

Trauma on the Line: Terrorism and Testimony in the *anni di piombo*

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The *anni di piombo* and Insidious Trauma

Italy's experience of political violence and terrorism in the 1970s has recently returned to the forefront of both political debate and cultural activity. The twentieth and twenty-fifth anniversaries of the *brigata rosse*'s 1978 kidnapping and murder of Christian Democrat president, Aldo Moro, have coincided with a new wave of terrorist activity leading to the assassination of Massimo d'Antona in Rome in 1999 and of Marco Biagi in Bologna in 2002. These experiences have compelled Italy to recall and confront the painful episode of recent history known as the *anni di piombo*, and to pose once and again difficult and uncomfortable questions about the relationship between state institutions, parliamentary and non-parliamentary politics and violence.¹ In the cultural sphere, a similar revisiting of the recent past is signalled by the publication of a wide range of histories, memoirs (especially those written by ex-terrorists), and films treating the *anni di piombo*.

¹ I employ the term "*anni di piombo*" here to refer to the entire period (c. 1969-1983) in which violent action featured prominently in Italian politics, rather than with reference to the narrower timescale of 1976-80 preferred by a number of historians.

The publication of these texts not only signifies a great need to testify to one's experience of the *anni di piombo*, or to investigate the motivations behind the violence of the time, or to create a coherent narrative of a complex and fragmented past; it also signals the extent to which that past lives on in the collective unconscious today.

The long unacknowledged persistence of the *anni di piombo* in the collective psyche suggests that Italian culture developed in relation to the political violence and terrorism of the 1970s a defensive amnesia symptomatic of an experience of psychological trauma or wound. Although there has been a great deal of public debate about the events of the *anni di piombo*, it is only recently that a discourse of trauma has begun to emerge as a dominant, with contemporary discussion abounding with references to the inflicting of a "ferita" or "dolore". Academic and cultural criticism has been equally shy of such a discourse; to date there has been no significant or sustained attempt to study this episode of Italian history in terms of collective trauma. Exceptions to this rule are the rare insights afforded by Antonio Negri, who intimated in 1998 that "the social and psychological traumas of that decade have still not been healed or distanced" (1998); by Anna Lisa Tota, whose study of commemorative practices relating to the bombing of the Bologna train station in 1980 implicitly acknowledges the traumatic status of the event in the city's memory (2003); and by Giancarlo Lombardi, who is unique in reading a filmic portrayal of the *anni di piombo* as a trauma narrative (2000). These rare exceptions signal a potentially critical field of enquiry for the advancement of our understanding of the impact of political violence and terrorism in the 1970s, and call for a re-reading of the *anni di piombo* as trauma.² Such a reading would examine

² Italy therefore seems to have reached the point identified by Joshua Hirsch in the life of a society that has suffered a massive blow; i.e., the period after

the impact of political violence not only on the major protagonists of the time – politicians, terrorists, victims, activists, etc. – but also on Italian society and culture as a whole. It is my contention that an investigation of the manner in which ordinary Italians and Italian institutions experienced violence in the 1970s, responded to that violence, and remember that violence will reveal symptoms consistent with a response of trauma; while Italian culture as a whole will be seen to be trapped in a cycle of numbing and intrusion, of silence and re-enactment with respect to the experience of the *anni di piombo*.

This paper is a step towards such a reading of the *anni di piombo* as trauma. The conceptual framework draws on a range of trauma-related writings from the 1990s but is most heavily indebted to Judith Lewis Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) and Cathy Caruth's two contributions to this field of study, *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) and *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995). These works have been instrumental in effecting a significant departure from the Freudian understanding of trauma as a reaction to events outside the range of normal human experience, thereby redefining the parameters of trauma studies. Herman, for instance, describes traumatic events as extraordinary, "not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life" (33). Thus, although we may still refer to an act of violence as a "traumatic event", it is the exceptional quality of the *impact* of the event, rather than the event itself, which constitutes the trauma.

