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Abstract

The great number of travel narratives written by Paolo Rumiz from Trieste, Italy, include books about walking and cycling, as well as travelling by train or ferry. On the one hand, these accounts present detailed descriptions of the routes taken on these journeys, depict illustrations of historic buildings, and display various types of maps, and as such, are meant to serve as walking guides (Rumiz 2012, 12). On the other hand, they become a space of reflection for a wide range of themes, including walking slowly as a way to clear your mind, to comfort your heart, and to heal your body, as a form of escape from a rapid and technologized working life, as a revolutionary act against immoderate lifestyles, as a way of regaining one's own capacity to take note of miracles (Rumiz 2012), with cycling as an alternative form of travelling, a form of existential nomadism, an expression of solitude and slowness, but also as a form of memory and introspection (Rumiz 2002).

The following contribution will explore the expressive modalities of walking and cycling in *A piedi* (2012) and *Tre uomini in bicicletta* (2002) by Paolo Rumiz by taking into consideration the three values of walking enunciations as outlined by Michel de Certeau, namely, the truth value, the epistemological value, and the ethical value. I will discuss how Rumiz attempts to integrate these three values in his texts, and how the chosen genre – a hybrid between a diary, a historical guide, a walking guide, and a reflective narrative – allows him to combine all three values to a certain extent. In this way, the narrators explicitly address their readership, consequently taking on social and political responsibilities.

Keywords

walking and cycling narratives, expressive modalities, forms of resistance

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Walking and Cycling as Modalities of Political Enunciation in Paolo Rumiz's *A piedi* ('On foot') and *Tre uomini in bicicletta* ('Three men on their bikes')

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"Il semplice fatto di mettere un piede davanti all'altro con eleganza, di questi tempi, é un atto rivoluzionario" (Rumiz, *A piedi* 13) 'In these times, the simple action of gracefully putting one foot in front of the other is a revolutionary act.'[1]

Walking as an expressive modality

In the third chapter of his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) titled "Spatial Practices," Michel de Certeau compares the act of walking to the "pedestrian speech act" (97) and thus explicitly applies linguistic concepts from "speech act theory" to the context of cultural studies. Speech act theory, which was developed in the early 1960s, was concerned with the performative function of speaking, as the most renowned book title in this field, *How to do things with words* by J.L. Austin, suggests. Austin was concerned with the diverse functions of "locutionary acts" and attempted to classify them. Similarly, Certeau categorizes the functions of walking as such, and affirms that "[t]he act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered" (97). While not all of the categorizations he makes on this basis are sufficiently developed from a spatial perspective, the transfer of these linguistic terms to spatial studies nevertheless opens up a lot of interesting insights. Viewing the "spatial acting-out of place" (Certeau 98) as connected to specific enunciation values is one of the perspectives I consider to be particularly insightful in the following contribution on two selected narratives by Paolo Rumiz, which address an autobiographical experience of walking and cycling. In this respect, I consider cycling to be akin to walking as a means of expression.

The three values Certeau differentiates between are the "truth value," "the epistemological value," and the "ethical or legal value" (99). Whereas the first category alludes to the disclosure of reality or truth, the second refers to forms of understanding, and the third relates to questions of duty and obligation. Which aspects of reality and truth does an act of walking or cycling reflect, what can we understand about our form of knowledge and the methods of thinking we employ by undertaking these acts, and how can the act of walking be connected to moral obligations?

[1] All the translated quotes from Rumiz's books are my own translation. I am indebted to Sonja Rohan for proofreading the article.

The author and traveler Paolo Rumiz

Born in Trieste in 1947, Paolo Rumiz is a journalist, an author, and a passionate traveler. He writes for *la Repubblica* and *Il Piccolo,* and has published numerous texts connected to the theme of slow and conscious traveling, such as *Danubio* ('Danube'), *Storie di una nuova Europa* (1990 'Stories about a new Europe'), *La leggenda dei monti naviganti* (2007 'The legend of the navigating mountains'), *Tre uomini in bicicletta* (together with F. Altan, 2008 'Three men on their bikes'), *L'Italia in seconda classe* (2009 'Italy in second class'), *Trans Europa Express* (2012 'Trans-Europe Express'), *Morimondo* (2013 'Morimondo'), *Come cavalli che dormono in piedi* (2014 'Like horses that sleep while standing'), *Il Ciclope; Appia* (2016 'The Cyclops: Appia'), *La regina del silenzio* (2017 'The queen of silence'), and *Il filo infinito* (2019 'The infinite thread') (Treccani enciclopedia).

Rumiz's belief that traveling is essential for human beings to be able to advance their understanding of the world and of their own existence is a recurring theme in his books. For Rumiz, traveling means being confronted with new spaces and new people, and is something that is therefore essential to his life. Rumiz calls himself a "giornalista viaggiatore" 'travelling journalist,' whose passion is "di spostar[si] nello spazio e nel tempo" 'to move through space and time', an act which allows him 'to grow' ("Come cavalli").

