea of World Literature – inspired by classical texts of the ancient Greek and Roman world, adapted to postmodernity – and of a culturally multifaceted Europe as a tolerant, multiethnic and ecological community, eager to perform and to act both in a creative and 'intelligent' fashion. In fact, to quote Bonaviri himself, humankind should "expand" its vision to a "cosmic vision", from which we should not remove ourselves because,

20 Cf. Luigi Saitta. "Knapp am Literaturnobelpreis vorbei: Giuseppe Bonaviri". *Kultur-Port.de*. 22 March 2019 (online: [www.kultur-port.de/index.php/blog/literatur/15534-knapp-am-literaturnobelpreis-vorbei-giuseppe-bonaviri.html](http://www.kultur-port.de/index.php/blog/literatur/15534-knapp-am-literaturnobelpreis-vorbei-giuseppe-bonaviri.html)).

21 Cf. Reichardt. *L'emigrante* (as note 12).

22 Costanzo Costantini. "L'inferno dentro. Incontro con l'autore". *Il Messaggero*. Roma, January 2, 1979. P. 3.

23 Cf. Reichardt. *L'emigrante* (as note 12). P. 195-212 [my translation, D.R.].

24 Cf. Franco Zangrilli. "Incontro con Bonaviri". *La Fusta. Journal of Literature and Culture* VI, 1-2 (1981): p. 3-41. Here p. 6-7; 19-20.



according to Bonaviri, “the individual human is a cell but an important cell, seeing that with his intelligence he is able to enter in the mysteries of the world”.<sup>25</sup>

In this sense true to the pioneering work of the Apulia-Roman comparatist, literary scholar, and postcolonial theorist Armando Gnisci, Bonaviri’s European, international and transcultural ‘garden’ of letters engraved into stone presents to the reader an early literary formula of the postmodern, sociocultural theorems developed by Gnisci, who, since the 2000s, has cumulatively, concretely and concisely advocated for a decolonization of Italy in a European frame<sup>26</sup> and an irreversible European ‘creolization.’<sup>27</sup> By using this latter term, Gnisci alludes generally to a new world-order, also in terms of literature, and in particular to the work of the French writer, philosopher and Caribbean literary critic Édouard Glissant, obviously inspired mainly by Glissant’s books *Le Discours antillais* (1981) and *Traité du Tout-monde* (1997).

## 5. An Ultimate Transmedial Framing: The *Certamen* and Ennio Morricone’s *Ode to Ciociaria* (2001)

To return to Bonaviri’s *The Book of Stone* and to confirm our conclusions, there are two last transmedial examples that show how *local* conditions synergize with *global* and transversal thoughts. Together these parameters build up “networks”<sup>28</sup> – to mention the key metaphor for transculturality coined by Wolfgang Welsch – and produce the positive effects of decolonization and decentralization – claimed by Armando Gnisci – that manifest themselves as solidarity and collectivity. Our first example is a festival. During the time in which *The Book of Stone* was being enriched by texts written by ‘European poets without borders’, the organizers had the idea to imbed, as a basic condition, the inauguration ceremonies of the poems set in stone and placed

25 Bonaviri’s original wording in Italian runs as follows: “Quindi abbiamo allargato la nostra visione a una visione cosmica dalla quale non ci dovremmo allontanare, una visione secondo la quale l’uomo è una cellula ma è una cellula importante in quanto con la sua intelligenza riesce a entrare nei misteri del mondo” (Giuseppe Maggiore. “Bonaviri, il sarto della parola”. *Amedit. Amici del mediterraneo*, 2011 (online: [amedit.me/2011/03/23/bonaviri-il-sarto-della-parola/](http://amedit.me/2011/03/23/bonaviri-il-sarto-della-parola/)) [my translation, D. R.].

26 Cf. Armando Gnisci. *Decolonizzare l’Italia. Via della Decolonizzazione europea n. 5*. Roma: Bulzoni 2007 (= *Quaderni di storia della critica e delle poetiche*, vol. 27).

27 Cf. Armando Gnisci. *Creolizzare l’Europa. Letteratura e migrazione*. Roma: Meltemi, 2003.

28 Reichardt. On the Theory of a Transcultural Francophony (as note 5).

in the public space of Arpino in the frame of festivities that traditionally take place in Arpino every year on the occasion of the so-called *Certamen Ciceronianum Arpinas*.