While both Herman's work and complementary studies on narrative explorations of trauma and testimony by Cathy Caruth, Leigh Gilmore, and Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub are primarily focused on the psychological impact of trauma on individual human beings, all acknowledge the potential for

the initial encounter with a trauma but before its ultimate assimilation, in which there arises a discourse of trauma (18).

trauma to be collective as well as individual. Indeed, recent advances in trauma theory are mostly due to studies of the impact of the holocaust, of slavery and of violence against women in Western society. In relation to this latter, Gilmore observes that “cultural memory, like individual memory, develops characteristic and defensive amnesia with which those who have experienced trauma must contend” so that “remembering trauma entails contextualizing it within history” (31). Herman reiterates the continuity between individual and collective responses to trauma in the closing pages of her book in a section on political violence and community. She writes that, “in the aftermath of systematic political violence, entire communities can display symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, trapped in alternating cycles of numbing and intrusion, silence and re-enactment. [...] Like traumatised individuals, traumatised countries need to remember, grieve, and atone for their wrongs in order to avoid reliving them” (242).³

Particular to collective trauma is in the lateral spread of traumatic symptoms beyond those immediately affected by the trauma-inducing event and into the wider population. Recent studies in the US have shown that violent events can traumatise a wider body of people than those directly involved. With specific reference to terrorism, a study of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing found that individuals whose only exposure to the event was through television media coverage actually showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress (Sitterle 20); a similar study of 9/11 revealed clear signs of dysfunctional reactions by Americans and others around the world who were not directly

³ When we consider the unresolved status of many acts of political violence carried out in Italy in the *anni di piombo*, together with the fact that the Special Laws remain in force, that questions of state culpability remain unanswered, and that commemoration is still extremely problematic and divisive, the potential for reliving the past remains. This has been verified on several occasions, and with tragic consequences, in recent years.

involved (Pyszczynski, Solomon and Greenberg 128-29). Elsewhere, Maria Root's work on the psychological effects of rape in North America reveals that as a consequence of the knowledge that there is a base rate of sexual violence which frequently goes unpunished, women who have never been directly exposed to violence may nonetheless display symptoms of psychic trauma. Root coined the term "insidious trauma" to describe this second-hand lateral spreading of psychological damage (qtd. in Brown 107).⁴

It is this insidious trauma that I wish to investigate here in relation to Italy's experience of political violence in the *anni di piombo* and beyond, because it is in this field that we find the strongest evidence of the spread of the impact of events beyond the major protagonists and into the wider population. I will limit my discussion to the testimony offered by a personal diary held at the Archivio diaristico nazionale in Pieve Santo Stefano (AR).⁵ The archive's collection of diaries, memoirs and letters written by non-professional writers constitutes a unique source of information on everyday life in twentieth-century Italy, and on the extent to which those events which occupy media headlines impact on the everyday existence of ordinary people. In the first instance, the collection provides a rough measurement of the resonance of events of political and social

⁴ Unlike the alternative term, "vicarious trauma", which suggests an empathic, mediated reaction to the pain of others (indeed it is more usually applied to those who suffer from listening to trauma survivors), "insidious trauma" denotes a *direct* seepage of trauma into a wider body of people than those immediately involved. The distinction is comparable to Agamben's explication of the difference between the Latin words relating to testimony: the word *testes* (orig. *terstes*) suggests the testimony provided by an uninvolved third party witness (contiguous with "vicarious") whereas *superstite* suggests that of a direct survivor (17).

⁵ I would like to express my sincere thanks to the staff at the Archivio diaristico nazionale for sharing with me their extensive knowledge of the collection and for their expertise and generosity in guiding me through the archive's holdings. All quotes are provided are with their permission.

import in a given space and time. But on a deeper and more engaged level, however, the commentary and analysis the texts offer reveal how a variety of individuals may have received, internalised and responded to the major events of their world. Though relatively small, the archive's collection of approximately 30 texts which directly or indirectly treat the *anni di piombo* is evenly split between diary and memoir, and predominantly composed of texts written during or about the latter half of the decade. For the most part, the texts which *directly* treat political violence and terrorism are self-consciously testimonial in nature, so that their concentration in the phase in which political violence has reached a climax attests to the depth of the wound inflicted by that climate of violence in the *anni di piombo*.

However, it is equally important to note that the collection also testifies to the wilful forgetting that has taken place in the meantime. For instance, in the introduction to her diary on her student days in 1977, Anna Rita Pizzioli eloquently describes how her generation's hopes and dreams have been repressed in cultural discourse, held up as the example to be avoided, a "momento storico da dimenticare, da cancellare". She goes on: "La cosa più triste è appartenere ad una generazione che la storia vuole cancellare dalla propria memoria. Io invece, voglio ricordare. Vivere quegli anni è stata un'impresa faticosa, troppo faticosa per pensarci sopra con indifferenza e superficialità" (1). Pizzioli writes her memoir in 1986 precisely to counter-act that motivated forgetting which she identifies in the current culture; while it is not stated in their work, the other writers who have offered their work to the archive may very well have shared this motivation.