By adopting the genre of travel literature, the author taps into its many potentials; Rumiz's narratives present themselves as a hybrid between a diary (Rumiz takes notes on a daily basis during his travels), a historical guide (he includes historical knowledge about places, and relates them to present-day reflections), a walking guide (the books offer maps, sketches of journey legs and their lengths, and suggested completion times), and above all, a reflective piece.

Walking and cycling—forms of revolutionary practices?

"L'uomo che non cammina perde la fantasia, non sogna più, non canta più e non legge più, diventa piatto e sottomesso, e questo è esattamente ciò che il Potere vuole da lui, per governarlo senza fatica" (Rumiz, *A piedi* 13) 'Human beings who don't walk lose their fantasy; they stop dreaming, singing and reading; they become shallow and submissive, and this is exactly what power structures want from them in order to govern them with greater ease.'

"While walking, the body and the mind can work together," argues Rebecca Solnit in the introduction to the second edition of her book *Wanderlust,* affirming that "[e]ach walk moves through space like a thread through fabric, sewing it together into a continuous experience" (XV). The connection between body and mind is expressed in similar terms in Rumiz's book *A piedi*: "camminare rischiara la mente, conforta il cuore e cura il corpo" (12) 'walking clears your mind, comforts your heart and cures your body.' Apart from enlightening the mind and healing the body, according to Rumiz's narrators

walking also contributes to soothing the soul. It is thus understood as a holistic experience, which facilitates one's growth in a multifaceted way. However, it is not merely considered an individualistic act, but also an act that has political implications. According to the narrator, mindful walking gives way to reflections, fantasies, and dreams. Furthermore, it fosters the individual's strength and their resistance to value systems that conflict with their own thoughts. It therefore makes them less inclined to allow themselves to be governed by others. The practice of walking is thus seen as "un atto rivoluzionario" 'a revolutionary act' (Rumiz, *A piedi* 13), especially when done intentionally and consciously. It is obvious that Rumiz's narrator does not have mass movements in mind when he writes about "revolutionary acts," and follows Certeau's vision in this sense. Jo Vergunst argues that "Certeau's pedestrian examples are not of revolutionary marches or occupations, but of ordinary habits and decisions made through the process of inhabitation" (18). In Rumiz's narratives, walking is understood as an act that goes against what in the narrator's opinion represents the current *Zeitgeist*, that is to say, wasteful, bureaucratic, rapid, and mindless ways of conducting one's life that don't suit the body's natural rhythm, and against which it starts to rebel by displaying "violent signals" and various symptoms such as sleeplessness, melancholy, and irritability. These symptoms ultimately push the individual to make a clear decision, which, in this case, is to set off walking. Departure thus signifies a rebellion against ordinary life, and a liberation of the human being's nomadic soul: "Il nomade che abita dentro di noi reclama i suoi diritti, non vuole più restare incatenato a una sedia." (Rumiz, *A piedi* 19) 'The nomad in us reclaims his rights, he dislikes being chained to a chair.'

However, this understanding of rebellion and resistance, which Rumiz's narrator shares with Certeau, has also been subject to critique: To what extent is resistance inherent to walking practices, and when can walking truly be seen in a political light? The geographer David Pinder criticizes the "eagerness with which a certain kind of politics is often read from it [Certeau's approach]" (678), and he connects the "partial reading of Certeau" to the discipline of urban and cultural studies in particular:

> What is most commonly celebrated about Certeau's texts, especially in recent urban and cultural studies, is its attunement to the creativity of ordinary users, to their tactical operations and errant movements, to their insinuations into ruling orders: what is often presented as resistance. (677-78)

While Pinder sees Certeau's ideas as "suggestive" (678), he also raises concerns about them, and argues for more differentiated "notions of resistance or oppositional practice" (688). He affirms that "[r]esistance as conceptualized by Certeau cannot, in any case, be automatically associated with the politically progressive and oppositional" (689). In their article *Resistance in Public Spaces: Questions of Distinction, Duration, and Expansion,* Lars Frers and Lars

Meier also argue for a more meticulous differentiation of "resistance," and make a similar criticism that "the limits of resistance are often overlooked, especially in the current rapid research and publication cycles of academia" (128). This article will make use of their distinction between symbolic resistance, which "sees revolutionary potential in more artistically oriented forms of protest," and "physical or violent practices that question, undermine, or attack the symbols and concrete manifestations of dominant structures, norms, rules, or a social order as a whole" (129). While walking and cycling are not strictly artistic practices, they can be connected to the sphere of the symbolic, or even the poetic. In reference to the artist Francis Alÿs, who carried out several projects rooted in walking practices, Pinder employs the term "poetic approach" (684), which for the artist is "the poetic act, when the poetics provoke a sudden loss of self that allows a distancing from the immediate situation, a different perspective on things" (qtd. in Pinder 684). It is this change in perspective and "the provocative and unsettling qualities" (Pinder 676) that can also be identified as one of the aims of Rumiz's walking and cycling expressions, and which the narrator himself explicitly links to politics and resistance.

