

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Sardinian Hinges: Geometaphors and Giovanni Corona's Poetry

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Abstract: The idea for this essay sparked from the 'Thinking Space' section of the 2023 issue of *Literary Geographies*, which focused on the concept of spatial hinges. I read those contributions with great enthusiasm, as they seemed to articulate an idea that has long fascinated me and that I have come to call the *geometaphor*. The geometaphor is a precisely localized hinge: an element of the landscape so deeply imbued with meaning that it undergoes a kind of transfiguration, becoming symbolic while still firmly rooted in its geographic specificity. It is, in some way, the movement of the hinge itself. This idea is actualized within the Italian context, specifically on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia, as seen through the poetry of Giovanni Corona (1914–1987). After discussing the intersection between geometaphors and hinges in the context of 'interpatiality' and introducing the concept from an Italian viewpoint, the article delves into a close reading of several poems by Giovanni Corona. It isolates elements of the Sardinian landscape – such as the cork tree, a village nestled in a volcanic crater, an ancient sacred well, basaltic rocks, and even handwoven cloth – to discuss their intersection with literary and existential themes. These concrete, specific locations may act as hinge-moments, swinging to reveal deeper layers of meaning, accessible through what might be called a 'double gaze.'

Keywords: spatial hinge; Sardinia; landscape; spatial metaphor; poetry; island

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Introduction

As I engaged with the ‘Thinking Space’ section of the 2023 issue of *Literary Geographies*, dedicated to the concept of spatial hinges, I was thrilled by a profound sense of intellectual recognition. The theoretical framework of hinge theory and its various articulations appeared to offer both terminology and a conceptual context for an ongoing hypothesis I have been developing in recent years. First, I felt a feeling of companionship: I am not alone in these visionary walks through a landscape that James Thurgill describes as a hybrid environment, both affecting and affected by poetic imagination – ‘whereby place could be understood not only to influence texts but also to be influenced *by* texts’ (Thurgill 2023a: 234). Second, I discovered a workable definition: the *hinge* metaphor brilliantly describes the experience of physically walking through a landscape and recognizing its metaphors. It refers to something mobile and fluid, meaning different things to different observers, oscillating even without the willing complicity of the author (Thurgill 2021; 2023b; Thurgill and Lovell 2019). Angharad Saunders defined hinges as glimpses of an elsewhere, quickly opening and closing: ‘[Hinges] connect and they separate; they hold something close and something at a distance. We must push (or pull) on the door, to work the hinge and reveal the world hidden behind it’ (Saunders 2023: 253). Finally, the section proved particularly effective in its collective engagement with a conceptual challenge, offering a reassuring reminder that provisional definitions are not only acceptable but often necessary. In this light, the term *geometaphor*—a tentative and perhaps idiosyncratic label I have adopted to articulate my experience of the hinge—may be understood as a legitimate contribution to this conversation. It is convenient to limit the confusion that Sheila Hones sees in the scholarly discussion by clarifying this article’s terminology at the onset. I intend ‘landscape’ as a human-influenced geographical area, seen through human eyes; ‘space’ as a more neutral concept which is anyway not free from human negotiation and ‘always in becoming,’ and ‘place’ as the understanding of space through human interaction and social practice (see Hones 2022). I also use the terms geographical metaphor quite literally, differently from ‘spatial metaphors’ that abound in literary criticism and that have been seen as problematic (Smith and Katz 1993).

The topic of this article is highlighting the presence of geometaphors in the Sardinian landscape through the work of poet Giovanni Corona (1914–1987). Lived elements of the island’s landscape – a cork oak, a volcanic crater, an ancient sacred well, basaltic rock formations, and a hand-woven cloth – function as geometaphoric sites inventively fashioned directly from by the poet’s intuition or secondarily by the reader’s perception. James Thurgill and Jane Lovell describe the hinge as a personal perceptual process, a chance response to a sensory trigger in the material world which prompts the reader to experience the intra-textual geography of a literary narrative in an otherwise unrelated actual-world location:

This engagement with the extra-textual does not reach its terminus after the reading of a text has ended. Rather, we posit a spatial ‘hinge’ operating between the instances of the reading and the read, whereby the role of the extra-textual outlined by Hones (2008; 2014) becomes inverted, so that actual-world places shift from shaping the reading of

the text to being shaped by the reading of the text' (Thurgill and Lovell 2019: 18; my italics).