***L'attesa* as Trauma Testimony**

Though many works in the collection provide evidence of the lateral spread of insidious trauma in the *anni di piombo*, it is Enrico D'Angelo's memoir, *L'attesa*, which most clearly

articulates how acts of terrorism may traumatise people who have no direct encounter with those acts. *L'attesa* treats the years 1977-1994, which coincide with D'Angelo's wife's battle against breast cancer.

The opening words of the memoir refer not to the news itself, but to the blow, the psychological wound inflicted, by the news of his wife's disease:

Quei giorni, quelle date, quelle ore sono sempre lì,
chiusi nel profondo della mia memoria, e lì
rimarranno finché Dio lo vorrà.
E mi tornano sempre nei miei sogni densi e agitati, mi
spingono a forza tra le sterpaglie d'un sentiero sterrato
che sale sale e poi si spezza così di colpo, in due
tronconi sospesi nel nulla. (0)

This extremely suggestive narrative opening incorporates several characteristics symptomatic of trauma. The freezing of time; the closure of the events in a separate space in memory; the recurrence of the events in the dreaming of the unconscious; the event itself as a watershed in D'Angelo's life, which fragments rather than coheres with the rest of his life's narrative, all point in the direction of a traumatic reaction.

Herman explains that such a reaction occurs when action is of no avail. D'Angelo himself clearly sees this as the case – the confirmation of his wife's illness compels him to recall, even repeat, an earlier trauma, that of his father's death from cancer. His highly visual recollection of the news of the terminal diagnosis given to his father is described in terms of repetition, of retraumatization; his description of the act of remembering that hopeless situation is presented in terms of a *reliving* of the moment when the specialist held up the X-ray of the tumour, shrugged his shoulders and told him there was nothing to be done (0). However, as the narrative progresses into the second part of the memoir, the main body of the text, it is revealed that the trauma or wound, with which the narration is concerned, is

not solely – indeed not primarily – located in the personal; rather, the trauma of a loved one’s battle through cancer gives way to a socio-political trauma of terrorism. The text documents the journeys D’Angelo takes between Palermo and Milan, as he accompanies his wife to her regular appointments with her specialist. Although the narrative *does* deal with fears associated with his wife’s illness and with their meetings and discussions with the specialist, much of the narrative space is given over to the experience of travelling the entire length of Italy at a very difficult time in the history of Italian train travel.

The narration of an event that occurs on the first journey the couple take in 1977 sets out the parameters for the trauma narrative. On the return leg, the train is delayed for over half an hour at the Bologna station before passengers are informed that a suspect package had been found on the line in one of the tunnels between Bologna and Florence. The event is simply recorded in the text, without comment, so that the narrative construction replicates the mechanism at work in the narrator’s unconscious. For it is only when next travelling by train that this incident gains traumatic significance by returning to torment him and by effecting a radical shift in the way he experiences train travel:

Ora su quel treno in quel giorno afoso di fine agosto, mi sorprendevo con rabbia del radicale mutamento del mio essere, e pur prendendone coscienza non riuscivo a scomporre nella mia mente immagini di disastri ferroviari, specie all’interno delle gallerie, e in aggiunta a questi si sovrapponevano anche immagini di attentati, da quando quella notte era stato rinvenuto un pacco dal contenuto sospetto. (26)

This passage of text, with its expression of anger and frustration at the belated awakening to the consciousness of the blow suffered, is infused with a sense of the latency which Freud

recognised as being the prime motivator of trauma. Freud viewed trauma as a reaction to a wound inflicted too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known; it therefore remains unavailable to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. Cathy Caruth, after Freud, maintains that it is the very unassimilated nature of the wound that returns to haunt the survivor later on, and concludes that “trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or a truth which is otherwise not available” (*Unclaimed Experience* 4).

