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The Body of Solidarity: Heritage, Memory, and Materiality in Post-Industrial Italy

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THE CIVILIZATION OF THE FACTORY

Since the late 1970s, UNESCO has recognized industrial heritage as world heritage, a recognition that came precisely at the moment when the global North's industries began their slow descent into ruination.[1] One of the first areas that received world heritage status was the Blaenavon "industrial landscape" in South Wales, which UNESCO's World Heritage Committee recognized in 2000 as having "outstanding universal value" because the remnants of its mines, quarries, railway systems, furnaces, and workers' homes bear "exceptional testimony" to its past status as one of the world's major producers of iron and coal.[2] For UNESCO, Blaenavon represents "all the crucial elements of the industrialization process."[3] As the Blaenavon nomination document put it, the town exemplifies how "the evolutionary process of industrialization" had come to an end, leaving both "significant distinguishing features visible in material form"

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[1] UNESCO's World Heritage Committee has since 1978 recognized forty-five industrial heritage sites. See http://themina.goskar.com/2013/02/27/list-of-industrial-world-heritage-sites/ (accessed 16 Mar. 2016). While industrial heritage is being recognized at a much slower pace than other kinds of world heritage, UNESCO's 2014 list did include two more industrial sites in Japan and the Netherlands, and three more were added in 2015.

[2] UNESCO recognized Blaenevon under the category of "organically evolved landscapes," whereby a (social, economic, administrative, or religious) "imperative" developed in association "with and in response to its natural environment." See http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/ (accessed 11 Sept. 2016). Sesto San Giovanni is applying under the same category.

[3] See http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/984 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

as well as a "continuing landscape with significant evidence of its evolution over time."

The decline of the global North's industries has thus come to be compared to the end of a civilization.[4] Disused infrastructures stand as icons of evolutionary stages, the last of which was the twentieth century in all of its grandeur. It is as if Oswald Spengler's prediction of the downfall of Western civilization (his *Decline of the West* was one of the most widely read books in the 1920s) has come to fruition, leaving towering reminders of a civilization in decay, reduced partly to archeological site, partly to aestheticized tourist attraction (Shackel 2009; Smith 2006; Petrović 2013).

This article tells the story of a northern Italian working-class town, Sesto San Giovanni, which is currently also seeking world heritage status.[5] Sesto San Giovanni's story is similar to that of many other towns that have been marked by the trauma of de-industrialization and its concomitant forms of decline. Located at the periphery of the glittering northern Italian city of Milan, Sesto (as locals call their town) was the center of Milanese steel and heavy machine manufacturing for much of the twentieth century, but has since the 1980s suffered under the de-industrialization and decentralization of its economy (Foot 2001: 16). By the early 1990s, the town's productive plants were almost completely abandoned, leaving empty a total of 2.5 million square meters of evacuated industrial space —almost a third of Sesto's entire urban area and the largest abandoned factory area in Europe. Trade, employment, and population levels dramatically declined. The number of industrial workers fell from forty thousand to three thousand in just over a decade. As the chairman of the Italian Association of Industrial Archeological Patrimony presented it at a conference in Sesto San Giovanni in 2011, the town's factories—"cathedrals of labor" that were the "glory of industry and its factory cities"—were soon reclaimed by nature and wrapped into an "unreal silence" (Covino 2011: 82–83). Streets were no longer dominated by thousands of workers wearing their blue overalls. Signs warning *uscita operai!* (workers' exit!) were taken down (Foot 2001: 174–75). The 1990s thus saw

[4] This story is, of course, deeply problematic, since industrial labor has not ended but has shifted to, and in fact significantly expanded, in the global South. See also Petrović (2013: 97) for a critique of this narrative.

[5] While I have conducted research in Sesto San Giovanni since 2003, the materials for this article were gathered during summer visits in 2011, 2012, and 2013. These consisted of ethnographic and archival texts (books, conference proceedings, magazines, brochures, and the bid itself) as well as fieldnotes. I also interviewed a number of town representatives and drew on Sesto per l'UNESCO's extensive online archive, where a series of maps, images, and oral histories are stored. More recently, I have delved into Sesto per l'UNESCO's Facebook archive, where dozens of films show Sesto per l'UNESCO representatives engaging with students and former workers, as well as grandparents with grandchildren. This Facebook archive also features images and reports on newly renovated machines, archeological bike tours, and other initiatives. In my analysis, I was guided by Luigi Vimercati and Giorgio Oldrini, both key figures in the bid who stress the inseparability of Sesto's productive base and its ethical heritage. I thus read the archive with this emphasis in mind, focusing on evidence that clearly expressed this nexus of productive and ethical life.

the end of an era for a town whose everyday fabric had for almost a century been steeped in the rhythms, sounds, and smells of industrial life.

And yet Sesto's story is, like Blaenavon's, a story of "ruin optimism" as well (Barndt 2010). Here, melancholic loss comes with similar efforts at preservation. The town council—housed in a town hall painted grey, yellow, and fiery red (thus mimicking the melting of steel that was so central to the productive process in the town's factories) and headed by now ex-mayor Giorgio Oldrini, who comes from a family with a long history of communist activism—bought up large tracts of the factory areas that had been abandoned by their owners. In an ironic twist of history, these workers and their heirs finally became owners of "their house" (as workers sometimes called their factories) right at a moment when these factories lay in ruins. In 2006, Sesto's candidature was launched through an initiative lyrically titled "Sesto per l'UNESCO" (Sesto for UNESCO). In it, Sesto presented itself as unique because the entire town was a "nest of the Industrial Revolution." Rather than focus on individual buildings and sites, Sesto presented its entire urban fabric—its factories, houses, machines, worker's clubs, libraries, and cinemas—as worthy of monumentalization (Negri 2011: 18). As Federico Ottolenghi, Sesto's director of public relations and head of the UNESCO bid explained, the entire town represents the "force and testimony of the 'civilization' [*civiltà*] of the factory" (2011: 28).

What do such declarations of civilization reveal? What according to the people of Sesto did this civilization consist of? I here focus on how the people of Sesto have come to define solidarity as core to this civilization. I lean on a theory widely held by many actors involved in the bid: that labor and the productive process—the massing of tens of thousands of workers on shop floors, around machines, and in a densely crowded town—created the conditions not just for industrial output but for collectively held values as well; the productive process and the values generated therein are thus not presented as separable processes but as aspects of the same phenomenon. As Giuseppe Vignati, a historian from Sesto's Institute for Contemporary History (Istituto per la Storia dell'Età Contemporanea [ISEC]) told me, it is important not to merely think of Sesto as "an economic and productive system," but as a social location "out of which explicit visions, conceptions, and knowledge—specifically also the values freedom and solidarity—were forged." Sesto's former mayor Giorgio Oldrini made the same point in a 2008 speech supporting the town's candidacy. Arguing that there was no other site in Europe between 1903 and 1911 where industrial development was more swift or more intense, he similarly outlined the dual character of the town—it had "a great capacity for innovation" but also "great social cohesion and therefore profound solidarity."[6]

[6] Solidarity was a central concept in European industrial workers' movements and signaled both a "common struggle" and a deep ethical commitment (Molé 2012b: 380; see also Stjernø 2005). For

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"The roles of labour and culture are therefore decisive for us," Oldrini said. "The town's physical and ethical heritage must be preserved."[7]

Drawing on ethnographic and archival research conducted in Sesto between 2011 and 2013, I track the memorialization and monumentalization of the "civilization of the factory" and explore how the material remains of an industrial lifeworld have become the grounds for a reiteration and reimagination of the "ethical heritage" that was housed within them. The people of Sesto think of this ethical heritage—the ethics of solidarity—as residing in and emanating from objects, infrastructure, and place. I thus argue for a theory of solidarity as more than sign, sentiment, or ethical commitment and instead focus on solidarity's materiality. I build on a long line of social theorists who have emphasized that materiality and material forms mediate solidarity and the social relations upon which they depend: Marx insisted that "the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life." All historical consciousness is thus mediated by "conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process" (Marx and Engels 1978 [1844]: 154). The subject thus develops "in the midst of its relations with things: the history of its relations with those things is, thus, the history of the subject" (White 2013: 675). Marx specifically described workers' solidarity as a "practical" and "observable" process that emerged out of the common assembly and gathering of communist workers as they smoked, drank, and ate together. This sociality of solidarity—its "splendid results" and "nobility"—was generated out of this concrete assembly and reflected in, and on, workers' "work-hardened bodies" (Marx and Engels 1978 [1844]: 99–100). Durkheim similarly argued that social solidarity—that "bond of mystical sympathy"—is made and remade through vibrant material practices and things. Bodies, scarred and tattooed with signs of society, rhythmically move and sing in unison as they assemble around a totem (1995 [1912]: 150–51). For Durkheim, solidarity must accrue around objects. It works through repetition and moves through the flesh (ibid.: 151). Antonio Gramsci, one of the founders of the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party, PCI), argued that working-class solidarity was fostered from within the infrastructures and rhythms of the factory and its proletarian world—a world made up of a "body of feelings, instincts, thoughts, customs, habits, and attachments" (1997: 152). For Gramsci, the "institutions of social life of the exploited

many Europeans of the early and mid-twentieth century, the term thus implied class solidarity and social justice. While this meaning has become unstable in recent years (Muehlebach 2009), Oldrini was certainly using it in the terms described by Stjernø.