In my view, my experience of a town in Sardinia – one I had first known in its non-literary aspect – has been deeply influenced by reading Giovanni Corona's poems, to the point that I began to perceive not just earthly elements around me, but metaphors scattered across the landscape. Enriched by the experience of the text, cork trees and villages became more than geographical entities: I saw a village and recognized an eagle's nest (because Corona described it as such); I saw a cork tree and recognized a poet's decorticated soul (because of my own creative understanding of his poetics). However, there is a difference: Thurgill's theory opens hinges in unrelated locations – 'echoes of texts in places unconnected to the world described by the author' (Thurgill 2021: 153) – while geometaphors are instead anchored (as much as it is possible) to the world of the authors and their text for the sake of coherence in literary criticism. Resisting both abstraction and generalization, geometaphors are specifically localized spatial hinges oscillating between the tangible realities of place and their poetic resonance for both the poet and the reader. It is not just about finding geographical references within poems but about recognizing them on earth.

The theory of geometaphors may serve as a productive framework within the field of literary geography, because it is a fecund mode of seeing the landscape, the text and the author's sensibility simultaneously, condensed or folded into a single image. It thus functions as a site that makes visible the connection between geography and literature. On the one hand, it is an element of the landscape infused with human meaning, uses, and sensitivities, and therefore part of human geography; on the other, it is a textual element, a rhetorical figure through which authors and their poems may be described, and therefore part of literary criticism. These two fields, Sheila Hones warns, are actually one: 'The idea that the imagined and real or the literal and the geographical, have to be connected is a distraction: they have never been separate' (Hones 2024: 152). 'Geography can only ever be a human geography' and human geography 'inevitably [is] a literary geography' (135). Geometaphors may be considered as condensed sites of what Hones terms interspatiality – a neologism that brings together the geographical concept of spatiality, understood dialectically in relation to place, and the literary concept of intertextuality (Hones 2024). The most compelling aspect of interspatiality for the sake of this argument is Hones's characterization of literary geography as 'something inhabited as well as studied,' that is, as a lived space. 'Once it become possible to think of a geography as a human way of seeing and of living in the world, then the importance of storytelling, writing and reading as aspects of that seeing and living come into view, and it becomes evident that literary geography can itself be understood to name something inhabited as well as studied' (137). Writing this, Hones opens the possibility for the existence of a landscape in which a tree is not merely a natural presence but a hinge between the material and the narrative, so that – perhaps – in place of a tree one may recognize a story: 'Understanding literary geography as something inhabited draws attention to the ways in which life is lived in interspatialities, in surroundings that are made up the real and imagined, of stories as well as locations: storied locations and located stories' (152) This perception,

Hones adds, has the merit of foregrounding ‘a routine (and routinely overlooked) dimension of human life’ (117).

The Geometaphor as Hinge

The notion of the metaphor or the objective correlative in literature, or even the geographical metaphor, are by no means new. A metaphor is a rhetorical figure that folds multiple worlds and unrelated domains into one: ‘a metaphor creates new meanings, thanks to a balanced conciliation between image and conceptualization, between internal and external, between subjective and objective’ (Fonzi and Negro Sancipriano 1973: 34 [my translation]). A geographical metaphor is a poetic image drawn from the physical landscape and thickened with personal spiritual meanings. For T.S. Eliot, a metaphor was also an objective correlative: objects and situations that trigger specific feelings (Eliot 1919). Nobel-winning poet Eugenio Montale adopted this idea for his existential poetry formed by expressing the concrete objects but silencing the occasion, the reason, the push and thus creating a metaphor (Montale 1976). What is novel here is the attempt to pinpoint the metaphor’s precise geographical coordinates, as though embarking on a creative treasure hunt across textual and topographical hinges. This remains, of course, within the realm of possibility where proposed locations are offered as aids to interpretation. A second innovation of this approach lies in the precedence accorded to the physical landscape, apprehended through the lens of poetry. The aim is to cultivate a doubled perception of the world – thicker, more resonant, more beautiful – so that we may, effectively, walk among metaphors. A third significant aspect concerns the role of the critic or reader, who becomes, in a sense, a poet by striving to see beyond physical appearances following the pointed finger of the poet’s imagination.