As Freud, Caruth and others remind us, it is through the unconscious language of repetition – flashbacks, nightmares, emotional flooding and other forms of intrusively repetitive behaviour – that the wound cries out. The subject is in a necessarily passive position in relation to the trauma as the traumatic image or event imposes itself on a subject incapable of *active* response. As Caruth puts it, “to be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event” (*Trauma* 5). Herman observes that the symptom of “intrusion” is a reflection of the indelible imprint of the traumatic moment in memory and, following Janet, observes that traumatic memories “lack verbal narrative and context; rather they are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images. [...] Often one particular set of images crystallises the experience, in [...] the ‘ultimate horror’” (38).⁶

What is of interest in the case of *L’attesa* is the fact that the intrusive images of violence which have come to haunt D’Angelo’s waking and sleeping moments alike are not images

⁶ Janet uses the term “traumatic memory” only as shorthand for the insistent return of a fixed image or emotion evoked under particular conditions. This form of memory differs considerably from normal memory, a social act which people use to make sense out of experience (663).

of a violence to which he himself has been directly exposed; rather – and this assumption is confirmed later in the text – it is through the recurrent media images of human bodies scattered in the wake of train bombings that a trauma is inflicted. Insidiously traumatised by the general climate of terror in the country, by the frequent targeting of trains by neo-fascist groups, and by his current sense of entrapment on the train (the use of the word “afoso” to capture the stifling quality of the atmosphere gains significance here), such highly visual media images return to haunt him like a recurrent film he is unable to avoid replaying in his head, mindful of the possible consequences which might result.

Plotting Trauma

The radical change D’Angelo registers in himself is illustrated by comparison with his former self, described in highly nostalgic, almost Edenic terms. The break with the past self, what Leigh Gilmore refers to as “the self-altering, even self-shattering, experience of violence, injury and harm” is a feature common in the diaries and memoirs of the Archivio diaristico nazionale collection (Gilmore 105). The following description of D’Angelo’s former travels, though no doubt rendered through rose-tinted glasses, is especially notable for its lack of concern with space or time:

Sul treno, un tempo, quando amavo viaggiare, riuscivo beatamente a sonnecchiare, mentre un libro o un giornale con cui sempre m’accompagnavo, lentamente scivolavano a terra. Quando al sonno seguivano brevi risvegli, mi beavo del sonno in cui m’ero immerso, grazie ad un attimo di coscienza. [...]. A volte, avevo la sensazione di viaggiare verso l’infinito o verso una meta ignota; e quando mi svegliavo nel cuore della notte a causa di una brusca frenata del treno, non mi preoccupavo piu di tanto, né avevo voglia di sapere quel ch’era accaduto.

Questi un tempo erano i miei stati d'animo, liberi da turbamenti e paure. (26)

This memory of a carefree, almost idyllic, past is constructed in opposition to the present space and time, a time in which the self is in a constant state of hyperarousal, or hyper vigilance, another of the classic symptoms of trauma recognised by Herman. Hyperarousal, she observes, is manifested in a combination of generalised anxiety symptoms and specific fears which reflects the persistent expectation of danger in those who have been exposed to trauma; “such individuals have an elevated baseline of arousal: their bodies are always on the alert for danger” (36). Moreover, because traumatic events confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, they evoke responses of catastrophe (Herman 33).

Such a response or expectation of catastrophe is patently and painfully in evidence in the following quotes from D'Angelo's memoir, which plot precisely perceived sites of danger. He is unable to forget the emotional freezing or constriction which attends the approach to these sites, powerless to do anything other than count the minutes to the end of the danger zone: “E poi come dimenticare quei momenti di tormento che mi procuravano quelle oscure e interminabili gallerie disseminate tra Firenze e Bologna, dove l'attesa di rivedere un fascio di luce mi costringeva a contare i minuti che ci separavano dall'uscita” (42). The intense concern with plotting one's own position in relation to danger by pinpointing the specific spatial area and time in which danger is perceived to be concentrated recurs throughout the text, frequently accompanied by allusions to shocking media images. The encounter with these space-time points is always accompanied by fear and traumatic symptoms – repetitive instances of intrusion – which give way to profound relief once the danger is perceived to have passed:

quelle corse pazze dei treni nella notte che mi bloccavano il sonno, quelle oscure, lunghe e insidiose gallerie da quando la strategia del terrore più minacciosa e pressante s'era presentata alla cronaca italiana, ormai diventata una sorte di calendario illustrato di terrorismo. [...] Guardai l'orologio. La mezzanotte era passata da tempo e mi accorsi che il treno aveva già attraversato le lunghe gallerie per le quali avevo un'avversione non facilmente eliminabile. Sospirai profondamente, liberato da un incubo. (31)