[7] See http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/cicandidiamo/scheda/,1649 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

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working class" were the practical sites through which revolutionary solidarity was generated. Solidarity and material practice were here not "linked" (that is to say, initially divisible) but indivisible and part of a single, total human activity (ibid.). Italian autonomist Marxist Bifo Berardi recently wrote that solidarity arises concretely out of "the continuousness of the relation between individuals in time and in space. The material foundation of solidarity is the perception of the continuity of the body in the body, and the immediate understanding of the consistency of my interest and your interest" (2012: 128).

As a "socialist affect," solidarity must thus not be conceptualized as "individualized emotion" or as "autonomous states of feeling" but as an affect that manifests "intersubjectively and collectively through embodied actions and alliances" (Schwenkel 2013: 252). The dynamics of solidarity, in short, are inseparably material and historical. I thus agree with Yael Navaro-Yashin that the question of whether "affect emerges from the self or from the environment" (2009: 5) is wrongly posed. Rather, the question is how subjects emerge from within and through their historically specific relations with things. Indeed, it is through "worldly arrangements with objects" (in my case, machines, buildings, tools) that subjects self-consciously relate to themselves and others (White 2013: 678). Working with a materialist conception of solidarity thus means accounting for bodies and embodiment, rhythm and refrain, as well as for the built environment and infrastructure that allow for the generation of proximities, coordination, and likeness across difference (see also Rutherford 2009; Fennell 2012). It means thinking of solidarity as a particular assembly of bodies in time and space and of these bodies and their movement together as generative of political feeling and action.

Thinking about solidarity's materiality also means taking into account the context of enunciation. Sesto's memorialization of its ruined landscape must be read as a response articulated from within Italy's precarious social body, where the children and grandchildren of Sesto's ex-workers are not, or are barely, finding work. Italy's population of semi-permanent or sub-employed workers doubled starting in the mid-1990s and continued through the 2000s, while its safeguarded workforce was halved, a trend particularly salient in northern Italy (Molé 2012b: 371). Milan and its peripheries were especially hard hit, which is why Milan is known as the site where "the global precariat" first stirred (Standing 2011: 1). As early as 2001, thousands of unemployed youths, students, and social activists gathered in the streets of Milan to protest precarity—that "flexible impermanence" where both humans and machines are rented for short periods of time (Bear 2015: 158) and where work and life are simultaneously corroded. These demonstrations have generated a widely shared sense that it is not only the social composition of work that has been "desolidarized" and "disaggregated" (Berardi 2012: 128), but that the social body itself has been rendered frail, even sick (Molé 2012a). I thus argue that Sesto's memory work is not only about remembering (see also Berliner

2012: 770). Rather, its memory work functions also as a metacommentary on a present that, rather than erasing previous forms of solidarity, in fact intensifies longings for them while dismantling the material conditions that made them possible (Muehlebach and Shoshan 2012: 332). Put differently, twentieth-century memories—of work, the "salaried society," and of dreams of universal security and prosperity—are haunted by the desolidarization of the twenty-first (Castel 1996). The widely shared experience of precarity has allowed for solidarity to survive as an eerie presence and as a remnant of a more proximate sociality, part real, part imagined (Molé 2012b). Sesto's "psychopolitical posture" is therefore not nostalgic (in the sense that Sestesi mourn the definitive loss of an era past) but melancholic in so far as the loss of solidarity is both acknowledged and disavowed (Steinmetz 2010: 316; see also Petrović 2013: 101).

The psychic investments in Sesto's bid are further heightened by controversies over urban renewal. Sesto's municipality has struggled with the fact that Falck, one of Europe's largest abandoned industrial areas whose ruined factories, towers, and machines continue to loom inaccessibly behind kilometers of graffiti-covered walls and shuttered steel gates, has become subject to major real estate speculation. Since 1998, when a competition over the future of the ex-Falck area was launched, the municipality of Sesto has insisted that this site be converted into mixed income housing, parts of which should be made accessible to the public. It thereby troubled the plans of those who emphasized "urban renewal" through the maximization of real estate profits (Oliva 2011: 13–15). The question was whether the area would capitulate to the logics of financialized urban planning (ibid.: 79) and become a gentrified "ghetto for the rich," as one interlocutor described it to me, or whether it would honor the memory of Falck as an important site of worker history. In 2010 the area, then owned by real estate investor Luigi Zunino, was sold for a stunning 405 million Euros to real estate magnate Davide Bizzi. The ambition was to create the largest urban requalification of ex-industrial space in Europe. Today, as parts of the vast area have been committed to the building of a hospital and a shopping center, the municipality of Sesto continues to insist that the old Falck buildings remain accessible to the public and that its industrial remains be treated not as private property but as world heritage. The future of the Falck area still hangs in suspension. It is into this suspended state, this indeterminacy regarding the future and meaning of Sesto and its civilization, that the memory work of Sesto per l'UNESCO inserts itself.

Sesto, one of Italy's major centers of twentieth-century heavy industry, is known as Italy's "Little Manchester" (*Piccolo Manchester*) and "City of Factories" (*La Città delle Fabbriche*). Not only did it house a dense concentration of diverse industries—mechanical engineering, steel, food, chemicals, and armaments (Bell 1986; Kohn 2003)—but it was also home to one of Italy's largest concentrations of organized labor, thus exhibiting unusual levels of

strike activity. It is also called "Little Stalingrad" because of the strong historical presence of the Communist Party and its exceptional legacy of resistance to Fascism. Indeed, the rise of Fascism in the 1920s and 1930s was slowed in towns like Sesto San Giovanni where many workers died defending "their houses"—the cooperatives and chambers of labor that they had built (Kohn 2003: 127). A series of historic anti-fascist strikes in 1943–1944, initiated mainly by female workers lamenting the doubling of the cost of living and the scarcity of food during the war, further shook the town. By the war's end, over six hundred Sesto workers (in a town of then only forty thousand people) had been deported to Nazi camps. Over three hundred were murdered at Gusen, Mauthausen, Hartheim, and elsewhere. About a hundred fell fighting in Sesto San Giovanni and Milan as part of the GAP (Patriotic Action Groups) and SAP (Patriotic Action Teams) as well as in the mountains in partisan groups. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Sesto again emerged as a central node in some of the most massive, coordinated, and continuous workers' strikes that Western Europe had ever seen (Lumley 1990). Sesto has since World War II been ruled without interruption by the Communist Party and its various post-Cold War incarnations, and has remained a "red fortress" even through the ascent of Berlusconi and the right-wing secessionist party Lega Nord, currently the ruling party in the region.

Sesto's bid for world heritage thus differs starkly from other instances where "former landscapes of labor have been transformed into landscapes of recreation," at times through aestheticizing and de-historicizing mechanisms of natural landscaping that dilute the idea of the working class as a source of collective consciousness and mobilization. Though scholars have described some cases where visitors have been asked to contemplate "the demise of a form of labor linked to a full-scale production economy where the worker occupied centerstage," such as in the abandoned landscapes of the former German Democratic Republic (Barndt 2010: 286), the tendency seems to be "to pacify history, rather than mining it for criticism and reflection" (ibid.: 279; see also Bonilla 2011; Berliner 2012; Petrović 2013). Sesto's unapologetic attempt to invest its industrial ruins with memories of a communist culture and history[8] thus stands in striking contrast to such pacifications. It also contrasts with other contexts where bids for world heritage status have been divisive and fricitious (Askew 2010; Meskell 2015; Rico 2008; Schmitt 2009) since Sesto's bid has led not only to the resignification of Sesto's crumbling industrial areas, its buildings, and machines, but also to a reactivation of what Berardi calls the "psychic and

[8] The Italian Communist Party (PCI) seceded from the Socialist Party under the guidance of Antonio Gramsci and became the second largest political party in Italy after World War II. By the 1970s, the PCI was the largest communist party outside the Soviet Bloc and attracted about a third of the popular vote. The success of the party was secured because it broke with the strictures of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy to develop its own national "reformist" version of communism and its own popular subculture (Shore 1990).

cultural energy that made solidarity possible inside the social body of the industrial worker class" (2012: 128). This reactivation is achieved through the intergenerational (re)creation of memories of the sensorium and matter that had made Sesto's "proletarian public sphere" possible (Bell 1986: 65–66).