In recent years, I have been experimentally applying this rhetorical figure – born from the hybridization of literary and geographical inquiry (Serra 2022; 2023; 2024) – to uncover the layered significance of terrestrial elements, interpreting them through an imaginative and generative lens and even mapping them through GIS. Geometaphors draw a poetic map in transparency over the physical map, almost like a ‘poetically augmented reality’ – term that Løvlie developed for his *Textopia* project (Løvlie 2009). His technology-based approach on ‘locative literature’ is similar to my own experimental attempt to create a GIS map of geometaphors (Serra 2022). Geometaphors may be understood as localized elements of the landscape so richly imbued with meaning that they undergo a transfiguration through the force of individual imagination shaped by the influence of literary readings, in ‘a post-reading scenario’ (Thurgill 2021: 154). Edward Soja calls this felicitous meeting of real and imagined space the ‘Thirdspace,’ a ‘real-and-imagined’ or ‘realandimagined’ space (Soja 1996: 10), that comes after the Firstplace or the ‘real’ material world, and the Secondplace or the ‘imagined’ representation of space: the space between world and literature. Sometimes, the landscape itself is commonly perceived using poetical terminology that belongs to another realm, thus overlapping layers in a metaphorical process. For example, Julian Jaynes notices a sensible world filled with metaphors captured in common names. Botanical terms such as ‘stag beetles,’ ‘lady’s slippers,’ ‘darning needles,’ ‘Queen Anne’s lace’ or ‘buttercups’ (and ‘foxtail

palms' and 'sawgrass' to add a personal Florida touch) fill the eyes with more than plants. He surmises that these 'concrete metaphors increase enormously our powers of perception of the world about us and our understanding of it and literally create new objects. Indeed, language is an organ of perception, not simply a means of communication' (Jaynes 2000: 50).

In Italy, Vittorio Lingiardi defined 'mindscape' as the correspondence between human and non-human geography: what we feel inside us and what we see around us are intertwined in a continuous dialogue. But it is Italian national poet Giacomo Leopardi who, according to me, best defined the presence of a poetic double gaze in the nineteenth century as pertaining to those who have a fervid imagination – which is undoubtedly just the capacity of perceiving the presence of kinds of hinges in the landscape: for these 'sensitive' observers 'the world and the objects are in a certain way double. They see a tower, a countryside with their eyes, they hear the chiming of a bell; and at the same time with their imagination, they see another tower, another field, and hear another chime' (Leopardi 1900: 352). Leopardi himself undoubtedly declared to prefer the second set of objects, the world of the poetic imagination, to the plain observable surface. According to him 'sad is that life (and it is the most common) that does not see, does not hear, does not feel other than the simple objects, those that pass simply through eyes, ears and feelings' (353). The 'double gaze' links 'the lived and the textual' (Hones 2024: 5): the physical presence with deeper imaginary, literary, cultural and existential meanings.

The definition of geometaphor begins with the acknowledgment that texts and the physical world intersect in various ways within a literary work. I would identify three primary modalities, each illustrated by examples from significant works of Italian literature. The first involves the appearance of geographical elements as mere toponyms—evocative names that gesture toward real locations but remain largely undeveloped within the narrative. These function as symbolic shadows of their geographical referents, suggestive yet inert. For instance, the Venetian arsenale in Dante's *Inferno* serves as an effective simile to convey the chaotic atmosphere of Hell, yet it remains a descriptive allusion. The second mode consists of landscape narratives imbued with affect, humanized or emotionally resonant. These descriptions are often redolent with feelings, yet they stop short of metaphor. An example is Alessandro Manzoni's poetic prose in *The Betrothed* (1827), particularly the famous depiction of the mountains surrounding Lake Como seen from the protagonist's point of view as she leaves them. The landscape reflects her inner emotional state, yet it does not transcend into symbolic abstraction. The third modality occurs when geographical elements remain firmly rooted in their physical specificity while simultaneously undergoing a metaphorical transfiguration. In these instances, the landscape does not merely reflect emotion or serve as decorative backdrop; rather, it becomes central to literary imagination and literary criticism, capable of embodying poetics or generating multilayered meaning. This is the realm in which the geometaphor operates: as a spatial hinge between the real and the symbolic, the material and the abstract. The most poignant example in Italian literature comes from Giacomo Leopardi's 1819 poem 'L'infinito' (The Infinite), where the hinge from the human to the non-human space is a specific shrub growing not more than fifty meters from his home in Recanati. Located on a hill, it limits the view of the surroundings. This very limitation is what launches