Since 1980, during the annual *Certamen Arpinas*, the city of Arpino organizes an international, pedagogically conceived competition of Latin, open to the learners of Latin from all classical high schools around the globe, but mainly those coming from European schools. In principle, all Latin classes are welcome to visit Arpino and to participate in a five-hour-long written examination on site, drawn up by the local *Centro Studi Umanistici Marco Tullio Cicerone*, consisting in the translation of an approximately 200 words long original text authored by Cicero into their mother tongue. Every year, some hundreds of young students travel to Arpino with their class and Latin teacher, spurred by the ambition to win the *Certamen* competition. A vivid, youthful, and attractive atmosphere surrounds it and the final selection ends in a solemnly staged celebration of all winners, with the whole town participating, attentively followed by the local press and honored by official authorities.

So, from 1984 onwards, the inauguration of Bonaviri's 'poem rocks' produced in the frame of *The Book of Stone* was scheduled according to the dates of the *Certamen* in summertime, in order to be celebrated simultaneously. Indeed, in Italy – a land of contradictions – and in a place like Arpino – regionally rooted and, as the hometown of Cicero, also a symbol of classical antiquity – Latin language and international contemporary lyric coexist and live on in the collective memory of occidental culture particularly well, despite a general chronic reluctance to read and write. The cultivation of festivals, popular tradition and rites, award shows, publications, literary parks, and the practice of exhibitions not only conduce the maintenance of a poetic language. Said cultivation also infiltrates, at the same time, an international, *global* feeling in the village life, as well as in the life experience of visitors joining the events from abroad. Therefore, an energetic *third space* opens up, symbolically embracing an ever-changing but constant, intervallic recomposed community that is interested in literature. This entanglement of people, interests and cultural initiatives builds up, again and again, a *res publica literarum* or postmodern revival of a *République des Lettres*, in which a transgenerational, flexible and open-minded, transcultural *Gemeinschaft* gathers for educational, recreational, and entertaining purposes.

The collaborative resources included in *The Book of Stone* reappear in our penultimate example of a literary glocalization: it touches the blessing and power of altruistic and influential friendship. It might illustrate the circulation of ideas, cultural stimulation and innovation, wrapping up our starting point according to which Bonaviri's literary park materializes a *local* network of healing collectivity. Bonaviri's circles – as we know – developed both from personal performance and the creative expression of 'others', which is – in a

nutshell – equivalent to a transcultural laboratory or a paradigmatic blueprint for any effective functioning society.

It was in 1999, when the cultural mediator and principal supporter of *The Book of Stone*, senator Massimo Struffi, introduced Giuseppe Bonaviri to the Hollywood-musician, conductor, and film-composer Ennio Morricone, who, then, was not yet the world-famous Oscar-winner that we know, but just a prolific Roman musician whose family descended from Arpino. It was friendship at first sight between the two artists. Bonaviri and Morricone continued to meet privately, and when a special event was looked for by the director of the newly built Conservatory in Frosinone (Conservatorio Licinio Refice), Struffi proposed a cooperation between Morricone and Bonaviri. On May 5, 2001, the two friends inaugurated the Conservatory with a gig, for which Bonaviri had written a poem entitled *I mille rigagnoli* (the title means: ‘A Thousand Rivulets’), that Morricone set to music.<sup>29</sup> To commemorate this special arrangement for four hands, the collective achievement was then renamed as *Ode alla Ciociaria* (2001; the title means: ‘Ode to Ciociaria’), and its text was enched in a large, elegant marble plate, hung on the wall of the entrance to the Conservatory in Frosinone, where Bonaviri lived and where it can still be found today.

This is where it comes full circle. The synergies that arouse around Morricone’s music and Bonaviri’s poetry unveil – like *The Book of Stone* does nowadays, after having been realized with the help of many international poets and friends from the spot and from abroad – not only the dynamics that push forward any mediation of communicative and social skills, bringing them to the audience and the people. Said dynamics also show – more than that – that lyric (particularly if combined with music) serves again as a ‘motor’ for emancipatory, humanistic narratives and discourses. At the same time, we notice once more that – and how – all forms of transcultural transfer play a key role in the sublimation of migration experiences through arts.<sup>30</sup> They act in an interdisciplinary, transmedial mode when linking literature to music (in the Morricone case), poetry to translation, or education to classic antiquity studies (in the case of the *Certamen*), and lyric to figurative arts, architecture, and tourism (in the case of *The Book of Stone*).

Bonaviri’s metaphorical stony *Book*, in fact, follows an ancient holistic ideal, known not only in philosophy (starting with the classical pre-Socratic

29 Cf. Landa Ketoff. “L’*Ode* di Morricone apre il conservatorio”. *La Repubblica*, May 4, 2001 (online: [ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2001/05/04/ode-di-morricone-apre-il-conservatorio.html](http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2001/05/04/ode-di-morricone-apre-il-conservatorio.html)).