In what follows, I move the reader across the material terrain of Sesto, focusing on a series of key sites, objects, and practices that Sesto per l'UNESCO has used to convey solidarity and its material entailments. In the section "City of Factories," I focus on Sesto's bid, which began with the mapping of a network of workers' sites—a historical itinerary that seeks to phenomenologically evoke the town as a solidaristic whole. Solidarity here is not figured as emanating from single sites, but as suffusing the fabric of the entire town. "Garden of Machines" focuses on a giant overhead crane (also called a "totem") previously used to facilitate the melting of vast quantities of metal. I show how this site of past industrial production has become key to the production of a critical historical and political consciousness today. "When We Made Metal" describes a series of pedagogical interventions whereby the sentiment and corporeality of solidarity is transacted across generations and cultural divides. "The Town as Machine" uses oral historical materials to argue that the Sestesi do not necessarily read their town and its infrastructures as signs of past alienation and exploitation. Instead, their memories often foreground the ways in which town life orbited around the rhythm of the factory—its sounds, sirens, songs. It was this collective rhythm that Sestesi remember as giving pulse to the body of solidarity. My final section, "Loving the Machine," shows how the machine itself has emerged as protagonist—not as sign of past forms of alienation but as something deeply loved and missed. Sesto per l'UNESCO has thus attempted to choreograph a kind of collective leftist kinship around the memorialization and monumentalization of material artifacts, a kinship whose long-term effects are hard to gauge but whose itinerary I here trace.

CITY OF FACTORIES

Coming from Milan, that enormously wealthy northern Italian economic powerhouse, I arrived in Sesto San Giovanni by subway and exited at the Sesto Marelli stop. The stop was named after the engineering company that was founded in 1891, restructured in the 1970s, and closed in 1983–1984, having relocated what was left of its business to Albania. Yellow markings on the sidewalk guided me along an itinerary that Sesto devised in 2002 together with ISEC, Sesto's Institute for the History of the Contemporary Era. The goal was to lace the streets with signage that would lead people along thirty-seven catalogued, mapped, and protected sites. The map I held called these sites "totems"—towering factories, industrial structures, and machines.

Walking along, one learns that Sesto was a small artisan and silk-weaving village until just over a hundred years ago. Since it was located along an electric tramway, several major roads, and an international railway, it soon became a

central productive node within the country. By the beginning of the twentieth century, some of the country's most important steel, metalwork, and engineering firms had built their factories there and occupied 4 out of Sesto's 11 square kilometers. As former mayor Giorgio Oldrini proudly declared, it was in Sesto that the company Ercole Marelli "invented the Italian electromechanical industry; Ernesto Breda … constructed the only four-engine aircraft achieved in Italy; Davide Campari [conquered] the world with his aperitifs [and] created modern advertising in our country; Falck was the first company in Italy to introduce the complete cycle in metal working; Garelli created motor cycles which won world championships…."[9] By 1920, the resident population had tripled to nearly twenty thousand inhabitants, as masses of migrants from the Italian south had flocked to Sesto to find work, fundamentally transforming the town since a majority of its inhabitants had by then not been born there. By 1944, the engineering firm Breda alone employed twelve thousand workers as southerners continued to move to the north for work (Pratt 2003: 26–27). Soon, a massive grid of factories and workers' housing was grafted onto the town's terrain.[10]

By April 2006, many "spaces of production"—factories, workers' housing, towering furnaces, machines—had been mapped on the occasion of the International Day for Industrial Heritage. They encompass the grandiose, such as the companies mentioned above, as well as others such as the "Pompei tanks," an "endless underground system" of tunnels that connected Falck's multiple plants and sheds.[11] The mapping process allowed the Sestesi to liken the grandiosity of industrial architecture to that of the famous ancient city and, with the help of UNESCO, to aim to achieve immortality as well. But there are also more vernacular sites that Sesto per l'UNESCO catalogued and archived, such as workers' housing, cooperatives, mutual aid societies, libraries, sporting clubs, and trade unions, some of which are still alive with activity today.[12] All stand as dense repositories of Sesto's industrial

[9] http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/cicandidiamo/scheda/,1649 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

[10] See http://www.spaziomil.it/citta.htm (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

[11] See http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/falckunione/scheda/,1729 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

[12] Sesto per l'UNESCO presented its sites in four categories: (1) Industrial buildings (BLISS, Inspection and Weigh Station, Campari, Overhead Crane, ex Sondel Electricity Receiving Station and Heating Plant, Thermal Power Station, Mariani Brickworks, Rolling Mill, Salvi Muller Warehouse, OMEC, "Esedra" Concordia Porter's Lodge, Vittoria A Porter's Lodge, Vulcano Porter's Lodge, Locomotive Repair Shed, T3 "Pagoda", T5, Models Tower, Concordia Water Tower, Unione Water Tower, Die Grinding Unit, "Pompei" Tanks) and, last but not least, the MAGE. Here, abandoned factory spaces have been offered rent-free to artists and small entrepreneurs. The MAGE is full of studios, ateliers, and design labs and is a showcase for "product innovation with the preservation of historical memory." The other three categories were: (2) Housing (Union Manager's House, Dwellings for Breda Workers, Housing for Breda Workers, Falck Garden District—later called "Villaggio Diaz," Villaggio Attilio Franco—later called

history, traces of industrial life that Sesto per l'UNESCO attempts to sublimate into symbols of a lost workers' culture. As a professor of architecture at Milan's Polytechnic University said at a 2011 conference in Sesto, the Sestesi think of these sites as "monuments" that "stand alongside churches, villas, or the town hall" because they express "shared values and character," unlike the built urban environment today (Consonni 2011: 31). In the words of Sesto per l'UNESCO's bid, the town's history was a "universal history" that it was protecting "for the world."[13]

By 2010, the bid began to make its way through a jungle of administrative levels. The hope was that Italy's Ministry of Culture would forward the bid to the International Council of Monuments and Sites, after which it would be considered by UNESCO. To date, however, the bid has stalled at the ministry and its outcome is far from clear. And yet the outcome itself is not the point, as a number of Sestesi involved in the bid said to me. At stake, rather, is the capture of a structure of feeling and its conveyance to future generations even as the workers who lived and breathed it are slowly passing away.

With the bid launched, Sesto per l'UNESCO's promoters began to create what they called a "diffuse museum" that seeps out all over the town's social fabric, a museum that is at once a map, inventory, archive, and experiential history. Visitors can today travel through Sesto via free, guided archeological bike and bus tours, all wearing hard hats. Participants listen to ex-workers talk about everything from furnaces to the exact hours of the workday and end with a "workers' snack" of bread, cold cuts, cheeses, and wine. One "Journey through the History of Sesto" was so successful when it was first offered in 2008 that Sesto per l'UNESCO had to double the number of tours originally planned. Sesto per l'UNESCO also encouraged Sesto's amateur photographers to build the town's archive by participating in photographic competitions that "liberate" Sesto's "monuments" and document "our cultural heritage." Sesto per l'UNESCO organizes "photographic safaris" in which up to a hundred cyclists move between industrial sites. Some of these photographs have been published online, on "Wiki Loves Monuments," where these photographers' work has appeared alongside stunning Italian medieval churches, castles, and bridges.[14]

Villaggio Falck); (3) Service Buildings (Falck Village Montessori Nursery School, Church of San Giorgio alle Ferriere, Savoia College and Monti Glassworks, Falck Village Elementary School, Galli Breda School, Theatre of San Clemente Association, VAO-Factory Workers' Hostel); and (4) Historic Residences (Villa Torretta).