In Rumiz's narratives, "the potential of change" lies in "changing people's perceptions, … disrupting routines, and forging new paths" (Frers and Meier 130). Considering the scale of the group it targets, it can only be seen as a small-scale resistance which operates on two levels: firstly, on the level of encounters between the walker and the people he meets along the route, and secondly, on the level of the narrative, where the narrator-walker engages with a readership. These resistance practices are explicitly expressed on both levels: the walker and the narrator both aim to connect with the communities they encounter and their readership in order to impart how they perceive the world to others. When the walker Rumiz arrives in Antignana, and a woman called Marija asks him the question: "Ma voi piuttosto dove andate?" (*A piedi* 71) 'But where are you going?,' he answers plainly: "'Vado da Trieste a Promontore.…Ci vado da solo, con mie *noge,'* che in croato vuol dire gambe" (*A piedi* 71) 'I am walking from Trieste to Promontore. … I am walking on my own, with my *noge*, which in Croatian means legs.' When the woman then asks him why he is doing this, he replies without further explanation: "Perché è bello" (71) 'Because it is beautiful.' Undoubtedly, what the walker is attempting to do here is to teach the woman a lesson about the motives of one's own life choices, and the fact that doing something for purely aesthetic reasons is not only acceptable, but even recommendable. A critique of outcome-oriented acts is expressed explicitly here—walking represents an act that is not directed towards a clear aim or benefit. The narrator—here acting in the role of pedagogue, which is one of the travel writer's archetypal roles according to Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan (8) —is fully aware that doing something simply for the sake of beauty is not a commonly accepted aim in contemporary life practices, and he knows that his answer must appear strange to the woman; however, it might make her reflect on her own life choices, although there is no

guarantee that this will happen. Holland and Huggan view the travel writer as a chameleonic figure, remarking critically that

> [i]n their self-presentation, travel writers are often extremely elusive, shifting roles with the same facility as they move from place to place. Now the pedagogue, now the clown; now the traveler, now (even) the tourist. They manage, thus, to benefit from alternative temporary privileges, one moment taking advantage of an honorary insider's knowledge, the next taking refuge in a foreigner's convenient incomprehension." (8)

While the narrator in Rumiz's narrative clearly wants to distinguish himself from the (mass) tourist whom he continuously criticizes, he is not always sufficiently aware that the line between traveler and tourist is a very fine one, and that he himself falls into the category of tourist at times.

Similarly to the narrative *A piedi*, the book *Tre uomini in bicicletta* highlights the fact that the simple act of going on a cycling journey that lasts several days is something that appears to warrant justification in our contemporary society: "'Dove vai? chiede la moglie al ciclista. 'Porto a spasso il bambino che è in me' risponde lui, con la mano già sull'affusto carico di bagagli" (9) ''Where are you going?' the wife asks the cyclist. 'I am bringing the kid inside me for a walk,' he answers, with his hands on the carrier filled with luggage.' From the very outset, the purpose is clear to the narrator, in that "[i]l viaggio lento come goduria liberatoria e totale" (9) 'slow travel [is] liberating and entirely enjoyable.' As the three cyclists are approaching the city limits of Trieste and are confronted by a policeman who questions them about their travel destination, the answer "Istanbul" comes to the uniformed man as a complete surprise. Answering this routine question with an atypical response causes the cyclist-narrator to reflect on his perception of this trip to the "Orient," which takes the opposite direction to that of those who flee from this region. On a deeper level, he ruminates on the nature of this act if one rides a bike for such a purpose: "E ci chiediamo se usare così la nostra bici non sia un atto anarchico, antiglobale. Dunque di sinistra" (20) 'And we ask ourselves if using our bikes in this way would be an anarchic and antiglobal act per se; in other words, a leftist act.'

Undoubtedly, the narrator-cyclist places himself and his act within a political sphere, and wonders whether using a mode of transport other than the car, bus, train, or airplane constitutes an act of confronting conventional systems in itself. The book clearly affirms this question, reflecting that this slow mode of travel counters what are currently the most common ways of traveling, seen as speedy and inattentive movements from one place to the next.

The geography of the journeys in *A piedi* and *Tre uomini in bicicletta*

In *A piedi*, the protagonist departs from his hometown of Trieste, walks through Istria within seven days, and finally arrives at Promontore. On his way, he stops for the night in the following places: Gracischie, Montona, Antignana, Canfanaro, Valle, Fasana, and Promontore. In terms of geographical knowledge, the book provides the reader with drawn maps (see Figure 1), illustrations of cultural buildings such as castles or churches, and pictures from the world of nature, including lakes, mountains, animals, and trees. On top of this, the book presents figures with information about the length and duration of the walk, as well as changes in altitude. A few illustrations are also connected to the belongings of the walker, displaying the limited number of objects needed for the journey such as water, clothes, shoes, socks, drinks, and a toothbrush.



