

Despite this story, I have been very lucky in my life ... I had two wonderful parents, who, in their simplicity they taught me to love and respect Nature and its Laws. I have had satisfactory work experience both economically and professionally. I am not rich, but I can not complain .. I have everything I need. If you have the adventure to stumble upon this book, Read it ... give it a value ... and DONATE !

You can be sure that every cent will be used for the survival of the protagonist, my adoptive son ,when I'm gone.



Bretea Streiouli orphanage , Deva Romania

Tito Capaldo

THE RABBIT CULTURE

The myth of infinite growth what madness!



INTRODUCTION

By Daniela Angioletti and Luciano Capaldo

Direct and vivid in its telling of the details of the adoption of a 7-year old boy from Romania after the collapse of Communism, the novel manages ultimately to deliver much more.

Through reminiscence of his happy childhood, his family ties, his values, his father figure, the environment he grew up in, Antonio Capaldo portrays the widening gap between that real world and the current virtual one:

“In the village everybody knew one another, as kids we had the feeling we were doing what we wanted, but, the truth is we were closely watched. Anyone, uncle, aunt, friend was of course entitled to reproach us, threatening us to inform our parents. It was a kind of extended family that seemed to work fine”.

Difficulties inevitably connected with the adoption bring the writer to explore the darkest places of human nature: schizophrenia, mental disorders, drugs and homosexuality.

In the everlasting clash between *Law and Faith, Rules and Revealed Truth, Relativism and Absolutism*, the only Law we can hold on to is the Law of Nature, the natural order of things:

“If you get rid of the absolute (principles) you’ll find out a world surprisingly made of balance, serenity and tolerance [...] you feel master of yourself, [...] fear of death vanishes and death reveals itself as an act of life”.

If we rise above the myth of the *Revealed Truth*, we’ll be able to finally set some *Shared Rules* which do not claim to have any divine link:

*“[...] even if we are labelled as Christian and Muslim we belong to the same rich yet diverse **pack**. [...] Everybody will enjoy – in their differences – the purpose of unity”.*

Thus many current subjects such as politics, information, justice, war, death, euthanasia, religion, fundamentalism can be seen from a much more balanced, yet trenchant viewpoint.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

December 1991, morning, the sky is clear with a freezing wind coming from the North, with my mind I am already at Campo di Giove on the ski slopes.

We are almost ready, from the tenth floor of the block of flats where we live, I can spot the Pontine Islands, Palmarola, Ponza and Zannone lying peacefully waiting for my summer raids.

Maria! The phone!

"Yes, I!"

I shut my eyes and find myself at *Punta della Guardia*, the water is crystal clear, I am over a landslide of huge boulders and down twenty meters below me a grouper, as straight as a candle, is watching me. My pulse is racing, I get ready and start plunging, I get closer and closer (I am almost within at spear gun range)...

"Tito! Tito!"

What?

I have got news: international social services in Rome told me that there is a child going through the process of adoption and he is Romanian. "

Adrenalin, induced by the grouper is rocketing up. At last after two years of tests and interviews with the assistants of the court of minors in order to be considered suitable, we got the news we have been waiting for. I was told his name is Marco. He is six and a half.

"Isn't he too big?"

Actually I agree with you.

Hurry. Let's go ... otherwise we'll be late, we will have time to think about it at Campo di Giove during the Christmas holidays. After loading the luggage into the car we took the 148 to Rome.

"Where are you going? Aren't you heading for Venafro-Roccaraso?"

No I am not. We'll take the motorway, the *Guado della Forchetta* may be closed because of the snow falls, so we'll go to Rome, Avezzano, Sulmona, Campo di Giove.

I turned the radio on to unwind a bit, expecting the reaction....

"Don't tune to *Radio Radical* I'll get out of the car.....!"

No, no, God forbid just tune to what you want.

We were absorbed in our own thoughts until we got to the Ring Road.

The boy is six and a half! My friend Professor Menichella, an outstanding paediatrician, warned off adopting a child older than 2 or 3. I talked to him about my plan and we went to meet him in Rome at his place. When he saw me, as friendly as usual, he greeted me and said: "Tito, do you remember the trip in the Majella range? You gave me one of the most beautiful days of my life!

I was almost embarrassed in front of this big man with grey hair and goatee, as I was also aware he was a relative of the Governor of the Bank of Italy,

the one who had his signature on the ten thousand lire note, the former big and red bank notes.

The professor was often at Campo di Giove. He got there in a Sixties van, he had 7-8 children, two were adopted. He stayed at my uncle's guesthouse, where I met him.

Since I was an expert skier I taught his children how to ski and I often saw them in the guesthouse common room, where the professor put me and my cousins play chess.