30 For the nexus between (migrant) literature and therapeutical sublimation of cultural trauma cf. Dagmar Reichardt. “La presenza subalterna in Italia e la scrittura come terapia”. *Incontri. Rivista europea di studi italiani* 28/1 (2013 [= *Italy’s Colonial Past Reconsidered*]): p. 16-24.

philosophy) but also in medicine, by transposing the idea of a 'great' World Literature in a 'small' Italian province in Lazio and the backwater of Arpino, brought to size of a local literary park. Thus, it calibrates the global vision of a united (European) community of poets by proposing an individual, personalized 'garden' that reflects the connectional blueprint of the passage from a first-person-perspective to a pluralized identification, i. e., leading from a *Me Myself [and] I* discourse to a 'we'-perspective.<sup>31</sup> *The Book of Stone* seems to transmit silently – but highly visibly – the message that not only Jeremy Rifkin's *European Dream* (2004) might come true if we manage to install a reliable, durable, and substantial common feeling of solidarity, group identity, and cohesiveness beyond cultural borders.<sup>32</sup> But, furthermore, it makes clear that Bonaviri found *ad fontes* – in the history and culture of Sicily during his childhood and his youth – a paradigmatic pattern that motivated him to dedicate his literary talent to an emphatic writing about what we could call a transcultural *humanitas*.<sup>33</sup> On a macro-historical level, his park in Arpino shows visitors a direction of where and how to root and to *glocalize* – concurrently – our fragmented, multilingual, and diversified personal world in a cross-border, peaceful, constructive way. It is in this manner that we may support a highly civilized, enlightened, and not only economically working, but also ecologically and culturally salutary, fully satisfying, and constructive model of cohabitation in future times.

*Il bianchissimo vento*

Cadde la luna nel riviato  
in onde, e venne bianchissimo  
il vento. L'erba ínula  
tremula si stupì; le donne  
stesero lini controroccia  
per assorbire lumi. Inaspettatamente  
il gallo cantò, pallidissimi vecchi

31 *Me Myself I* was the title of an Australian comedy film directed by Pip Kamel in 2000, besides various homonymous song titles (performed by De La Soul, Beyoncé, and others).

32 In 2004, Jeremy Rifkin described *The European Dream* as "a beacon for a globalizing world" (cf. the back cover of the book), stressing, among others, Europe's cooperative commerce (chapter 8), the decentralization of the continent (chapter 10), and the Enlightenment past of Europe's *Civic Society* (chapter 11) as its strengths, thus contrasting the American Dream that Rifkin regarded as declining.

33 Cf. Dagmar Reichardt. "Bonaviri terapeuta. Letteratura di migrazione e scrittura empatica". *Migrazione e patologie dell'humanitas nella letteratura europea contemporanea*. Ed. Alexandra Vranceanu/Angelo Pagliardini. Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2012. P. 219-230. Here p. 227.



guardavano il cielo  
 in tenebra. La chiocciola, l'arpinate  
 contadino, la novantenne madre  
 dolcezza di miele, vedevano  
 rotolarsi in polvere d'itterbio  
 e sassi lunari il nostro  
 satellite per acque.

Giuseppe Bonaviri (1984)<sup>34</sup>

*The Whitest Wind*

Down plumped the moon in Rivieto's  
 rills, and the wind sprang up  
 very white. The herb elecampane  
 was a-quiver astounded: women  
 spread linens on rocks  
 to mop up the lights. Out of the blue  
 the rooster crew. Very pale old men  
 in the shade checked  
 out the sky. The snail, the peasant  
 of Arpino, the mother on ninety,  
 sweetness of honey, tracked  
 as it cartwheeled in gadolinic dust  
 and lunar scree our  
 satellite through the waters.

Giuseppe Bonaviri (1984)  
 (Translated from Italian into English by Sandy Hutchison)

*Der weißeste Wind*

Es fiel der Mond in den Rivieto  
 wellenförmig, weißestens erhob sich  
 ein Wind. Das Alantkraut  
 erstaunt erzitterte. Die Frauen  
 legten Leinen auf den Felsen  
 um Lichtstrahlen aufzunehmen. Plötzlich  
 krähte der Hahn, blassbleiche Alte  
 betrachteten den Himmel

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34 Giuseppe Bonaviri: *Il bianchissimo vento* [poem exhibited in the public space of the old town of Arpino, Porta Napoli, Quartiere Colle], 1984 (published in Struffi, *Il Libro di Pietra* [as note 10]. P 11).

im Dunkeln. Die Schnecke, der Bauer  
aus Arpino, die neunzigjährige Mutter  
süß wie Honig, sahen sich  
im Staub des Ytterbiums drehend  
und im Mondgestein unseren  
Satelliten über Gewässer.

Giuseppe Bonaviri (1984)

(Translated from Italian into German by Dagmar Reichardt)