[13] http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/cicandidiamo/scheda/,2479 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

[14] See https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progetto: Wiki_Loves_Monuments_2014/Finalisti2014 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

By presenting the museum as diffuse and all of Sesto's urban fabric as "world heritage," Sesto per l'UNESCO has promoted a theory of class solidarity as embedded within and mediated by the town as a whole. Sesto per l'UNESCO's insistence that the entire town, rather than a few select sites, be recognized as world heritage is a reflection of the fact that its working-class solidarity grew not only out of factories but also out of libraries, evening schools, bars, movie houses, and its nineteenth-century mutual aid societies. They thus echo a point made by labor historian Donald Bell, who describes Sesto's working-class culture—its "proletarian public sphere" (1986: 66)—as a seminal collective achievement that expanded far beyond the factory floor. Indeed, collectivity had been wrought out of a highly diverse work force (composed of skilled workers, unskilled operatives, and a potentially fricticious mix of workers from both the Italian north and south), and despite a productive process that could have exacerbated fragmentation among them. After all, the changing metalworking industry had by the end of the nineteenth century reorganized production processes and the spatial layout of factories in ways that made worker sociality and political organizing extraordinarily difficult. Until then, high quality metals were produced in small plants by master manufacturers who directed groups of skilled puddlers, foundrymen, and their assistants (ibid.: 24). In the new factories such as Falck, the newly introduced Martin-Siemens furnace rendered obsolete the grouping of the skilled puddler and his labor crew around the open hearth. "The ovens now remained closed while forge workers were distributed in various areas of the factory as crane operators supplying ovens with pig irons or as casters who poured molten steel into molds. Work was no longer carried out in a central location and the processes of manufacture was broken up into separate departments" (ibid.). And it was not only the physical layout of factories and new machines that made it hard for workers to organize; the introduction of steam hammers also made communication increasingly difficult. It was this break-up of the productive process and the segregated factory that could have splintered the workforce and exacerbated distinctions between skilled and unskilled labor, northerners and southerners.

And yet, the people of Sesto refused to fragment. Rather, they drew on what Bell (ibid.: 54) describes as a remarkably resilient artisanal life-world as well as on a set of workers institutions inside and outside the factory to build a culture of solidarity that lasted for much of the twentieth century. Over and again, Sesto was a hotbed for experiments in workers' self-management, a political hub for cooperative values and a distinct sense of class-identity and morality (Pratt 2003: 27; see also Lumley 1990). It is this ethic of resilience, built both inside and outside of the "house" of the factory, that Sesto per l'UNESCO seeks to commemorate and that walkers such as myself are invited to experience in movement through the town (see also Bonilla 2011).

Sesto per l'UNESCO's promoters have thus sought to phenomenologically (re)generate this proletarian public and its "collective consciousness" out of embodied awareness. They have carefully managed and choreographed this historical consciousness such that audiences properly sense and perceive Sesto's working-class culture. This is not always an easy task. Lina Calvi, a music and mathematics teacher born and raised in Sesto, who for many years was a municipal council member and president of Sesto's Association of Italian Partisans (ANPI), and who now sits on Sesto per l'UNESCO's steering committee, recounted how even the Sestesi sometimes question the status of Sesto's ruins by asking, "Sesto? What does Sesto have? It's so ugly!" Gazing from her tiny balcony down at the ruins of Falck Unione's imposing water tower, Lina remembered how the dark red glow of Falck's furnaces used to illuminate the night sky. She told me that there was "much explaining to do. One really has to understand the historical aspect of this, and the value that work has had for this city." What was at stake for Lina was an alchemy that Sesto per l'UNESCO's promoters are invested in, that of turning rubble into beauty. Sesto's citizens are to be summoned into a public that "orients itself towards common objects of contemplation," such that they learn how to move within a built environment wherein objects and landscapes are reflexively framed (Fennell 2012: 644). The promoters of Sesto per l'UNESCO said the goal was to generate a "consciousness that is very watchful, active, and receptive" and to keep "alive the testimonies of the industrial past" in order "to strengthen the community of Sesto San Giovanni's feeling of belonging to a cohesive body."[15] The conjuring of this cohesive body is thus not at all reliant on a built environment that spontaneously speaks as semiotically excessive "vibrant matter" (Bennett 2010). Rather, these are choreographed acts of semiotization that aim to render material environments readable and sensible from within a historical context where this body's cohesion has been rendered frail.

GARDEN OF MACHINES

It was a sweltering summer of 2013 as I made my way towards one of Sesto's central "totems"—a huge overhead travelling crane, the *carroponte*, today the largest open-air theatre in the region of Lombardy. Reaching into the sky like a vast skeleton, it sits on what used to be the famous Italian mechanical manufacturing company Breda's enormous industrial terrain. I walked underneath the railway line that cuts through Sesto and up and out toward what used to be the main entrance of Breda, directly to its foundry, the area in Breda's steel plant where castings for locomotives, trucks, weapons, aircrafts, motorcycles, and railway and agricultural machines were produced.

[15] http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/passidagigante/ (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

Today, the "ex-Breda Industrial Archeological Park" is part of Sesto's Museum of Industry and Work (Museo del'Industria e del Lavoro [MIL]), no longer a place where "sweat drips from brows," as MIL's website puts it, but where citizens learn to "valorize its industrial patrimony" and "actively produce it."[16] A carefully restored locomotive and six 8-ton ingot molds sit on a steel wagon and platform, "protagonist machines" that have found their final resting place on the quiet grassy terrain of what the MIL calls the "Garden of Machines."[17] The garden, an area of about 12,000 square meters, is embraced by the *carroponte*. The vast steel structure is made up of columns and girders that are 250 meters long, 40 wide, and 20 high. They marked the boundary of the scrap yard inside the Breda Iron and Steel factory and were designed to speed up the steel-making process. Here, thousands of Breda workers labored alongside eleven giant blasting furnaces, feeding steel scraps into the heat. Rossana Turolla, interviewed in one of Sesto per l'UNESCO's numerous oral historical projects, remembers the phantasmagoria of images and sounds of steel-making as she experienced it as a little girl. Growing up in Sesto, industrial buildings were "fantastical," "majestic" and "above all, strange." The jagged rooftops and high chimneys so characteristic of the factories dotted the landscape like "plumed hats." She remembered that "the air was contaminated with smoke and odors" and that she could stand by her family's apartment window and watch the glow of the molten metal as it was poured into Breda's smelting ovens, its light rising up red into the dark evening sky.[18]

Gazing up to the *carroponte* and standing next to the locomotive and ingot molds, I hear a soft whisper emanating from what turns out to be a "talking wall" (*muro parlante*) placed on the grassy lawn of the Garden of Machines, thick and dark red with rust. A recording embedded within the wall makes it speak and sing in the voices of workers, workers now ghosts in machines. These walls are thus not only to be gazed at in wonder at their sublime scale. Nor are they merely to be read and contemplated (numbers engraved on the wall recount a history of Sesto: the number of people who lived and worked in its largest factories, the number who fell during the resistance, and the exact date—22 December 1995—at which the last metal casting emerged from of Falck's T3 furnace). Rather, the injunction is to remember these ghosts by intently listening to material artifacts for the stories they tell. What used to be the deafening sounds of clanging metal are now softly evoked; they demand of us not only our visual but also our concentrated aural attention. This is a wall that has been *made* vibrant in highly specific

[16] http://www.spaziomil.it/index.htm (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).
[17] https://www.facebook.com/650486915012297/videos/886885894705730/ (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).
[18] http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/citta/storiadisesto/scheda/,1751 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

IMAGE 1 Carroponte, Sesto San Giovanni. Copyright Comune di Sesto San Giovanni/Progetto Sesto San Giovanni per l'UNESCO.

ways for those who are willing to listen. Indeed, the goal is to turn this industrial site of production into a site where a different kind of productive labor is performed, a labor of remembering that is praxis in the sense that it is "transformative of political and historical consciousness" (Bonilla 2011: 315).