We haven't seen each other for some years since I joined the Air Force Academy. Once we met again at Campo di Giove and he told me he really wanted to go on ski trip on the Majella massif.

I hesitated at first, but then the next day in my car we took the country road which leads to the woods up to Macchia di Secina where the snow began.

With our skis on we set off along the path leading to the valley and then to the top. It was really hard, but behind me the professor, at his venerable age, kept the pace up. I do not know what he was looking for or what made him do that.

I walked, and I was on the outlook searching through the beeches and I thought to myself: I am reckless. If we come across a pack of wolves we are dead!

Finally we left the woods and we found ourselves facing Fondo Majella: it was a huge immaculate, clean amphitheatre without rows of seats, spread with shiny diamonds sparkling in the sun. Three hours later we were almost on the top. We sat down tired and after a hot drink the professor exclaimed: "I believe I'll never see such a view in my life again!"



I never suspected that a mountain I saw every day from the village could give me that emotion being on its top. I thought of that lovely Abruzzese song "*So' sajito a ju Gran Sasso so remastu ammutulitu mi pare ache passu passu se sajesse a j'infinitu.*" (I climbed up Gran Sasso and I found myself speechless, it seemed to me that step by step I could climb up endlessly) It took my breath away.

It was my wife who brought me back to reality.

"Do you know, Tito I was thinking of Professor Menichella"

As a matter of fact me too.

"He said that a 6-7 year-old child has already a formed character, and that, being in an orphanage he has certainly gone through heavy traumas and

negative experiences, on top of everything he is in a Romanian orphanage with the current situation with Ceausescu."

Well the Professor also said that it would be difficult to deal with such a child and it would require a great deal of patience and strength of mind; but at the end of the day he is just a kid! I always think positive and I am an optimist.

"That may be true, I am happy but at the same I am a little bit afraid."

In fact, I soon forgot the wise Professor's rational analysis and I made up my mind.

In Avezzano we saw the snow, I could fully see the Majella range in the distance. I carelessly started humming a verse of the Grand Sassu song, that bit referring to the Majella massif: "how beautiful.....how beautiful it seems made for....love".

The reaction was a sudden and obvious one: "Make sure you won't miss your chance to sing and get drunk with that gang of desperate friends of yours. Bear in mind Tito that I am going back to Latina.

Do not worry, wife, do come as well....a couple of drinks will do you good. Then it is so cold that you will not even feel drunk!

Meanwhile, in my mind scenes followed one another just like in a movie, I see myself on the ski slopes with Marco while I am teaching him the snowplough position, after a little I find myself in our rubber dinghy, going at breakneck speed along the coast of Latina, and he just loves it, then we reach a sand bank I know of and I am putting on the wetsuit, grabbing the spear gun and we are diving in. it is still early, he is little but I am sure he will become a perfect scuba diver.

We left the motorway and we went through Sulmona, in the main square there is the statue of Ovid, absorbed in deep thought, I used to see it every morning when I went to school. Perhaps it is a sign of destiny but he also

lived in Romania, "Sulmo mihi patria est" is written on the pedestal, but I also remember the other famous statement "Cogito ergo sum" I think therefore I am. It seems like a meaningless sentence but if I turn it into a negative one "I do not think, therefore I am not" it becomes a very serious issue: an individual with flat electroencephalogram in irreversible coma, kept alive by a machine is he a person or is he not?

At that point the road got steep, I know every bend to the point that I could drive keeping my eyes shut. After the Pacentro junction we got to the valley. On the left mountain ridge I could still see that path my mother and all the other villagers used to take with their mules to reach Sulmona to buy something; different paces in the old days! I had the pleasant sensation I was going back to my den. A little further up there's the cottage of my shepherd friend and not far from that spot years ago my father captured a wild boar. Everything was becoming familiar. I did not say that to my wife but this is my territory, therefore she is safe. One more road curve and I see a signpost: Campo di Giove 1064 m..

My wife bothered by the winding road said as usual: "go on say it say it" ...

And I replied: and here it is, the charming little village!



Campo di Giove is perched on a hill with the entire Majella range lying in front of it. On the right there is a small plateau bounded on the West by rail road flanked by a beautiful pine wood. Unlike now when I was a boy the fields were all farmed. In July the wheat fields waved in the wind simulating the waves of the sea, which I first saw, as many of my peers did, when I was 16!

When I think of it I believe I was very lucky to spend the first years of my life there. We enjoyed virtually unlimited freedom. There were two or three cars, several mules, donkeys, sheep and cows. There were no hazards and we ran anywhere we liked satisfying our curiosity and inventiveness.