Figure 1: Alessandro Baronciani in Rumiz *A piedi* 32.

Illustrations, geographical knowledge, and facts about natural phenomena are further supplemented with historical expertise, adding to the wealth of information about the spaces the walker passes through, as the following example about Istria shows:

> In Istria si incontrano tantissime cose. Due mondi, le Alpi e il Mediterraneo; tre lingue, italiana, slovena e croata; e i segni forti di tre dominazioni: Roma, che ha lasciato tra l'altro una grandiosa arena nella città di Pola; Venezia, che per secoli in Istria ha avuto basi commerciali costiere—Pirano, Rovigno e altre—sulle rotte del mare d'Oriente; e infine l'impero d'Austria, che su quella penisola strategica ha costruito porti e ferrovie ancora in funzione, e che si é dissolto con la prima guerra mondiale." (66)
>
> In Istria, one encounters many things. Two worlds, the Alps and the Mediterranean; three languages, Italian, Slovenian, and Croatian; and the strong traces of three power centers: among other things, Rome left a magnificent amphitheater in the city of Pola; Venice had commercial bases along the coast on the sea routes of the Orient for many centuries —Pirano, Rovigno and others; and finally, the Habsburg Empire, which dissolved with WWI, built ports and the railways on this strategic peninsula that are still in operation today.

Tre uomini in bicicletta follows a similar structure, with some minor differences. The protagonists are three cyclists, who at the start of the book, are presented to the reader through their bikes, a Haro Extreme, a Specialised, and a Turner Burner XC. The cyclists are Altan Francesco, a cartoonist aged 58, Rigatti Emilio, a professor aged 47, and Rumiz Paolo, a journalist aged 53. The departure point of their shared journey is Trieste, and the arrival point is Istanbul; the entire route takes 18 days. The reflective part on each section of the journey is preceded by practical information, including the starting time in the morning, the arrival time each evening, and a brief description of the route. In between, the book presents detailed geographical maps on which the paths are highlighted, as well as comical cartoons and other images created by Francesco Altan (see Figure 2).

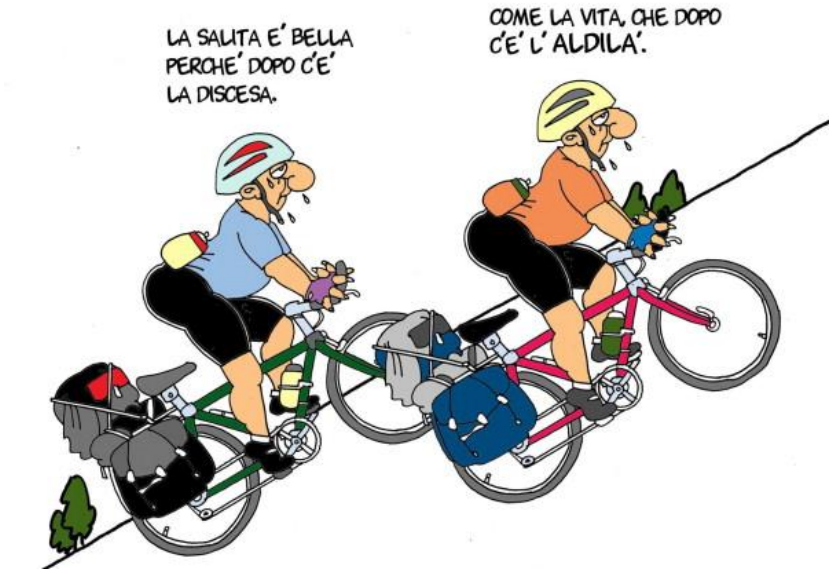


Figure 2: Francesco Altan in Rumiz *Tre uomini in bicicletta* 119.

In contrast to *A piedi*, this book dedicates less space to reflection, which perhaps testifies to the fact that walking is a slower mode of traveling than cycling, as the cyclists need to pay more attention to the roads, and are often less free to make their own choices. This way of traveling most often reflects what Michael Cronin refers to as "horizontal travel." He states that horizontal travel is the "more conventional understanding of travel as a linear progression from place to place" while vertical travel is "temporary dwelling in a location for a period of time where the traveler begins to travel down into the particulars of place" (19). The average distance the cyclists in Rumiz's book cover each day is around 100 kilometers, leaving them very little time to become familiar with their surroundings. In contrast, vertical travel can be seen in Claudio Magris's travel writings, such as in his book *Microcosmi*, where the narrator focuses on marginal and small places, reflecting on their landscapes and their respective living environments. Similarly, Magris's *Danubio* (1986) depicts forms of vertical travel, as the narrator combines literary and philosophical knowledge with his own perception and experience of the spaces. His more profound reflection on spaces is also revealed in his book *l'infinito viaggiare*, where, for instance, the author reflects on how traveling takes on various symbolic meanings in the preface. For example, he defines traveling as a form of escape, as a way of getting to know other places and by doing so oneself, and as a form of persuading oneself to live in the very moment; however, he also includes a more critical perspective, which includes discussing Otto Weininger's statement that "[t]ravel is immoral, since it is supposed to be the annulment of space within space" (50).