"You have to understand," ISEC historian Giuseppe Vignati said to me as he described the *carroponte* and the accompanying Garden of Machines, "this was where they melted steel—work that was extremely dangerous and demanded lots of professionalism and courage. The crane transported the steel and metal that was to be melted. You used to see mountains and mountains of metal lying scattered underneath." Almost in the same breath, Vignati said that I must never forget that "Milan was the capital of resistance, and that Sesto is the capital of non-Milanese resistance. Sesto is a 'city of martyrs' [*una città martire*]. We were not the only organized movement, but the strongest, most exhaustive, and most continuous. Hundreds! Hundreds of martyrs!" In this retelling, the mechanical sublime is intermingled with memories of human courage, and the grandeur of the factory and the vastness of the machine are matched with the everyday bravery of ordinary folk. This was a theory of transubstantiation—of particular forms of labor transmuting into particular kinds of politics, a theory already voiced by Marx in his hymn to communist workers. When they associate with one another, Marx wrote,

> theory, propaganda, etc., is their first end. But at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need—the need for society—and what appears as a means becomes an end. You can observe this practical process in its most splendid results whenever you see French socialist workers together. Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, and so forth are no longer means of contact or means that bring together.

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Company, association, and conversation, which again has society as its end, are enough for them; the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, it is a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies (Marx and Engels 1978 [1844]: 99–100).

Today, as work and work-hardened bodies seem to have faded away, the remnants of factories and steely machines make manifest this brotherhood. Sesto's industrial remains, in their solidity, have become altars to the nobility of work and the socialities it produced, fetish objects that both disavow and acknowledge the loss of past solidarities (Steinmetz 2010: 300).

One might think of this as a predominantly masculinist story, another iteration of the socialist veneration of male workers' bodies where steely muscles and sweat indexed the cult of machines and of humans-as-machines (Buck-Morss 2002: 105; Petrović 2013). But this would erase the fact that the town of Sesto pulled a large part of its adult female population into the factories as well by providing child-care long before the Italian state began to do so. To keep women working during their children's summer holidays, for example, factories such as Falck paid for their employees' offspring to spend time at the seaside or in the cool Italian Alps. Barbara Zicolella, a municipal employee tasked with managing the Sesto per l'UNESCO campaign, still remembers eight hundred Falck children leaving together en masse for the summer holidays.

There are thus many stories of female labor and political heroism that have found their way into Sesto per l'UNESCO's archive, especially when sons and daughters recognized that their mothers worked two shifts: in the factory and in the domestic economy at home. In the archive, these ordinary forms of female heroism and endurance sit alongside extraordinary accounts of female protagonism. When I asked whether their family had participated in the workers' strikes of 1943–1944, the two elderly sisters Adriana Gabbione and Flora Gabrione mentioned their mother, who worked in Falck's nuts-and-bolts production department. Remembering the exact time and date of the beginning of her revolt (which had thousands of workers switch off their machines and simultaneously stand, silently, with their arms crossed), they recounted, "She was the first to switch off the machine at which she worked, on March 23, 1943, at 13:00, and she refused to switch it back on again, even under threat of arms. She then lost her voice for two full years. It was only the emotion of seeing her son ravaged by the war that made her regain her voice again."[19]

With these stories in mind, I stood in the Garden of Machines gazing up at the *carroponte*. I had been told that it was to be demolished when Breda closed. Giorgio Oldrini, the former mayor of Sesto who was watching the spectacle with a few others when the demolition was scheduled to occur, vividly

[19] http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/passidagigante/scheda/,1753 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417516000542 Published online by Cambridge University Press

described the group awestruck by the grandiosity of the structure suddenly "freed" of its shed and the "impenetrable walls that had enclosed the factories and hid them from view."[20] The onlookers were "spellbound by the charm of this enormous object," he said, perhaps because the bare metal carcass appeared both rock solid and frail in a rapidly vanishing world—a world of exhausted promises as not only factories but the entire dream world of twentieth-century mass utopia had come crashing down (Buck-Morss 2002). Perhaps the enormous structure rising up before them allowed the assembled onlookers to recognize that this dream had left some magnificent debris behind, offering reminders of the twentieth-century technological sublime. At that moment, Oldrini recounted, the assembled onlookers collectively agreed to treat the *carroponte* not as trash but as treasure. They kept the *carroponte*,[21] and it stands today, illuminated by deep red lights at night, as if metal was still being made.

As Lina Calvi sat with me on her narrow balcony that summer afternoon in 2013, she exhibited a recalcitrance similar to that of the *carroponte* itself. After all, she said, "These huge rolling mills, these *laminatoi*, these are objects that history cannot throw away in five minutes." She insisted that Sesto's universality hinged on the very scale and weight of its infrastructure and objects. And yet, those objects are always already about more than scale and weight. Calvi told me these object-signs index "dignity"; that is to say, the fact that the town "impacted the lives of tens of thousands of people [and] allowed for them to live more dignified lives." Sesto was one of those northern Italian industrial towns where masses of landless peasants escaping lives of penury in the Italian south gathered together. Yet for her, the gathering of the masses was about not only producing an industrial working class with shared knowledge regarding its rights, but also about creating a social body that was "rich in terms of its humanity (*umanamente ricca*)," "not rich in monetary terms!" There was, she explained, a crucial difference between a farmer and a salaried worker, one not only measured in terms of salaried security. Rather, the then mayor (the father of Sesto's now ex-mayor Giorgio Oldrini) insisted that workers should not only have housing, streets, and running water, but also access to art, music, schools. "We had schools for workers to learn painting, languages.… Sesto gave work, but it also gave us other possibilities." Lina's account was thus one where the masses were encompassed within not only the communist project but a much larger Enlightenment trajectory as well.

The *carroponte* thus laid bare the fact—or hope, or desire?—that all that was solid would not melt into air but instead remain fixed in place as a towering reminder of a world of work, salary, and dignity. Oldrini explained that the keeping of the *carroponte* "contributed to a regaining of a place, an object, a

[20] http://www.sestosg.net/CmsReply/ImageServlet/carroponteeng.pdf (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).
[21] http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/cicandidiamo/scheda/,1649 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

word for the young people of today." None of the onlookers' grandchildren knew that such huge objects and the world they indexed had even existed, he said. The task was to hold on to and retain a sensorium and semiotics—a physical location, material object, and language to name the past and emplace it within the present.

WHEN WE MADE METAL

The MIL is the site where the staff of Sesto per l'UNESCO has trained hundreds of elementary, secondary, and high school students from Sesto and beyond in the art of remembering industrial heritage. Importantly, as representatives from Sesto per l'UNESCO stressed, the demographics of the town were shifting to entail increased numbers of immigrant children. The task was thus to convey Sesto's history to not just children born and raised there, but children from elsewhere, too. In some ways, Sesto per l'UNESCO was embarking on a task reminiscent of that of their forebears, of generating cohesion and collectively held values out of diversity.

Once again, the message conveyed was clear. As town councilor and current Italian senator Luigi Vimercati said in a 2002 speech during the opening of the MIL, the aim of the museum was to convey that solidarity and materiality were part of the same productive process: "Sesto was a site where steel and cast iron, trains and airplanes, turbines and motors, cannons and tanks were produced. But more than that," he waxed poetically, it became a site that produced particular types of workers who "lived, suffered, and fought," transforming themselves from "a nameless and dispersed mass" (*un volgo disperso che nome non ha*, a phrase lifted from Alessandro Manzoni's famous tragedy, *Adelchi*) into a "people knowledgeable of their rights and capable of struggling for the rights of all" (Vimercati 2002). Paolo Sangalli, one of the pedagogues at the museum, said to me that the aim was to present a time "when workers were a class," when poverty stricken crowds were massed into a working class engaged in regimented collective action.

