

99 FIELDS: NOTES FOR A BIBLIOGRAPHY

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notes for a
bibliography
in
SAN ROCCO 02
THE EVEN
COVERING OF
THE FIELD
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It happened during a mediaeval art history class. The image being discussed was that of St Jerome in the desert. As for myself, I had always seen St Jerome in his study, surrounded by books in the carefully described space defined by Antonello da Messina – more a man of the Renaissance than a saint.

Here instead, the saint showed himself just as I had imagined a saint would: alone, penitent, ascetic, far from the joys and temptations of society. What I found really striking, though, was the desert. The idea of the desert.

The desert was defined by a comparison with the town painted in the background:

this is the desert because it is not the city, which is a clear urban ensemble. If you are not within the walls, then you are in the desert, which does not mean sand, heat, Paris-Dakar, or a void, but rather the negation of the town. And I also remember perceiving St Jerome in the desert, painted just outside the city, as someone who had lost the keys to his house and was waiting outside, just beyond the town walls.

Not much has changed, in the end, considering how we Italians escape from the city in the springtime and celebrate the season's arrival with a day trip outside the walls in true Italian style. Nothing has changed since Shakespeare had Romeo say "There is no world without Verona walls".

Well, I was born in Verona and, in time, I left it, and I can tell you that there is most definitely something beyond those walls.

What follows is a selection of ninety-nine episodes that happened there, in the fields outside Verona – episodes that showed (and keep showing) us those fields . . . the ones beyond the city walls.

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