the heart into infinite imagination where the poet himself dissolves and sweetly shipwrecks (I am paraphrasing the last verses). After ‘L’infinito,’ this specific hedge – perhaps the most famous environmental element in Italian poetry – becomes more than a simple hedge: not a hedge, but a threshold that confirms ‘the presence of infinity within the finiteness of a limited space’ (Assunto 1973: 12).

The term ‘geometaphor’ is a neologism that unites geo, geography, the shape of the land, and metaphor, its value as poetry. Imagine it as a fragment of landscape that seems anonymous or unremarkable to the casual observer, but that acquires a double meaning as it enters the verses of a poem and then lives a life of its own once enriched and sublimated by poetic words. Through this dynamic, the element emerges as something more than itself. For Thurgill, the presence of hinges can be observed in the imaginative behavior of children. It is not uncommon for a child walking through a forest to perceive it as the Hundred Acre Wood from Winnie the Pooh, or to populate it with figures from Japanese folklore (Thurgill 2023c). Within the Italian literary tradition, this resonates with the gaze of the fanciullino (the little child) theorized by Giovanni Pascoli (1907) during the age of Symbolism: a childlike gaze that ‘speaks to animals, trees, stones, stars, and fills the shadows with ghosts and the sky with gods’ (5). Such imagination animates the world, investing the landscape with poetic and mythic resonance. The literary critic, too, is implicated in this dynamic, as an active and imaginative participant in the interpretive processes through which, as Yi-Fu Tuan suggests, undifferentiated space is transformed into place, subjectively endowed with meaning, memory, and affect (Tuan 1999). This transformation extends further still into what may be described as inscapes, or interior landscapes. In Simon Schama’s words, places acquire a thick poetic value in their intersection with the human: ‘It is our shaping perception that makes the difference between raw matter and landscape’ (Schama 1996: 10).

In contrast to more traditional literary geography studies, based on literary representations of real-world places, the analysis of geometaphors proceeds in the opposite direction, starting with the land itself and treating it as a generative force for the literary imagination. This approach gives agency to the landscape, in what Eric Magrane describes as the geopoetic process: ‘An immersion in a site that first pays close attention to the materialities and encounters of the site, and then intervenes in the site through a geopoetic form that is immanent to the site itself, one that is designed to enact, perform, comment on, critique, and, perhaps even recalibrate, the site itself’ (Magrane 2015: 96).

I will therefore begin with the geographical description of the place in its material specificity and subsequently thicken it by adding layers of literary and symbolic meanings. Influenced by Sheila Hones’s approach to literature and geography which described the text as an event happening in space and time (the ‘text-as-spatial-event’), James Thurgill usefully asserts that ‘within this shifting it is, of course, place that plays an active role in working with the author, reader and text to ground, legitimise and then expand the geography of the novel. Place collaborates in the ‘text-as-spatial-event’ not only in the imagining of literary places, but in the continued state of re-imagining those belonging to the actual-world’ (Thurgill 2019: 19). I align with this view: in what may be called the landscape-verse hendiadys, it is the landscape that precedes the verse—not as a rhetorical flourish, but as a critical imperative, in an

ontological continuity between the human and the nonhuman (Iovino and Oppermann 2014; Iovino 2015). Place is not a passive backdrop but an active interlocutor participating in meaning-making. This approach involves a reversal of both anthropocentric logic and conventional grammatical structure: the poet—and, by extension, the critic as poet—is positioned not as the subject who observes and interprets, but as the humble object who is shaped by and spoken to by a dynamic landscape. Geographic elements are not only passively perceived, but they are capable of speech and agency. Italian writer Marco Lodoli articulates this process in describing his own dialogue with the Tuscan landscape, where rose bushes take on their form of intentionality:

In the Chianti I once read some moving verse of British poet Richard B. Sheridan on a plaque: ‘Come into my garden, / I would like my roses to see you.’ This overturning is beautiful, and truthful. Perhaps our roses, our squares desire to meet us every day: we water them, and they tell us the ephemeral and eternal story of beauty, we feel quieter for a moment, and they feel for a moment protected by our gaze. (Lodoli 2010: 21; my translation).