We had an updated map of all the nests of the pine wood and we knew all kinds of birds and animals present in the area. Skilled builders of huts and

bows we compensated for the lack of toys by manufacturing them with iron wire. Whoever had two ball bearings could consider himself extremely lucky because he could build a scooter with them. We were able to survive two or three days by eating herbs, berries and tubers we knew, and one of my favourite amusements was to steal cherries, plums and hazelnuts from the wide courtyard that belonged to the person who was once considered the "village squire". Everything was clean, even the dump yard because people did not waste much; you could perhaps find a shoe or an old umbrella, but there was mainly organic waste. In fact, there was n't a proper landfill, there were small places just outside the village where people threw their waste. In the spring time I often went there because peach trees, plum trees and cherry trees sprang up.

I was fascinated by the fact that fruit trees and fruits I really liked could grow out of a dry seed.

In the village everybody knew one another, as kids we had the feeling we were doing what we wanted, but, the truth is we were closely watched. Anyone, uncle, aunt, friend was of course entitled to reproach us, threatening us to inform our parents. It was a kind of extended family that seemed to work fine.

When the weather was nice old people gathered in the square along a low wall to warm up in the sun. They talked with kids like me bestowing wisdom, but they spoke very little with one another. They just looked around and sometimes someone exclaimed: "Eh Yes! A second one replied" Who knows! "And a third one replied back" Oh well"

After many years I realised that those three lapidary expressions held the speech of a lifetime, a lethal synthesis of "certainty", "doubts" and "interaction". It was like drawing conclusions, and judging by their faces, the result was, nevertheless, positive.

LOCAL POLITICS AND PARK

"Here we are at last! Here it is freezing cold and I am telling you right now that next year we are going to spend Christmas in Latina".

Yes Ma'm! As I was formerly in the army I knew extremely well that my wife was the captain. We could hardly find a spot to park the car in the Town Hall square, my parents' house is about 50 m. from the square, we got up the stairs, I opened the door and I was welcome by a nice warmth and a familiar smell of cooking.

"Ohhere you are at last" My father came to say hi and then went back to sit near the kitchen range. "Are you coming from Sulmona?"

Yes I am.

"Well done because at Valico della Forchetta it is snowing and there may be avalanches. I cannot stand the snow any longer, I would not even put it in my pipe. "

I went to the kitchen and greeted my mother with a kiss on the cheek.

Mom what are we eating?

"I mad some ravioli, then sausages with gravy" and "*u turcineie*" Elio brought me some ricotta cheese, it is very good."

We have special ravioli here: homemade pasta filled with ricotta cheese and each raviolo weighs about 40 grams. "*U turcineie*" is a kind of sausage made of lamb liver wrapped in lamb casings, I just love it!. Whenever I go back to Campo di Giove my mother – if lamb meat is available - always prepares it, and my sister, with a touch of envy comments: "the lost son is back, today we have food!"

In the meantime my father was sitting at the table and he was watching the news, I could see he is shaking his head and the expression on his face changed: in fact they were reporting news about the Pope, and with an ironic grin on his face he talked to my mother: "eh your friend is on the every single day".

"How nasty of you, but what has that poor thing done to you....he is not even well"

"I know what he has done to me".

As an old comrade he could not stand priests, considering them able to bewitch bigots who voted the crusader shield¹ This matter started a long time ago. In 1942, when he was twenty, he joined the Carabinieri and at first he worked as a guard at the residential palace of King Peppetto Vittorio Emanuele III. Then he was sent as military police to the Greek-Albanian front

He wasn't particularly keen on talking about that experience, but sometimes with a few extra glasses of wine he let himself go. He must have seen atrocities and executions to the point that on 8th September, when the army withdrew astray and without a guide, he joined the other side: Tito's partisans. Once he told me that one evening, during a reprisal, a boy was hanged because he was the partisans' despatch rider, and on the road edge my father killed a dozen of Germans. I find it difficult to imagine that, a man as good and gentle as my father could – out of necessity or beliefs – do such a thing.

It is not like in a movie; when you are aware that the scene is real, things change, and at that point, I understood his reticence, his silence and his anger. At the end of the war he walked back to Italy on his own and returned to his unit, but it did not last long.

¹ Christian Democrats logo

In that environment there was still the atmosphere of the Twenties, when in the village he was a young fascists' leader. His previous experience violently clashed with the new situation, especially for him who had worn the red star hat for over one year. He smiled when he heard that someone received the partisans' legion of merit for hiding a British soldier for one night. He who had been a true partisan did not have and could not receive any award, it reminded me of that movie scene in which Totò says: "let's count each other, we are seven but it is not that later....!"

Immediately after the end of the war the situation was dramatic. To avoid starvation people made ends meet by farming land and raising cattle. Boiling stones to make lime could also provide an extra income. Later the railway reconstruction works to connect Sulmona to Naples began. It was a chance for all the surrounding villages. The constructor exploited the manpower - in an indecent way even for those years - forcing desperate people to accept twelve-hour working shifts for little money. My father tried to organize a strike with a few friends, but people were blocked by the fear of losing even that little money they could make.