Rumiz's narrator in *Tre uomini in bicicletta* clearly doesn't dedicate as much time to reflection as Magris's narrators do. The cyclists' forms of

traveling tend to revolve around speed and are characterized by the hectic pace at which they travel in order to arrive at their next destination. At times, they find themselves on roads full of traffic, having no choice but to continue. For instance, when approaching Istanbul, the narrator reveals that he does not recommend taking the last stretch of the journey by bike:

> La storia tecnica di questa parte finale dell'ultima tappa si riassume in tre parole: non farsi investire. Il consiglio dell'equipaggio è quindi il seguente: fate gli ultimi chilometri in taxi o con un altro mezzo pubblico, perché questo è davvero il tratto più pericoloso—secondo noi l'unico—di tutto il viaggio (*Tre uomini* 151)
>
> The technical side of this final leg of the route can be summarized in three words: don't take this route. The group's advice is thus as follows: take a taxi or use public transport, as this really is the most dangerous part and in our opinion, the only one, on this entire journey.

The idealized, mindful solo walker and the rhythmic cyclist

Rumiz's *A piedi* introduces a rather idealized walker who is highly conscious of his choices, which certainly is not the case for every hiker. The ethnologist Orvar Löfgren distinguishes between the "turistus vulgaris" 'vulgar turist' and the "real traveler" (qtd in Karentzos and Kittner 281), who set themselves apart through their choice of travel destination and their perception of the places to which they travel. In Rumiz's narratives, the protagonist is a real traveler who chooses his own path and remains highly dissatisfied with following the paths taken by others—"ero stufo di seguire le strade degli altri, di procedere su percorsi già segnati con in mano una guida." (*A piedi* 14) 'I was tired of following others' paths, of continuing on already trodden paths with a guide in my hands.' Undoubtedly, his dissatisfaction with established routes has a deeper symbolic meaning: The walker is dissatisfied with conventional life choices and unoriginal ways of living one's existence. Thus, walking is perceived as a strategy towards greater emancipation, and ultimately, towards freedom. This freedom, however, is "[n]ot the freedom of all" as Holland and Huggan correctly affirm; it is "the freedom of travel writer," and "the privilege of mobility that allows them to travel, and to write" (Holland and Huggan 4).

In contrast to Certeau, who envisions an urban pedestrian whose walking practices happen within an urban space, where control, surveillance, and power are more prominent than in rural landscapes, Rumiz's narrative presents a rural walker, who from the outset is given more freedom to choose individual paths than the urban pedestrian, and who remains in close contact with the natural environment throughout. This notion of a "romanticized walk" played a prominent role during the Romantic period, which also marked "the beginning of a particular sensibility towards the environment. It depended more than anything on the experience of being in a place, and of using that experience

for reflection on the self and the environment" (Vergunst 106). However, in the past walking was considered a mode of traveling reserved for the male gender and for men of a certain social class while women of the bourgeoisie would have traveled in horse-drawn carriages or by train. This gender difference is also reflected in the book *The Wanderer in Nineteenth-Century German Literature* by Andrew Cusack, whose study discusses works portraying male travelers only. The male narrator-walker in Rumiz thus follows a long tradition. Holland and Huggan, who suggest that travel writing needs to be studied from a more critical perspective, particularly stress the need for a more critical view of travel writers as "retailers of mostly white, male, middle class, heterosexual myths and prejudices" (VIII).

While walking may start out as an individualistic decision or an individualistic act in *A piedi*, the walker initiates encounters with others and makes it his intention to meet people along the way. According to Solnit, "[a] solitary walker is in the world, but apart from it, with the detachment of the traveler rather than the ties of the worker, the dweller, the member of a group" (21). He can thus be considered as being in a privileged position between detachment and attachment, and between individuality and communality. According to the narrator in Rumiz's *A piedi,* traveling on your own prompts people to approach you more often, and offers more opportunities to meet others: "Un uomo solo che va a piedi suscita curiosità e tenerezza assai più di una coppia o di un gruppo di uomini. É più facile fargli domande, invitarlo a casa, offrirgli un letto." (23) 'A single walking man triggers more curiosity and invites more endearment than a couple or a group of men. It's easier to ask him questions, invite him home, and offer him a bed.' Thus, walking by oneself lays the foundation for further encounters, which in turn spark dialogue and further reflection. However, in Rumiz's narrative not enough attention is given to the depth of such encounters, which, among other aspects, also depends on the participants having a shared language and a more profound cultural understanding. Cronin reminds us that:

[t]he challenge for the travel writer and, more generally, for any sensitive traveler is to resist the lazy shorthand of fixed equivalence and to engage with the cultural depth and linguistic intricacy of other peoples and places (88).