Tangible elements of the Sardinian landscape – cork trees, sacred wells, and basaltic rock formations – transform into poetic metaphors through my interpretation of the verses by Giovanni Corona, presented here for the first time in English translation (alongside the original Italian to preserve the nuances of his voice). They serve as an entry point into an imagined insular landscape—or what Peter Carravetta and Paolo Valesio (1993) have aptly termed the *poesaggio*, a neologism that fuses *poesia* (poetry) and *paesaggio* (landscape). Complementing this literary exploration, my original photographs aim to visually situate the reader within these evocative and often remote Sardinian locations.

Giovanni Corona, Poet of Place

The choice of Giovanni Corona's poetry as a gateway into the poetic landscape of Sardinia is driven by his uniquely profound connection to the island, a place he never left, and which permeated his work with a deep-rooted sense of belonging. The landscape spoke to Corona, as he describes in his novel *Questo nostro fratello*, where the narrator seems to walk the line between the visible and invisible world: ‘I walked distractedly, and with each undulation of the countryside, in jolts, as if carried by the wind, memories bumped against me’ (Corona 2011a: 19). As so many oscillating hinges. Critic Leandro Muoni referred to the ‘shrine of environmental images’ that constitute Corona's landscape, which becomes ‘the iconic pretext, or the psychological antecedent, of an existential condition’ (Muoni 2009: 286). Similarly, critic Angela Cacciarru underlined the intensity of ‘intellectual reworking, but also the emotional perception of [Corona’s] environment’ (Cacciarru 2014: 13). The result of this mirroring dialogue between inner and outer spaces is an outburst of extraordinary hybrid metaphors, such as ‘the grassy fields of adolescence’ (‘Se guardo te,’ *Richiamo*: 56), where green age and green grass come to coincide, or ‘sadness is a stubble field’ (‘Funghi,’

Richiamo: 153). Elsewhere, straight paved roads are used to define the self-assuredness of those who never doubt, in the sarcastic ‘Psalm of those who believe in themselves’ (‘Salmo di chi crede in se stesso,’ *Richiamo*: 52). In his verses, human and geographic anatomy intertwine: ‘Our bodies / and souls / of tattered houses’ (‘Al mio paese,’ *Richiamo*: 23). Mountains acquire a human face: ‘You don’t know my mountain, / which - if you look well - is imprinted / with a man’s face’ (‘Questo è il mio monte,’ *Ho sentito la voce del vento*: 56). Even the wind becomes human in a poem that uses enjambments like asthmatic breaths: ‘[The wind] howling / alive and ungainly like those who suffer, eternal / like eternity, vain like vanity / human panting rising and falling’ (‘Se dovessi...,’ *Richiamo*: 158). In touching self-portraits, Giovanni Corona recognizes his image in the island landscape: ‘I was born with the *nuraghe*’ (‘Non sono giovane,’ *Richiamo*: 43), he declares, recognizing his own *gravitas* in the heavy Nuragic constructions – megalithic villages and towers dating from 3,000 years ago. ‘I am a shore without seagulls,’ he writes in ‘Ragazza’ (*Richiamo*: 47) describing his sense of abandonment in a simple stroke. Then he morphs into nocturnal coldness: ‘I feel like stone in the night, immersed / in a moon soiled with whiteness’ (‘Mi sento pietra,’ *Sassì*: 78), and allegorizes his passivity through the act of collecting dead plants: ‘I am one who gathers leaves / for the cruel book of memory’ (‘Come dirti che t’amo,’ *Richiamo*: 80). This brief exploration of the geographic threads woven through Corona’s verse underscores his distinctive poetic sensibility, positioning his work as especially apt for illustrating the concept of the *geometaphor*.