At that time it was easy to find weapons, therefore he together with a few close friends decided to compel people to strike. Hiding in the woods they shot on the railway tracks, forcing the workers to leave the site. It was not very democratic, but within a few weeks, things slightly changed.

We finished eating and I was looking forward to going out, my father - after all that chatting - dozed off, I, gazing at my wife, put the jacket on and left.

The main square was not far and going down there I walked by a man's house, he passed away but I still remember him well because he used to wear plus fours trousers and impressed me with a sentence "e uaiò sempre a fatià...pure...a cacà ce vò la forza," as say, dear boy we must always work hard, even to defecate... you need strength.

In the square there were a few people, certainly everybody was at the bar, I looked through the window and in fact many of my friends were there.

As soon as I stepped in the owner greeted me, "Hello *Wreck* (they teased me because I was a pilot) at last you show up here" Handshakes in rapid succession, and after that I found myself with a glass of beer in my hand.

During the holidays there was a bit of a problem there, anyone you met offered you a drink and it was hard to say no. In the lounge bar they are all set. "Tito, Tito! Come over here, we need a forth player for a Tressette²".

I was sitting in front of one of my cousins who gave me an ambiguous smile and said: "I need to talk to you later."

What about?

"After the game we let's go for a walk."

I almost lost all cards games and I was heavily reproached, but I made up for it when I played Passatella³.

As we left the bar outside it began to snow, the trees and the streets were all lit, only Santa Claus on his sleigh was missing. We were walking towards San Rocco square.

Well, what do you have to say?

"In April the Council elections are taking place you have to run for mayor for the right-centre winged party."

But are you crazy? I live in Latina! Should I take a leave from work? On which ground? With a mayor's salary of 800,000 lire⁴ per month?

Well this is odd, in Italy there are about 8,000 municipalities, most of them are small and with limited resources, the Government spends billions for

² Card game

³ Card game

⁴ 400 euro

unnecessary institutions, there is no way they pass a bill to raise mayors' salary. Then they complain if mayors do business or make others do business!

"No you should not take a leave, but you can commit yourself 2 or 3 days a week."

Anyway you know how I feel right wing, left wing D.C., MSI, P.C., P.S.I, with all the other versions there are about twenty, what have they go to do with the Council administration?

"Eh They have something to do with it because then at provincial and regional level there's nobody to rely on".

You are wrong, look at the current situation if the Left party runs the Council, there is the centre-right party at the Province and the centre-wing party at the Region, they all fight with each other. It is a system that sucks, tailored made to create problems rather than solving them.

I already picture the scene: as mayor I have to solve a problem,– as I am slow – it takes me a month to prepare the papers concerning this matter, but at the Province they bounce it back because I am a Leftist. The papers get back, I prepare them again, the Province gives the green light, but at the Region they reject it because the right-centre party is in charge.

Roughly I have to wait the astral combination in which the council, province and region are all right-winged or left-winged. Local municipalities have to administer applying existing rules and regulations which are approved by the parties in Parliament. Right, left, centre ...

We have to deal with the ski basin and the park issues! Instead of sorting out the problems we have with these environment extreme conservatives we are at dagger drawn with comrades, crusader shield and others, and meanwhile the village goes to rack and ruin.

We have given 94% of the Council territory to the Majella park, to obtain what? Only kicks in the faceand some seats in the Park Administration Board.

They complain that young people leave the village, that the village is being depopulated and aging but they cannot explain why. It almost seems an inevitable, natural process. Not long ago this village was teeming with life, people could make a living out of farming land, raising sheep, goats and cows, sometimes it was tough, but people were here because there was work to do.

It is true, now times have changed! The village economy is no longer based on agriculture and livestock, but mainly on tourism, and it is here where the problems begin.

They claim to develop tourism without adequate infrastructures, with a policy of total immobility imposed by the park managers who seized everything: the village, agricultural land, stables and even the ski basin.

If by chance I had in mind to come back here to work as a farmer or raise cows as I did when I was a child I couldn't have the opportunity to fence my land, to sow what I consider more appropriate, I am talking about my piece of land the one my father, grandparents and great-grandparents have had and made a living out of, for centuries.

I couldn't build a stable.....at Campo di Giove only three shepherds are left, we should build a monument for them, facilitate them in all possible ways but instead my friend Falaschino is not allowed to build a stable and he is forced to leave the sheep in inadequate and ugly structures with enormous difficulties during the winter.

Yet I cannot fully grasp which natural disasters could be caused by the construction of a farm.

To add insult to injury these gentlemen tell us to encourage and promote local production; their common sense is truly impressive: who should be

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