To convey this history of this social body of the industrial working class, Sesto per l'UNESCO has attempted to render the town "protagonist" in the (re) production of memory. The goal is not only to "conserve a past history, but to reinforce the sense of belonging of the community to a coherent organism." This aspect of the bid is crucial because UNESCO demands of its bidders that they represent a living, continuing, and evolving landscape of both material signs and affective attachments. Sesto per l'UNESCO thus began to collaborate with local elementary, middle, and high schools that had independently begun to honor and remember the town's industrial history and had initiated a series of competitions in which students conducted interviews in projects entitled "The Sesto San Giovanni of My Memories," "We Live in Sesto San Giovanni," "Remembering the Past in order to Respect the Present and the Future," and "Sesto in Evolution between the Past and the Future." The evocative

recollections cited above—the phantasmorgia of Sesto's built environment as remembered by Turolla, the heroism of a mother working in a nuts-and-bolts production department—were all gathered by Sesto's school children under the auspices of these oral historical projects. By pairing Sesto's youth with the elderly in a choreography of question and answer, call and response, Sesto's schools, later in collaboration with Sesto per l'UNESCO, aimed to produce a public that, while no longer proletarian, nevertheless consciously reflects on its proletarian past. What is thereby produced is a public that translates its many private lives into publicly significant ones, and intimate into monumental memories. This is a public that folds the personal and the political together, helping Sestesi narrate and render meaningful their past from the perspective of collective worlds. Such rich oral historical work is performed not only by children and youth but also in a number of short films that show grandparents taking their grandchildren into the rubble of old, overgrown factories. Faces glowing, and switching between standard Italian and Milanese dialect, they share many a detail about their machines and the work they performed.[22]

This memory work is also carried out in the pedagogical encounters staged at the MIL. Paolo Sangalli was very strategic in his pedagogical work. A tall, lanky, and energetic man in his sixties, he is visible on online videos, together with Carletto Vimercati and a young man and woman who both wear original sets of blue worker's overalls. Towering above dozens of schoolchildren sitting on what used to be the floor of a cavernous Breda work shed and what is now the MIL, and a few feet from a giant power hammer that rises halfway to the building's roof, Sangalli's voice echoes as he shows the children a large aerial map of Sesto in the 1990s, when the factory warehouses were abandoned but still intact. "What are these 'orange things' [aerial views of worker's housing] and those 'grey things' [factory roofs]? Why were there so many factories in Sesto? Why did Sesto grow so rapidly from six thousand to a hundred thousand people?" he asks. He stresses the importance of Sesto as a "space where people were united in struggle; the worker's groups, the soccer clubs, our eight movie houses, and many libraries!" He then has the children calculate what used to be the exorbitant weekly working hours one hundred years ago versus what they are now. "And why is it not that way anymore? Because of our unions, our struggle."

In May 2013, I was spending time at MIL with Paolo Sangalli, Barbara Zicolella, and Cristina Meneguzzo (who, like Zicolella, manages the Sesto per l'UNESCO campaign). When I asked what the children enjoyed doing the most, they laughingly mentioned the quizzes they had devised to test students on how much they knew about the steel-making. One, called "When

[22] For a sense of these animated conversations, see https://www.facebook.com/650486915012297/videos/vb.650486915012297/700228736704781/?type=2&theater (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

We Made Metal" (*Quando Facevamo L'Acciaio*), has the students work with a large sheet of paper containing a jumbled set of images and snippets of information on the process of steel-making. "Cut out pieces of the story, cut out the images; pair the text with the images," the instructions read. "Reconstruct the correct sequence [of steel-making]." Another quiz contains twenty questions, including, "What is a *capannone*? Answer: an industrial warehouse." "This *capannone* contained the furnace T3 where steel was melted. At what temperature does steel melt? Answer: at 1600 degrees Celsius." "What is a *depuratore*? Answer: a purifier that was used to reduce air pollution." "This is an image of OMEC; an industrial warehouse. What does the acronym stand for? Answer: Officine Meccaniche E Costruzioni, the mechanical engineering shops." "Here we are at the Concordia plant, where you can see the 'Pompei tanks.' Why do we call them Pompeii tanks? Answer: because seeing them reminds us of the antique city of Pompeii." "This is the *carroponte*. What is a *carroponte*? Answer: a large crane that was used to lift up heavy objects." The children, scribbling on clipboards and eagerly stretching out hands as they compete to answer questions, sit as they watch black-and-white movies of factory work and press hands over ears as they hear the eardrum-shattering sound of factory sirens.

Yet it is not only concrete knowledge that Sesto's new generation is summoned into learning. There is also a fleshiness and corporeality to solidarity that Sesto per l'UNESCO's pedagogues want them to experience. All of the students who pass through the MIL—"boys and girls without distinction," as Barbara Zicolella insisted—are led in front of the giant power hammer, a mallet that was used up until the 1980s and that they can "touch with their hands." They are invited to take turns to lift up a set of pincers, as large and heavy as a small child. Steelworkers used to take turns at lifting these 15 kilogram pincers as they fed burning hot metal into the power hammer. The children lift and laugh at the weight, their bodies having borne the weight of those hundreds of bodies that came before their own and that performed a form of work almost unimaginable to them today. What is conveyed is "somatic knowledge" (Filipucci 2009: 180)—a form of memorialization that takes place on the terrain of the body. As Paolo Sangalli explained to me, "We want to convey a life of *manualità* (manuality, or manual labor), not only that of the computer!" The children, some of whom laughed out loud since they were unable to lift the pincers off the ground (let alone use them to move 30–50 kilogram heavy pieces of hot metal as Breda workers did) were thus summoned into sensing not only exhaustion but the dangerous intimacy between man and machine. One of the students exclaimed, "This thing, if it hits your head, you'll have a massive cranial fracture!"

On one hand, one must think of this intimacy and the "enormity of the task" that it conveys, as Barbara Zicolella put it to me, as an exercise in historical sympathy. The touching of pincers, one by one by Sesto's children, might

be read as a staging of Frazerian "contagious magic," whereby entities are corralled together in the hope that radically different classes of humans and things communicate their properties, perhaps even souls, in ways that reconfigure both (Fennell 2012: 647).[23] The pincers here operate as mnemonic devices that conjure proximity between the "work-hardened" bodies of the past and those of the present. And yet, an unbridgeable gap between labor then and labor now is also evoked, as if the strength of past bodies indexes the weakness of bodies today. Contemporary bodies are weakened insofar as they are often nothing more than extensions of computers ("those little machines," as Paolo Sangalli described them to me). The pincers thus performed a curious kind of double-labor: as reminders of labors past, they also evoked the weaknesses of the present. And it was not only individual bodies that were being evoked here, but social bodies as well. Work-hardened, solid, and solidaristic; weakened like the precarious social body as a whole.

THE TOWN AS MACHINE

It was Gramsci who first noted that Americanism and Fordism amounted to the "biggest collective effort to date to create, with unprecedented speed, and with a consciousness unmatched in history, a new type of worker and a new type of man." New methods of work were "inseparable from a specific mode of living and of thinking and feeling life." Rationalization and mechanization thus occurred not only on factory floors. These processes, all of which worked to "develop within the worker to the highest degree mechanical and automatic attitudes," reached far into the intimate recesses of workers' everyday lives (Gramsci 1997 [1971]: 305–7). The factory, in short, had no location but had become generalized across the social fabric as the lives of men, women, and children were organized through its rhythms and forms. Building on these insights, Italian autonomist Marxists developed the concept of the "social factory" to understand social relations as subsumed under capital, especially in northern Italy's industrial centers (Wright 2002: 38; see also Negri 1991: 114). Yet the people I met—workers often decried as mere extensions of capital—have a different recollection of life in the social factory. While they described their town as machine, or in the words of Luigi Vimercati, a "locomotive for the modernization of Italy," it was also a "coherent organism" that produced something that could not quite be captured by capital—solidarity.

Sesto's workers and their descendants vividly describe the intimacy with which the factory had insinuated itself into their lives, rhythms, and bodies, in ways that reached far beyond the immediate limits of the factory floor. Numerous oral historical projects bear eloquent testimony to the social factory as lived experience. Rossana Turolla, like so many others interviewed, began her

[23] To watch MIL pedagogues teach children how to lift pincers, see https://www.facebook.com/650486915012297/videos/886885894705730/ (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

IMAGE 2 A worker in Breda's steel plant. Copyright Fondazione ISEC (Instituto per la Storia dell'eta Contemporanea).

recollections with the memory of factory sirens and how they regimented collective life. "We Sestesi used the sound of factory sirens to organize our time and everyday family labor." The Maggi factory had stood about 200 meters away from where she grew up. Her mornings were thus punctuated with two whistles of that siren, as well as one announcing the factory break over lunch and then, finally, the end of the workday. Turolla recounted: "We had to all wake up at the first whistle and leave for school after the second. The siren over lunch gave my mother a sense of when to begin preparing our food, and my aunt a sense of when her husband, who worked at Marelli, would come home from work. This was the case in all families." The town as machine pulled its inhabitants into the orbit of the factory's rhythms and refrains, a pull that was the "main cultural transformation" of industrial capitalism. These were "refrains of temporal perception" that pervaded and disciplined society: "the refrain of factory work, the refrain of salary, the refrain of the assembly line" (Berardi 2012: 131). Renzo Baricella, another interviewee, spoke similarly of the extent to which factory, temporality, and collective consciousness were intertwined: "Our city … was based on three shifts: from 6:00 to 14:00, from 14:00 to 22:00, and from 22:00 to 6:00. And then there was the so-called normal shift, which ran from 8:00 to 12:00 and from 13:00 to 17:00.… The 'mental conditioning' that thus occurred was very, very strong."