Sardinia’s Sand

Sardinia is a large island in the middle of the Tyrrhenian Sea, on the west of the Italian peninsula. It is second in size only to Sicily and it is commonly appreciated for its picturesque contours, sandy beaches and crystalline waters. The tourist industry has packaged an alluring ideal image of Sardinia that foregrounds its shores as ‘the ideal image of the island—a neatly bounded piece of land, surrounded by water’ (Grydehøj 2017: 5). However, in contrast to this public image of Sardinia, the islanders seem to have a love-hate relationship with their beaches: for Sardinian writer Michela Murgia, islanders seem to remember the fear of outer threats coming from the sea and maintain an ancestral wariness of their borders (Murgia 2008). There seems to be a need to consider islands in a different way: nissologist Lisa Fletcher wished for an end of the persistent distinction between ‘geography’ and ‘literature,’ undermining the separation between physical and metaphorical islands (Fletcher 2011). Maria Grau-Perejoan’s proposal is to give an alternative vision of touristy islands through the gaze of poets, because ‘the poet is understood as a key cultural worker with a sensibility that allows them to uncover what is not seen and decipher what lies behind official narratives’ (Grau-Perejoan 2024).

Giovanni Corona was born and lived in the small town of Santu Lussurgiu (Oristano) in Montiferru, a North-Western area of Sardinia. He published sparingly in his lifetime – only one poetry collection, *Ho sentito la voce del vento* (1966) – while most of his work was released posthumously (1988, 1992, 2008, 2011, 2014a, 2014b). He leaves the island only for military

service that he loathed because he was deeply pacifist: 'I want life without an ideal / if for the ideal I have to kill' ('Ideale,' *Sassi*). His friends remember him as 'a comrade who spends his earthly experience in an isolated village in isolated Sardinia and who lives his life between school and home' (Corona 2014b: 47). His 'existential inertia' bogged him down among the 'the race of those who stay grounded,' as critic Francesco Porcu puts it, using an expression from Eugenio Montale (Porcu 2009: 282). Occasionally, Corona would travel to the city of Cagliari, where he attended Futurist gatherings and met the founder of the Futurist movement, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

Corona's true habitat was his hometown, his home, the intimate circle of friends and pupils that grounded his daily life. The sea called him but also scared him. Corona used to take a trip a few miles away to the shore of S'Archittu – a white pebble beach crowned by an ancient granite arch – where his friends remember him almost fading into the landscape: 'His ruddy face, under his bushy head, emerged from the sea of S'Archittu . . . while his body basked, swaying like a native jellyfish' (Cigliana 2020: 117). While he may have felt the lure of the open horizons of the Tyrrhenian Sea, he ultimately yielded to the centripetal force that bound him to the shore. This tension finds expression in the six concise lines of the poem 'Sabbia' (*Richiamo*: 103), which offers a subtle self-portrait in the guise of a landscape. Here, the *geometaphor* is the wave of the Tyrrhenian Sea – retreating and returning in rhythmic motion, carrying grains of sand only to leave them behind. Within the fleeting aperture of this swinging hinge, the sand of the Sardinian coast becomes the beached poet: left behind by the currents of life, residual and immobile, a pile of granules deposited on the page.

Sabbia

*Lungo il mare
Saremo andati,
Lungo il mare
Siamo andati.*

*Lungo il mare
Sono rimasto.*

Sand

*Along the sea
We will be gone,
Along the sea
We have gone.*

*Along the sea
I stayed.*

The Cork Tree

In Sardinia there are not the rolling hills or the dark brushstrokes of cypress trees as in Tuscany, nor the orderly rows of pale vineyards as in the Venetian countryside. The Sardinian landscape is rugged and unforgiving, tormented by 'the dangerous affair of fresh winds and burning sun' (Cattaneo 1996: 6). It is a land without rhymes and with rare assonances, sweetened by the scent of licorice from the pale foliage of the Italic *belichrysum* and the sonorous *ferula* reeds, long stalks of rushes with a hollow interior (reeds and wind are metaphors for the struggle of humanity and destiny in the novel *Reeds in the Wind* by Sardinian

Grazia Deledda, recipient of the 1926 Nobel Prize for Literature. The parched brown hills are punctuated by the cork oaks, *quercus suberus*, a unique and valuable tree species characteristic of this area. It is evergreen and has a thick and knobby dark grey bark (cork used to make bottle stoppers and local crafts). When the bark is stripped from the tree, once in a decade, the tree assumes a striking appearance of almost obscene nudity. This oak appears more like a metaphor than an arboreal being - at least to the mainlanders (like me, not used to this type of vegetation). It is twisted and aching but at the same time tenaciously standing on the windswept plains of the island. Lonely in the barren field, but hospitable with its broad shady canopy. Coriaceous inside but covered with bark that is lighter than water.