In spatial terms, the series of tunnels between Florence and Bologna might best be understood as what Kevin Lynch labels a “node” – a site of particular importance or cultural value which transcends its geographical positioning. The status of the Bologna-Florence tunnels as node of traumatic hyperarousal lies not only – indeed not primarily – in the discovery of a suspect package on the line in 1977. Rather, and it is noteworthy that it is only later that this is acknowledged – almost, therefore, with a quality of narrative latency – the traumatic significance of the site rests in the bombing of the *Italicus* train in the Val di Sambro-Castiglioni di Pepoli tunnel on August 24th 1974. The traumatic significance of that event is reinforced by its status in the text as an unacknowledged presence between D'Angelo and his wife, a fact that emphasises the ghostly, spectral quality of the event. The narration of the emotional and psychological impact of the event on the couple is constructed upon a series of gaps and silences which underlie their fears; this contrasts sharply with the emotionless, journalistic quality of the narration of the event itself which provides the precise notification of space and time, the intentions of the bombers and the outcome of their actions.

“Sarebbe meno pesante il viaggio...”

“E meno pesanti... quelle gallerie...” S'interruppe a metà frase.

Rimasi stupito.

“Come? Hai paura?”

“Non proprio, ma da quando....”

Erano l'una e ventitré del 24 agosto del '74 e l'Italicus, l'espresso che collegava Roma a Monaco di Baviera stava atterversando le gallerie degli Appennini. La strage, firmata 'Ordine nero' sarebbe dovuta avvenire al centro della galleria, amplificando così il disastro. Ma quando il timer della bomba entrò in funzione, il treno in parte era già uscito dal tunnel. La quinta carrozza dov'era stata collocata la valigia con l'esplosivo si trasformò in un inferno. La strage di Stato non ebbe colpevoli. (42-43)

Surviving Bologna

The extent of the hyperarousal articulated in the narrative intensifies as the climate of terror persists, and increases with each individual escalation of the violence, most notably with the Moro kidnapping in 1978 and with the bombing of Bologna station in 1980. In relation to this latter, D'Angelo describes how his fellow passengers display a heightened awareness of being potential targets, and manifest what we can recognise to be hyper vigilant symptoms. The apparently random nature of terrorism's choice of victims has seriously undermined Italians' assumptions about the safety and security of the world they inhabit; this results in a collapse of the normal strategies habitually employed to maintain security and protect the self from the most frightening aspects of life. Thus the “self-altering, even self-shattering, experience of violence, injury and harm” individuated by Gilmore is replicated on the social level, as normal human relations and interactions are similarly altered, shattered, damaged. This is illustrated by D'Angelo's description of the suspicion and mutual surveillance apparent in human interaction in public spaces in the wake of the Bologna massacre:

Sui treni accadevano le cose più grottesche, che esprimevano uno stato d'animo concitato per una situazione di pericolo non prevedibile né evitabile.

Con sospetto come fossero potenziali terroristi, si scrutavano le persone che salivano in treno a Roma o a Firenze portando con sé una piccola borsa. Si guardavano con la coda dell'occhio le loro facce, i vestiti che indossavano, i movimenti che facevano, se erano loquaci o taciturni.

[...] Non mancavano i volontari di turno che nell'intento di sostituirsi alla polizia, pur sempre presente sui treni, andavano scrutando nei vari scompartimenti, se per caso vi si trovasse qualche valigia abbandonata sulla reticella o sotto i sedili. (55)

Kai Erikson's study of the impact of trauma on community structures reveals that traumatic events tend to act as divisive, "corrosive" forces, opening up whatever fault lines already existed within any given community (189).⁷ In the case of the Italian 1970s, in which social division was a major factor in the development of the corrosive force of terrorism, one would imagine that the community-destroying effect could only be reinforced by the trauma of terrorism; D'Angelo's narrative lends weight to such a proposition.

For D'Angelo himself, each new episode of violence heightens his own sense of fear and helplessness as, although it

⁷ Erikson's definition of collective trauma as "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (187) highlights above all the sociological, rather than the psychological, effects of trauma. However Hirsch, following LaCapra, forwards a very convincing suggestion that "it may be a misconception of the significance of psychoanalytic theory to think of its applying primarily to individual psychology and only secondarily, and by analogy, to a broad social phenomenon. Perhaps trauma is, instead, a broad social phenomenon, exemplified in human psychology and in public discourse alike" (18).

is periodic, the regularity of his train travel amounts to extended or prolonged exposure to trauma. Herman reminds us that prolonged exposure results in prolonged duration of the traumatic symptoms and that “Long after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present. The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep” (37).