Tre uomini in bicicletta narrates a cycling trip undertaken by three men. While sharing the "idea dell'andare" (9) 'the idea of 'walking' or 'moving'' with the narrative *A piedi* and the perception of slow travel "come goduria liberatoria e totale" (9) 'as a liberating and all-consuming pleasure', the constellation of protagonists and the mode of travel differ. The narrative verifies his opinion that a group constellation invites fewer encounters. Additionally, the less slow mode of traveling leaves less space for reflection, as the cyclists cover around ten times the distance the walker does in *A piedi*. Furthermore, their pathways differ: The walker has more freedom to choose, as any footpath is open to him, while the cyclists have to take roads that are suitable for wheels. These roads, however, may be roads with heavy traffic, and may demand the cyclists' full attention. In terms of speed, the cyclist is free to choose the rhythm

at which they travel: "la bici è ritmica, veloce quanto basta, non annoia mai. È uno shaker che assembla memorie, immagini, profumi, frasi dette e in gestazione" (29) 'the bike is rhythmic, as fast as it needs to be, it never bores you. It is a 'shaker' that assembles memories, images, smells, sentences already expressed, and sentences still to be made.' The cyclist-narrator experiences time as "un presente continuo", "eterno gerundio del tempo" (167-68) 'a continuous present', 'an eternal gerund of time', which indicates that the past and future play a subordinate role for him. Indeed, leaving the past behind— "tagliare i ponti" (31) 'to cut the bridges' is mentioned in *A piedi* as necessary for undertaking the journey. This attitude is further expressed through a Greek proverb: "Non guardare mai la riva che lasci," (*A piedi* 30) meaning that one can never discover new oceans unless one has the courage to lose sight of the shore. Moreover, a feeling of living outside of time, or a sense of atemporality runs through Rumiz's narratives (133). As his perception of space changes continuously, so does his perception of time; both of these factors are seen as positive changes by the narrators. They are understood as fostering a happier life, and a form of living that allows him to focus on the present.

In contrast to the walker, the cyclists express themselves through an object—their bike—which, according to the narrator, takes on a significant role:

> Non posso parlarvi della bici, ma solo della mia bici. La quale è, prima di tutto, un passaporto. Esattamente come il cane quando lo si porta a passeggio: serve a contrare gente affine. Gente che non si rassegna a trip organizzati o a fare da guardona in safari di cellophane. (12)
>
> I cannot tell you anything about the bike in general, but only about my bike which is, above all, a passport—and as such, is exactly like the dog that one brings on a walk in order to meet like-minded people; people who are dissatisfied with organized trips or with being a voyeur on artificial safaris.

His explicitly critical stance towards organized vacations and his use of the pejorative word "guardona," which typically refers to a person who leers, further emphasizes the difference he sees between journeys of this nature and the cyclist's journey. Clearly, Rumiz's travel narrator sees himself as superior to the tourist, but overlooks the fact that the travel writer "shares some of the problems of its poor relation, tourism," as Holland and Huggan highlight. They go on to say that "[t]ravel\lers are tourists, although of an independent breed" (8); consequently, they consider the "conventional traveler/tourist distinction" to be "highly specious" (2).

The significance of the bike being more than a simple mode of transport is clear from the outset of the narrative, where the bikes are presented to the reader right after the route map on a separate page. In *Éloge de la bicyclette* ('In Praise of the Bicycle'), Marc Augé views the bike as the better half of the cyclist, who is

connected to it through love (68-9), a relationship which is similarly reflected in Rumiz's text.

'Values' gained through walking and cycling

Oggi, a un mese di distanza, mi accorgo che quel nostro viaggio su due ruote è stato anche un atto politico. (Rumiz, *Tre uomini*, 164) 'Today, from a month's distance, I realize that our journey on two wheels was also a political act.'

A metaphor expressed in both narratives in relation to the mode of slow travel is that of the child, which harbors a deeper significance. In *A piedi*, the narrator tells us that he would have liked to have been accompanied by a child, but that his sons were already adults at the time of departure. Instead, he remembers the words spoken by the cyclist Altan—who went on the cycling trip to Istanbul with him as narrated in *Tre uomini in bicicletta*—that he must take the child in himself for a walk:

> Dovevo—ripeto le sue parole— 'portare a spasso il bambino che è in me'. Significava che dovevo cercare di vedere il mondo con lo stesso occhio incantato di quando avevo dieci anni … Arrendersi allo stupore è la chiave di tutto. Il viaggio non è fatto per quelli che hanno smesso di meravigliarsi della vita. (22-23)
>
> I repeat his words: 'I have to take the child within me for a walk. This meant that I had to try to see the world with the same enchanted eyes I had when I was ten years of age … To surrender oneself to a sense of amazement is the key to everything. The journey is not meant for those who have given up on being astonished by life.'