But it was not only quotidian life that was moved by the heartbeat of the factory; some older interviewees remember children as extensions of factories. All social relations, even those amongst children on the playground, were structured around work and the social universe regimented by factory life. Rossana Turolla recalled going to school and knowing exactly what and where her classmates' parents worked. Children on the playground would identify themselves

with "my father is the director of …," or "mine is a worker in …." If someone wrote with "a beautiful wooden pen inscribed with the logo of *Pompe Gabbioneta*, one knew that this was the case because her father worked there." It is not only that social relations are here narrated as part of a larger, highly differentiated universe of class relations; arms are described as extensions of bodies that were made legible by the very objects they held.

Workers and their children and grandchildren spoke eloquently of the ways in which the refrain of industrial modernity insinuated itself into their lives on olfactory levels as well. Most often mentioned is the town as a stinking and fuming machine, one that crept into nostrils, lungs, and bodies such that one's skin seemed to have been nothing more than a paper-thin boundary between factory and self. Bodies are remembered as collectively inhaling and exhaling the factory and as being assembled in ways that enabled collective consciousness and a kind of "atmosphere of brotherhood and solidarity." Talking about a "typical day in the Villaggio Falck [Falck village], the two former Falck workers Adriana Gabbione and Flora Gabrione remembered life in the workers' villages set up by "Signore Falck." They recounted how the people of the workers' village would "meet Saturdays and Sundays on the sidewalk to shine their shoes and chat. We would call down from the windows and meet in the gardens of one of the houses and we'd talk about our things, our aspirations.… We would breathe an atmosphere of real brotherhood and solidarity." In these workers' memories, the rhythm of respiration was shared, such that both polluted air and the sensorium of solidarity became part of workers' bodies. The factory-machine and its environments are thus remembered not only as deadening, but also as vibrant matter that made up the social body and built the very organism of the town. The shared breath of solidarity was, of course, the effect of workers' struggles all along—struggles that had led, for example, to the right to a weekend that allowed for regular rest and regular assembly beyond factory floors. Shared breath also relied on shared infrastructure that Falck had provided and that had massed workers together in small, identical two-story buildings right next to the factory. Here, as the sisters remembered, Falck made sure that workers "developed a greater attachment to work" by providing everything—a pharmacy, a greengrocer, a school, a butcher, a church. "It was a little fortress in the city."[24] Falck was here creating his own orderly little kingdom, one that would bound the proletarian public sphere while simultaneously making it possible.

The refrains of the factory, temporality, salary, and the built environment grew out of and yet cannot be reduced to the mechanical reproduction of factory life. Once again, Turolla describes this most lyrically: "In the rare cases that I went to the factories it seemed to me that I, apart from smelling

[24] http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/passidagigante/scheda/,1753 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

the air and the diffuse stink of fumes, would also always hear a few notes of a song that happened to be popular at the time, such as *suona campana, suona vien giù la sera, mentre tornava l'uomo dalla ferriera* (the bells are ringing, they ring as the evening settles while the ironworker returns home)." That song ended with a refrain of the worker being devoured by the factory: *Suona campana vien giù la sera ma non ritorna l'uomo dalla ferriera* (The bells are ringing, they ring as the evening settles while the ironworker does not return back home).[25] But by the mid-1970s, songs of factory-death were also accompanied by songs of factory-love. *Romanzo Popolare*, a 1974 movie set in Sesto, narrates the passionate love triangle between the lead character Vincenzina, her husband, an elderly factory worker and labor organizer, and a young, dashing policeman. The famous theme song "Vincenzina and the factory" (*Vicenzina a la fabbrica*) contains the refrain "Vincenzina loves the factory" (*Vinzenzina vuol bene alla fabbrica*), a nod toward the fact that the great worker's strikes that had shaken Italy in the late 1960s had managed to transform factories from symbols of pollution, injury, and death into much more ambivalent objects of desire, "clusters of promises" of welfare, waged work, and security (Schwenkel 2013: 254).

Song is remembered because it indexes more than the gathering of vocal cords into unitary sound. Apart from expressing a poetics of "collective semiotic activity" (Berardi 2012: 19), these moments of meaning-making always expressed something corporeal as well—that a plurality of bodies had to be assembled for song to occur in the first place. There was thus a material and affective dimension to the gathering of bodies; the mere fact of bodies gathered presented the promise (and threat) of the workers' community. This was significant because song was heavily policed in twentieth-century factories, which workers had to "enter and leave … without making noise." They were fined or suspended not only for "sitting down," "eating fruit," or "showing solidarity with colleagues who were punished and fired," but also for "singing and making noise" (Kohn 2003: 52). Song thus signaled the refusal of the body of the working class to fragment and disaggregate. It indexed the resilience of the collective workers' body as a tight, organic whole.

LOVING THE MACHINE

We know that industrial work alienates workers from each other, from their selves, and from the objects they produce—industrial work generates numbness, boredom, pain, even madness, as Charlie Chaplin described in *Modern Times*. In one of the film's most iconic moments, the body of Chaplin's Little Tramp is invaded by the obsessive-compulsive rhythms of the machine; he cannot rid himself of the mechanical twitches he is forced to

[25] To listen to this song, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EwK9L02sRw (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

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perform on the constantly accelerating assembly line and is eventually sucked in and spit out by the machine's merciless mouth. In this dystopic vision of industrialized society, man and machine become one; bodies are devoured by machines and become appendages of their mechanized movements. Chaplin was here making the point that industrial machines reduce workers' activities to mere abstractions of activity. Marx wrote in his *Fragment on Machines* that craft workers had used their instruments and "animated" them by making them their "organs" with their skill, strength, and virtuosity. In industrial capitalism, Marx argued, the machine is an alien power that possesses the "skill and strength in the place of the worker, is itself a virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it." Machines thus dispossessed living labor of skill and soul and subsumed it "under the total process of the machinery itself." The worker was nothing more than an "accessory of this machinery," a "mere moment in the realization of capital" (Marx and Engels 1978 [1857–1858]: 279–80).

Antonio Gramsci had a different interpretation of what factories and industrial production effected. Rather than emphasize alienation and dispossession, Gramsci, particularly in his earlier writings, insisted that divisions of labor strengthened working-class solidarity by creating a "beneficial sense of mutual interdependence" amongst workers (Kohn 2003: 60). Rather than lamenting the machine, Gramsci lauded the discipline it generated. It was the very characteristics of the machine's "strength, unity, uniformity, rationality, modernity, productivity" that he saw as vital to the successful revolution (ibid.: 60–61). Like the Soviet scientists and artists who ecstatically imagined a world transformed by the "power of machinism" that would produce a "global, mass body with collective movements, collective feelings, collective goals" (Buck-Morss 2002: 105–7), so did Gramsci think of machines and factories not as deadening mechanical assemblages but as methodically pulsating organisms that unified the proletarian class both "psychologically" and on the corporeal level. For him, the factory "fostered within the proletarian world that body of feelings, instincts, thought, customs, habits and attachments that can be summed up in the phrase "class solidarity." Within the factory, every proletarian would "conceive of himself as inseparable from his work-mates … the more the proletarian specializes in a particular professional task, the more conscious he becomes of how indispensable his companions are, the more he feels himself as one cell within a coherent body, possessed of an inner unity and cohesion." For both Gramsci and Togliatti, successive leaders of the Italian Communist Party that all of Sesto's mayors had belonged to since World War II, the whole world should be "a vast factory" because it created an "inseparability" of workers. It was the recognition and consciousness of this inseparability that would ultimately "link one factory to another, one city to another, one nation to another" (Gramsci, cited in Bellamy and Cox 1994: 152).

Sesto per l'UNESCO's insistence that Sesto be recognized as a "coherent organism" is perhaps an aftereffect of Gramsci's organismic view of the factory and the inseparability of workers it spawned. It thus shows that the machine and the factory have a curious afterlife of their own, one that exceeds Marxist narratives of alienation and expresses itself in acts of memorialization that hinge on peoples' love toward machines. Such love might very well be a remnant of Gramsci's early insistence on machines as solidarity-producing, but it might also be an effect of a curious alchemy that seemed to have set in for Italian workers during a very different historical epoch in Italian communism, when a grand compromise between capital and labor began to govern late twentieth-century industrial modernity, such that factories were transmuted from sites of injury and death into sites of ambivalent love. This was an era in which workers exchanged their will for revolution for the boredom and violence of the machine, but they did so because they were then fed and insured against risk such as injury and old age.