The latter part of D’Angelo’s memoir, which deals with the 1980s, reveals that to be the case. On seeing the newly rebuilt Bologna train station in 1982, he writes from a position of perceived security, one in which he is hesitantly optimistic about the safety of train travel:

In quel mentre il Paese viveva un periodo di apparente tranquillità. Si aveva quasi la sensazione che il terrorismo fosse stato ridotto all’impotenza. [...] Ad ogni buon conto ritenevo fosse una nota positiva fra le tante stonate; e per il Paese e per noi pendolari di professione. (61)

However, the vision of the newly built Bologna station propels him back into the past. It is not the new construction of the present time that impresses itself upon his mind; rather he is flooded by very visual memories, no doubt emerging from newspapers and television reports, but which are precise enough to appear as if he had been present:

Quando il treno si fermò alla stazione di Bologna, erano ancora accese le luci. Dal giorno del massacro solamente un segno della furia devastatrice era rimasto: l’orologio fermo alle dieci e venticinque e mai più messo in funzione. M’apparve spettrale quella parte di fabbricato ricostruito: sapeva di mausoleo dove sotto stavano racchiusi brandelli di carne, vestiti, valigie, giocattoli,

e malgrado ogni cosa fosse stata rifatta con meticolosa cura quasi un puntiglio a mo' di rivincita, alitava in quella stazione una morte sospesa, mai cancellabile.
(61)

The image of the stopped clock encapsulates the timeless quality of traumatic memory emphasised by Langer: “Trauma stops the chronological clock and fixes the moment permanently in memory and imagination, immune to the vicissitudes of time” (112). The images of scattered remains and personal belongings which persist to haunt the living in fragmented shards of memory compound the ghostly quality of the narration, which is achieved through the use of the word “spettrale” and the figure of death living and breathing still. The manner in which these images force themselves upon D’Angelo’s mind clearly conforms to the “inflexible and invariable” quality of traumatic memory (Janet 662); D’Angelo continues to live in the grip of such images, unwittingly undergoing the ceaseless repetitions and re-enactments of the original event as it presented itself to him in media coverage. Because the traumatic event took place outside the parameters of normal human reality, it has no beginning or end, no before or after.

This is borne out by a similar episode two years later that reinforces the enduring nature of insidious trauma. Although he perceives the threat of terrorism to have abated, when booking a ticket for a forthcoming journey, D’Angelo is surprised to find himself asking what time the train would pass through Bologna (68). This incident is best explained by Elizabeth Wheeler’s image of the leaking capsule. She writes that: “Past trauma lives in the psyche as an encapsulated island, quarantined away from the rest of memory. [...] One can never erase the memory of violence: one can only encapsulate it, and the capsule always leaks” (11-12). D’Angelo’s prolonged exposure to insidious trauma throughout the *anni di piombo* has resulted in a long-term reprogramming of both memory and the ordinary responses

to danger, so that despite the fact that he no longer consciously sees train travel as a risk, his self-defence mechanisms “persist in an unaltered and exaggerated state long after the actual danger is over” (Herman 34). For the unconscious, the danger is not yet over.

Light at the End of the Tunnel?

Just as for the individual, so for the collective unconscious; the danger is not yet over. The wound inflicted on Italian society by the violence of the *anni di piombo* is one that has not yet healed. The continuing hyper vigilant state of a range of collective defence mechanisms – whether political, legal or social – provides ample evidence of persistent scars. On a more positive note, however, the recent emergence of a discourse of trauma would suggest that an important step has been taken towards the overcoming and reintegration of the trauma into a coherent narrative of collective memory. The cues which have facilitated this approach to the trauma are broad and varied, but include the series of anniversaries relating to the entire arc of time between the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing to the Moro case; the new wave of political violence and terrorism culminating in the recent arrest of a number of the “nuove brigate rosse”; and the return to public attention of a number of notable political exiles. Though few 1970s’ texts held at the Archivio diaristico nazionale promote so eloquent a discourse of trauma as does D’Angelo’s *L’attesa*, all nonetheless provide unprecedented testimony to the breadth and depth of the traumatic reaction to the violence of the long 1970s. The collection itself and the emergent discourse of trauma in discussion of the *anni di piombo* signal that the moment is now ripe for further investigation into the continuity between individual and collective experiences of political violence, informed by the significant recent advances in the field of trauma studies.

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