What we find expressed here is the affirmation of an approach to knowledge that is linked to the concept of 'epistemological value' that Certeau identified. Gaining knowledge by looking at oneself and one's surrounding environment anew is an epistemological method employed by the walker and the cyclists. Walking is not only seen as "recreational" (Cusack 121) for the aforementioned effects it has on the individual's mental, physical, and spiritual health, but also as educational, and it is here that Rumiz also recognizes the revolutionary stance that walking can take; as long as one keeps walking, one keeps dreaming, singing, and reading, and doesn't allow oneself to be governed. Thus, walking fosters an individual approach towards thinking, and counters the manipulation desired by political systems.

Consequently, the independent and individual approach to knowledge can lead to *aletheia*, to 'disclosure,' to truth. Perhaps one of the most fundamental truths that the walker in Rumiz's narratives discovers for himself is that the nomad is the one person who really understands life and truly lives in peace: "E che tutti rischiano di finire rovinati proprio dai sedentari, dalle loro

gerarchie totalitarie, i loro muri, le loro ossessive compartimentazioni dello spazio e quelle stupide torri di Babele" (*Tre uomini* 168) 'Everyone risks being destroyed by the ones who settled down, by their totalitarian hierarchies, their walls, their obsessive segregation of their space, and their silly towers of Babel.' The cyclist-narrator in Rumiz's book points out that one gets used to nomadism quicker than settling down (*Tre uomini* 157).

In *A piedi,* the narrative clearly reveals that the walker desires to position himself outside power structures by not possessing his own personal space and by not needing borders. Solnit affirms the walker's "literal position from which to speak" and argues as follows: "As a literary structure, the recounted walk encourages digression and association, in contrast to the stricter form of a discourse or a chronological progression of a biographical or historical narrative" (21). She thus clearly links walking, and recounted walking, to a particular genre, which is in a sense based on the practice of walking itself, due to its rhythm and its improvisational, and not always strictly goal-oriented, character. Tying this back to Certeau, who understands walking as a form of expression, namely as a speech act, walking itself forms a narrative that intends to establish certain forms of "truth," although these are sometimes only valid within the narrative itself. The connection between walking and writing finds its counterpart in Rumiz's narratives:

> Non esiste viaggio senza scrittura. Se camminate, poi vi pruderanno le mani dalla voglia di buttare giù qualche appunto. L'andatura diventerà scrittura con una facilità tale che vi meraviglierete di voi stessi. Seduti in casa vostra stavate a penare davanti a un foglio bianco da riempire? Sulla strada vi scoprirete scrittori (*A piedi*, 27)
>
> There is no journey without writing. While walking, your hands feel itchy because they yearn to take some notes. Walking turns into writing with such an extraordinary ease that you'll surprise yourself. Are you sitting at home, suffering in front of an empty page that is waiting to be filled? On the streets you will discover yourself as writers.

Walking and creativity are thus portrayed as going hand in hand; walking opens up new thoughts and new perspectives, and creativity in Rumiz is another path to truth, in a similar manner to Vergunst when he describes "the actions of the walking body and the rhythms of walking as the source of creativity and 'eventness" (106). As mentioned in the above quote, another very significant aspect of walking and cycling is the involvement of the body in these expression practices. Rumiz's narrator notes that while walking, the body changes its habits and frees itself from excess and any form of imbalance. The narrator recounts that while walking, he drinks double and eats only half of what he would usually drink and eat, and he takes an explicit stance against any form of excessive habit:"Il nostro mondo è popolato di individui grassi che mangiano troppo e bevono troppo poco, e basta una lunga camminata per sentire l'insofferenza per

questa dieta" (*A piedi*, 43) 'Our world is populated by obese individuals who eat too much and drink too little, and one long walk is enough to start feeling an intolerance toward this diet.' The body, in general, can be understood as a further medium through which new forms of understanding and knowledge can be gained, as Solnit describes it, "knowing the world through the body and the body through the world" (29).

Unsurprisingly, the senses also play an important role as further mediums for exploring one's environment from a different perspective. The walker and cyclist experience the places through which they travel through their odors, "[i]l viaggio è anche questo, un inventario di odori. La Slovenia sapeva di abeti, la Croazia di tiglio, la Serbia di fieno" (*Tre uomini*, 140) '[t]he trip is also this, an inventory of odors: Slovenia smells of fir trees, Croatia of lime, Serbia of hay.'

As luxury becomes impossible when traveling on foot or by bike—and above all, irrelevant—the walker and cyclist experience a particular sense of freedom and calm, as well as a feeling of being at home. The continuous change in places to sleep and light luggage leads to a new sense of being (*Tre uomini*, 160), which is described exclusively in positive terms in Rumiz's narrative. For the narrators, departing means taking leave from an undesirable living condition, which they have experienced for a time as a limitation, and that expressed itself through melancholy, irritability, and a strong sense of dissatisfaction. In particular, a life spent at one's desk, and living in enclosed spaces is perceived as a form of imprisonment by the narrators. According to Solnit,

> [m]any people nowadays live in a series of interiors – home, car, gym, office, shops – disconnected from each other. On foot everything stays connected, for while walking one occupies the spaces between those interiors in the same way one occupies those interiors. One lives in the whole world rather than in interiors built up against it. (9)

In Rumiz's narratives, this 'living in the world' is linked to nomadism, as the narrators claim that it is in fact nomads rather than settled people who truly experience the feeling of being at home in the world. It can be argued that the concept of nomadism is romanticized in these accounts, as the walker or cyclist cannot be compared to "real nomads," who don't have the luxury of being able to go back home whenever they wish to do so.

