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CILENTO AND VALLO DI DIANO NATIONAL PARK WITH THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES OF PAESTUM AND VELIA, AND THE CERTOSA DI PADULA

“Before sunset, he came close to a colonnade that had been erected in front of the sea. Some fluted shafts laid like large tree trunks, others, still standing, doubled horizontally by their shadows, silhouetted against the red sky; behind them the misty, pale sea could be glimpsed. Miguel tied his horse to the shaft of a column and began to walk among those ruins whose name he did not know. Still dazed from his long gallop across the heath, he felt that lightness and languor that one sometimes experiences in dreams.”

Anna Soror, in Two Lives and a Dream, Marguerite Yourcenar

Miguel feels like he is in a dream as he walks among the ruins of one of the archaeological sites of Cilento: a national park created in 1991 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1998. The environment has the typical coastal Mediterranean vegetation – broom, junipers, mastic trees, sea lilies, heather, myrtle, olive trees – as well as holm oak, maple, plane, hornbeam and chestnut forests in the interior. The park is home to natural wonders and exceptional monuments: from the Greek Paestum to Elea/Velia – the birthplace of Parmenides and Zeno – from the Cilento Coast to the Pertosa Auletta Caves, from the Calore Gorges to the abandoned village of Roscigno Vecchia, from the Certosa di Padula to the fertile Vallo di Diano. The UNESCO Site includes much more: the Mediterranean diet, the art of dry-stone walls and the traditional practice of truffle hunting and extraction.



CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
UNESCO DOSSIER: 828
PLACE OF INSCRIPTION: KYOTO, JAPAN
YEAR OF INSCRIPTION: 1998



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION: Cilento is a cultural landscape of outstanding value. The striking groups of sanctuaries and settlements vividly portray the area's historical evolution: it was a major route not only for trade, but also for cultural and political interaction, from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages.



“Salerno, 5 May 1932. [...] These are the places that Virgil visited, and he was so attentive, sensitive and accurate that it is difficult not to see them through his eyes. [...] Thus, if my eyes assist me this time, it will be thanks to Canto V and VI of the Aeneid.”

In 1931, Giuseppe Ungaretti, commissioned by the *Gazzetta del Popolo* in Turin, starts working on a travel reportage in southern Italy. In 1934 he is in Cilento, a land he falls in love with and celebrates in his prose. His articles are published in the collection *Il deserto e dopo*.

Leaving from **1 Salerno**, Ungaretti travels through the **2 Piana del Sele**, where he writes a note on the cows that provide milk to the dairy farms that make the best mozzarella in the world: “[the cows] roll around in filth so as not to feel the flies, they go around covered in crusty earth, on which even grass grows, carrying the magpies that mistake them for tall clods. Good beasts after all, and producers of the milk that gives us those exquisite mozzarellas.” In **3 Paestum** he reflects on how the temples, surrounded by malaria-infested swamps, have survived looting and are still there, standing for millennia: “Surrounding them with fever, instilling fear for so many miles, time has defended the miracle of their strength from death [...]. A flock of

crows flees from the temple of Poseidon [...]. The rhythm of their song is that of time. [...] In front, the travertine of the tympanum and Doric columns looks like inflamed glass: the light that does not consume burns in the heart of the stone, and its sacred indifference shines through. The sides, however, convey a tragic sense of decay: columns emptied over long years, showing labyrinths of caries”. Then, his journey continues: “Now the mountains can no longer be seen, but they press our flanks as we go towards the sea, the silence is almost scary, as is the solitude and grandeur in which I feel segregated. And what is that high cliff covered by little fields all the way to the top, in such elegant geometry?”. He has reached **4 Agropoli**, with its historic centre

perched on a cliff and the beautiful Bay of Trentova. “From semi-darkness we come out to the sea. The coastline cuts the mountain.” He is now at **5 Punta Licosa**, where according to myth the sea laid the body of one of the three Sirens killed by Ulysses’ resistance. “Then the mountains recede, the leaves of the olive trees become darker [...] and shook by the breeze they show a silver side, full of ancient shadows.” And finally, he visits **6 Elea/Velia**: “Elea, this is Elea, city of fugitives. [...] Oh you, Xenophanes, the bard who landed here from invaded Jonia, the fragments left of your work are not larger than splinters of terracotta [...] that I can pick up by the handful as I ascend.”



FOOD AS HERITAGE

“The Mediterranean diet constitutes a set of skills, knowledge, practices and traditions ranging from the landscape to the table, including the crops, harvesting, fishing, conservation, processing, preparation and, particularly, consumption of food. [...]. However, [...] it encompasses more than just food. It promotes social interaction, since communal meals are the cornerstone of social customs and festive events.”

Decision 5 COM 6.41 of 16 November 2010, UNESCO

With these motivations, the Mediterranean Diet was acknowledged as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010. Later, it was also recognized by the FAO and the WHO as a tool for sustainable agriculture and an essential way to help prevent cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases. The American biologist Ancel Keys (interesting fact: the initial of his surname gave name to the K Ration, the American army’s subsistence food kit) was the first to theorise the link between the eating habits of the inhabitants of the Cilento area and the low incidence of cardiovascular disease in that territory. The Living Museum of the Mediterranean Diet in Pioppi, the Cilento village where Keys lived most of his life, is dedicated to him.