But machine love is certainly also an effect of the fact that machines seem to have mediated thick social relations all along. Rather than alienating workers from each other, Sestesi today remember machines as drawing people together —workers with workers and workers with kin. In Sesto during the summer of 2012, I was struck by a giant image that had been attached to the *carroponte* and that hung there for several months. The installation, commissioned by the MIL, consisted of a huge, blown-up image of a small plaque that the artist Fabrizio Bellomo had found in the ruins of a steel factory in Bari in southern Italy. The plaque exclaimed, "Take care of the machine you are working at. It is your bread!"

What does it mean, to think of the machine as one's bread? One might think of this as the language that was used to make palatable and meaningful the value of industrial machines to peasants, those who had left their southern fields to work in factories in both the Italian north and south and who had to be cajoled, if not forced, into their deadening discipline. One can think of this cynically, too, as a crystallization of Fordist Keynesianism's hegemonic force, where the violence of the machine was exchanged for dreams of security, and revolution forsaken for middle-class prosperity. After all, as ISEC historian Alberto de Christofaro explained to me, Sesto was a communist town, but it was a "reformist communism," not the "revolutionary version but one that made the world better in a practical way."

I want to take seriously that this plaque appeared as a monument in its own right in Sesto in 2012. Attached to the *carroponte*, it reads like a declaration of love that celebrates a form of imbibing very different from the one described by Chaplin's *Modern Times*, where machines had devoured workers and workers choked on machines. In Sesto today, the machine appears as life-giving love-object, as nourishing and worthy of care. As Sesto per l'UNESCO put it, the installation evokes a worker-machine relation that is "physical" and

IMAGE 3 Carroponte, Sesto San Giovanni, 2012. Photograph by Roy Bisschops—zeropxl.com.

"trusting."[26] What remains in the rubble of Sesto is a story of elementary reciprocity, organicity, and symbiosis, a reciprocity that extended itself outward from the worker-machine and into the family. The machine, after all, is the bread that allowed for the transformation of the worker into the breadwinner (*chi procura il pane in famiglia*), the figure that stood at the heart of modern welfarist solidarity (Fraser 2009).

But there is also a story about property embedded in this plaque. To whom do the machines belong? The workers interpellated by the plaque were summoned into thinking of their machines as *their* machines (It is *your* bread!), and indeed, there are traces of this sense disseminated across the fabric of the town today. When Cristina Meneguzzo from Sesto per l'UNESCO made a number of videos interviewing the town's elderly ex-workers, she discovered that they affectionately remembered machines as mediating their relations with kin, such as when one man remembered climbing a Breda locomotive together with his father, a locomotive that his both father and grandfather had made and driven. Meneguzzo also told me that some of the townspeople when they retired had taken small machines home and kept them there "like relics." One eighty-five-year-old woman who had first been a manual and then an office worker at Marelli was visited by Meneguzzo in her home. There, she suddenly revealed that she had kept one of Marelli's huge old calculators (*calcolatrice*). She pulled it out proudly, showing her visitor how the accounts were made. Cristina noted, "These machines of course are different from the

[26] http://www.sestosg.net/sportelli/sestounesco/passidagigante/scheda/,3356 (accessed 11 Sept. 2016).

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enormous machines in the factory; it was a *macchina da tavolo*, a table machine as it was called, but she kept it at home like a relic (*reliquia*). There is this very strong relationship with the machines that people worked with." Cristina ended by saying that Sesto per l'UNESCO wants to make visible "the love that there was, that existed on the part of the people vis-à-vis the machines they were using, amongst men as well as women."

Workers in Sesto thus remembered machines as objects that belonged to them like bread and that they held sacred when their factories closed. These machines were treated not only as vehicles towards solidarity and revolution but also as icons of workers' skill, material artifacts that indexed the kind of knowledge that workers remembered in great detail. This knowledge was alive in workers' accounts and alive in Sesto's machines as well. Every single machine exhibited under the auspices of Sesto per l'UNESCO's project today is squeaky clean. They stand gleaming as former workers explain to their audiences how exactly they worked. These machines have deliberately not been staged as half-decaying objects of a nostalgically evoked past (Steinmetz 2010: 306), but instead stand poised, vibrant, ready to be used again. They thus continue to work as compressed symbols of the inalienability of workers' knowledge and skill, knowledge that is theirs and that remains even as their "houses" stand empty.

Sitting in her office in Sesto's town hall, Meneguzzo suddenly remembered a "beautiful thing." "There was one man," she said, who was "recounting some very technical detail about those big machines in the factories. He was talking about a problem he had to resolve … a transmission problem that had to do with the movement of the machine. He said that his wife had been a seamstress, and after days of wracking his brains over what the problem was, he went home and opened my wife's sowing machine. There, he saw that "the transmission worked with two camshafts, and from there I got an idea, and I transferred that very same mechanism to the giant machine in the factory!" We both marveled at how these workers "had studied two very different machines and had the desire to make them work." The factory had invaded the intimacy of a home and consumed the man in that the broken machine simply would not let him go. But it was precisely because these machines were not computerized that they allowed for this man to enter the machine, to open it up and to appear as a crafty bricoleur-maker even decades later.

In part, one must understand the sacrality of machines and knowledge as an aftereffect of what Bell has described as Sesto's remarkable artisanal culture. Working-class culture in Sesto was not "the product of rootlessness and marginalization," but rather sprang from this long and honorable tradition (Bell 1986: 54). This was a tradition that insisted on the ethic of the craft and, quite literally, on craftiness at the workplace, both vis-à-vis machines and the work process. Sesto, as Paolo Sangalli told me, was "incredibly rich in terms of its *maestranze*," a term that in Italian means "workforce" but also denotes

mastery and manual expertise. These were not workers who ever thought of themselves as Fredrick Taylor's "trained gorillas."[27] Rather, as former Falck worker Giuseppe Granelli recalled, "I experienced a passion for the work we performed. Because even as this work was extremely tiring, we felt that we were creating something." Worker's insistence on intelligence and craftiness is a reflection on the past. But it is, once again, also a reflection on our current condition where we are beholden to machines like never before: "those little computers" that we do not understand and that enslave us.

THE ENDURANCE OF SOLIDARITY

Sesto per l'UNESCO's cultivation of solidarity from within the debris of its abandoned factories is striking, especially when placed within the more generalized sense of loss that permeates Italian political and cultural landscape today—a loss not only of twentieth-century achievements of social stability through work and state protections, but of the concomitant forms of sociality that this era entailed. While it is of course difficult to parse Sesto's actually lived past from its memorialization of its Italian communist ethic and sensorium—a cultivation suffused with desires of the present—we do learn one thing: that this past produced an incredibly durable set of ideas, desires, and aspirations that might very well outlast the concrete work-processes, objects, and infrastructures within which they came to life. Put differently, the lasting power of a set of ideas and desires might in fact outlive industrial production itself.

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[27] This was the term Taylor famously used in his book *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911).

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Abstract: This paper explores the rise of "industrial heritage" and the forms of memorialization proliferating around it. The site is Sesto San Giovanni, Italy's "City of Factories," which was also a bastion of communist mobilization and which is now bidding to be recognized on UNESCO's world heritage list. Sesto's bid is an attempt not just to recuperate and reinvigorate the landscape of Sesto's ruined factories and its massive, crumbling machinery, but also to capture and render visible and graspable the traces of what this built environment expressed and left behind—the sentiment of solidarity. I thus argue for an understanding of solidarity not just as an emotion or value, but as a structure of feeling

mediated by specific material and corporeal forms, in bodies collectively inhabiting a built environment and rhythmically moving within and out of infrastructures and lived landscapes. Such a materialist conception of solidarity must account for bodies and embodiment, rhythm and refrain, as well as for how certain material forms allow for the generation of proximities, coordination, and likeness across difference. It means thinking of solidarity as an arrangement and assembly of bodies in time and space, and of these bodies and their movement as generative of political feeling and action. Based on ethnographic and archival research in Sesto San Giovanni between 2011 and 2013, I tell the story of the afterlife of a twentieth-century sentiment and its fate in an era that has rendered solidarity precarious.