The duty or moral obligation linked to the expression of walking and cycling comes across very explicitly in Rumiz's narratives. Their narrators don't hide their pedagogical intentions; indeed, they intend to pass on to the reader the forms of knowledge they gain through slow modes of travel in order to change their perspectives. This knowledge is mostly associated with aspects of our contemporary life: technology, speed, alienation from nature and other people, alienation from oneself and one's own body, injustices in society, and letting oneself be governed without resisting.

The narrator in *A piedi* recommends leaving all gadgets at home, as they hinder the walker from listening to silence and the music of nature. "[D]iavolerie" (30) 'devil's gadgets' is the expression he uses to name things like the iPod or iPad, and in doing so, expresses his aversion towards them. Undoubtedly, traveling at a low speed is endorsed in Rumiz's narratives, as the narrator learns that traveling slowly leads to many more insights than fast travel. Moreover, speed takes the pleasure out of traveling, as the narrator discovers: "La velocità, credetemi, è solo una galera che rende noioso qualsiasi percorso e dilata le distanze all' infinito" (123) 'Speed, believe me, is only a prison that makes every trip boring and extends distances into infinity.' This is where Rumiz's text picks up on ideas put forth by Paul Virilio, who sees acceleration not only as being connected to gain, but also to loss: "By losing the slow pace of revelation of things, we have lost one sense of time in favor of another." (qtd in Armitage 42) As examples, Virilio contrasts the speed of the sailboat to the motor vessel, painting to photography and videos, mechanical lifts to staircases, and transatlantic air services to ocean liners. The above quote from Rumiz unambiguously reveals that the narrator sees this development in exclusively negative terms. However, as mentioned above, the cycling trip to Istanbul was not undertaken at as slow a pace as the narrator wishes to portray, which indicates a discrepancy between the trip itself and the travel writer's overall reflections on it.

The narratives reveal that human beings come into direct contact with their bodies and the surrounding natural environment while walking and cycling, and that this subsequently increases their eco-awareness. For instance, the walker learns to appreciate water as a natural commodity, as something that is indispensable to life, and as something that should therefore be free to everyone. The walker is described as being in complete harmony with their own body, which is also reflected in a changing diet and in altering needs. The walker takes note of the animals around them, such as birds, and listens to their songs and other forms of expression. Moreover, the narratives unveil people's often misconceived perceptions of countries they hardly know anything about, or that they sometimes only know about through the media, as well as their often unmotivated prejudices against others. During the trip to Istanbul, the narrator discovers that the "Orient" is part of Europe and that—taking up Julia Kristeva's thought in her book *Strangers to Ourselves*—there is no other apart from the other in oneself: "l'Oriente non è la terra degli orchi, non sta altrove" (Rumiz, *Tre uomini*, 164) 'The Orient is not the country of the giants, it is not elsewhere.'

In terms of the way values are transmitted to the reader in Rumiz's narratives, however, it is important to mention that the narrators' affirmations have a tendency to over-generalize and be overly simplistic. Michał Czorycki notes in his essay on Rumiz's *É Oriente*, that the "rapid, almost telegraphic style" of the narrative stands in contrast to the "eulogy of slowness" to a certain extent, and that this leads to a "glossing over of many aspects and nuances of the realities" (156). The same can be said for the texts *A piedi* and *Tre uomini*

in bicicletta, which are short pieces that often allude to concepts rather than developing them in greater detail.

By taking into consideration Certeau's understanding of walking practices as forms of speech acts, one notes that walking and cycling in *A piedi* and *Tre uomini in bicicletta* are narrated as expressive practices with clearly defined aims. By adopting slow modes of traveling, the characters aim to gain new knowledge, alter conventional perspectives, and change undesirable lifestyles. The chosen genre, a hybrid between a diary, a historical guide, a walking guide, and a reflective narrative, allows the narrators to explicitly address the readership thus taking on social and political responsibilities. While one cannot consider the acts of walking and cycling in Rumiz's works as forms of resistance on a larger scale, they instead form a kind of symbolic and poetic resistance against current manifestations of our civilization, which the narrators criticize and reject. They consider these to be of a destructive nature, a conviction which is explicitly transmitted to the readers in a rather pedagogical tone. This article has also addressed some of the problematic aspects in Rumiz's travel writings, such as generalizations and superficialities, as well as unreflective and contradicting arguments.

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