'PALINURUS WAS AT THE HELM OF THE FIRST SHIP, THE OTHERS FOLLOWED. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HUMID NIGHT THE SAILORS RESTED IN PLACID STILLNESS, UNDER THE OARS SPREAD OUT ON THE BENCHES. IT WAS THEN THAT SLEEP CAME DOWN FROM THE ETHEREAL STARS, SAT ON THE HIGH STERN AND TOLD HIM: PALINURUS, THE SEAS THEMSELVES STEER THE FLEET, THE BREEZES BLOW STEADILY, THIS HOUR IS GRANTED FOR REST.'

Sleep's advice – "Rest" – hides a pact between Venus and Neptune: in order to lead to safety the fleet of Aeneas, who escaped from Troy and was headed to Italy, the sea god demanded "one life that will be given for the many" (*Aeneid*, V, 815). The chosen victim is Palinurus, who does not listen to Sleep and holds on tight to the tiller trying to stay awake. But Sleep shakes a branch wet with soporific dew over his brow. Palinurus closes his eyes, lets go of the tiller and slips into the dark sea. For three days, he is at the mercy of the wind, until he lands at **1 Cape Palinuro**, where he is captured and killed by the locals, who believe him to be a sea monster. His body is abandoned at sea never

to be found again. Neptune's will is fulfilled. The sea, the scent of thyme and liquorice, seagulls playing in the wind: the best way to enjoy the nature of Cape Palinuro is by following the **Sentiero della Primula** trail. "Next you will come to the Sirens who deceive all men that approach them. Whoever encounters them unaware and listens to their voices will never rejoice at reaching home, his wife and children to greet him. Instead, the Sirens tempt him with their limpid song, as they sit there in the meadow with a vast heap of mouldering corpses, bones on which hangs the shrivelled skin. Plug your comrades' ears with softened beeswax lest they listen, and row swiftly past. And if you must hear, then let them first tie you hand and foot and stand you upright in the mast housing, and fasten the rope ends round the mast itself, so you can delight in hearing the Sirens' voices" (*Odyssey*, XII, 39-55). "Your voice like the chorus of Ulysses' Sirens enchains me", sings Franco Battiato in *Sentimento nuovo*: with their voices, the three Sirens Leucosia, Ligea and Parthenope, attracted sailors, who led their ships to crash on the rocks. Only then did the Sirens show themselves: a woman's face, wings and claws to rip their victims apart. Ulysses (*Odyssey*, IX) resisted them, and the Sirens, humiliated, threw themselves into the sea. One of them, Leucosia, was shipwrecked at **2 Punta Licosa**, a beautiful stretch of coastline with a small island surrounded by clear waters. According to local fishermen, early in the morning, when the sea is calm and the shore deserted, one can still hear her voice. Virgil or Homer do not mention them, but they are a must-see destination for children: the **3 Pertosa-Auletta Caves**, an underground system of stalactites and stalagmites that can be explored by boat and on foot: an amazing and very cool refuge in summer.



CILENTO AND VALLO DI DIANO NATURAL PARK in books

Reading suggestions to enter the heart of Cilento.

- **La spigolatrice di Sapri**, Luigi Mercantini (1858). Poem inspired by the feat attempted by Carlo Pisacane to free the political prisoners from the Bourbon prison of Ponza and provoke a revolt in Southern Italy. The plan included a stop at Sapri, in the Gulf of Policastro, where he waited for reinforcements before marching on Naples. The poem recounts the events from the point of view of a peasant girl who falls in love with Pisacane, joins the revolt and witnesses the defeat: "I was leaving in the morning to glean / when I saw a boat in the middle of the sea / it was a boat powered by steam, / and had a tricolour flag".
- **La Sanfelice**, Alexandre Dumas (1864). Maria Luisa Sanfelice of the Dukes of Agropoli and Lauriano is the protagonist of Dumas' novel, a chronicle of a tragic affair of intrigue, love and spies that takes place in Naples.

- **The Old Man and the Sea**, Ernest Hemingway (1951). "Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated." It would seem that Hemingway, in imagining Santiago, the elderly Cuban fisherman who struggles to catch a massive fish after a lengthy period of bad luck, was inspired by a fisherman he met in Agropoli, where the American writer spent some time in the early 1950s.

- **Viaggio in Italia**, Guido Piovene (1957). Piovene travelled through Italy for three years to write a unique and extremely detailed reportage, a classic of Italian travel literature. From the Alps to Sicily, through Cilento, the author's gaze is an invitation to discover the wonders of this beautiful country.

- **The Long Road of Sand**, Pier Paolo Pasolini (1959). On board a Fiat 1100, in the summer of 1959 Pier Paolo Pasolini travelled along the entire Italian coast, from La Spezia to Trieste, passing through Cilento.

- **Il deserto e dopo**, Giuseppe Ungaretti (1961). Between February and September 1934, Ungaretti visited the regions of southern Italy commissioned

by the *Gazzetta del Popolo*. The works produced on these trips, including to Cilento, were published by Mondadori in 1961.

- **Two Lives and a Dream**, Marguerite Yourcenar (1982). Of the three tales that make up the book, *Anna Soror* is the 16th century story of two siblings, Anna and Miguel, who discover that they love each other, and not just as siblings. Their story is also set in Cilento.

Children's books:

- **Odyssey**. Canto XII of the *Odyssey* is dedicated to the coast of Campania, where Odysseus resists the song of the Sirens, who throw themselves into the sea out of outrage.
- **Aeneid**. Book VI is entirely devoted to Aeneas's adventures in Campania, from the death of Palinurus to his encounter with the Sibyl, and his descent into the underworld via Lake Avernus.