It is the experience of a personal hinge that led me to look at this tree and see it as a metaphor for Giovanni Corona's solitary life and his skin-thin, delicate sensibility. Corona belonged to an austere family, but he is remembered for his sociable disposition and for having pockets brimming with pages of extemporaneous poems. His upbringing was marked by the scorching loss of his father who died in an accident crushed under his wagon: 'Giovanni Maria Corona / son of carriage driver / orphan without benefits / began to die / since the age of four,' ('Giovanni Maria Corona,' *Richiamo d'amore*: 20). In synesthetic verses, he confesses his orphaned condition and existential melancholy, feeling crushed by the weight that killed his father: 'Bearing inside me the ashes / of that wagon rolled over his body / between the hay and church bells' ('Dicevi...', *Richiamo*: 104). Renzo Cau calls this somber feeling Leopardian in nature (Cau 2009); however, as Paolo Pillonca observes, Corona retained a luminosity that Giacomo Leopardi never experienced (Pillonca 2009)—a steadfast faith in God, that he declares in these verses within a game of cross-references:

And if there were no heaven I would love you
and even if there were no hell I would fear you
...
for even if I did not hope for what I hope for
I would love you in the same way that I love you' ('Amore,' *Sassi della mia terra*: 84)

The cork trees are shaped by the strong wind coming from France that invests the island of Sardinia. If the cork tree can be read as a tormented soul, then the Mistral wind becomes the breath of solitude. Giovanni Corona felt a kinship with the wind that becomes his way to converse with the place: '*Su entu lussurzesu* (that's what we call the mistral) [is] the wind of tempest and cold. It too is my friend, however, for we both live through blizzards and storms' (Corona 2014b: 39). The wind resonates in many poems, swinging hinges open: the wind howls and we hear the scream of loneliness. In 'I heard the voice of the wind' (*Ho sentito la voce del vento*: 57), the breezy repetitive chant heightens a sense of isolation.

Ho sentito la voce del vento

*Ho sentito la voce del vento
nelle strade del mio paese.
Ogni cane s'è ritirato
dalle strade del mio paese.
E' rimasta la voce del vento
come un cane senza padrone
nelle strade del mio paese.
Scroscia l'acqua come torrente.
La pioggia e il vento vivono solo
nelle strade del mio paese.*

I heard the voice of the wind

*I heard the voice of the wind
in the streets of my town.
Every dog has retreated
from the streets of my town.
There remained the voice of the wind
like a dog without a master
in the streets of my town.
Water roars down like a torrent.
Only rain and wind live
in the streets of my town.*

In 'Mi conosce un vento' ('A wind knows me,' *Sassi della mia terra*: 220), Corona depicts the wind pawing like a horse through the streets of the town. He might be thinking of the *Ardie*, traditional neck-breaking horse races typical of this area, where riders rush through the narrow and steep cobblestone streets of the village. In this poem, the wind is a prepotent and active element in the landscape to the point of taking over man's will. In a grammatical reversal mentioned above, the inanimate landscape is an active subject, while the human is the direct object ('me'): 'A wind of sea foam knows me'; 'the wind that in the evening seeks me'; 'a land remembers me.' From the title ('A wind knows me') to the final verse ('An island bloomed into my heart'), the poet submits to the will of the island.

Mi conosce un vento

*Mi conosce un vento
della spuma del mare.
Il vento che la sera mi cerca
davanti la casa che fu mia
un tempo disperato.
Il suo grido di cavallo
notturno, la sua criniera
di ebano impazzita, risuona
nel vuoto di quest'aria
ad ovest:
ritorna, oh torna!*

*Anche una terra mi ricorda
come sognata, azzurra, di agave,
arsa di lichene dorato.
Qui la gente cammina nel vento,
le sue parole sono d'aria,
i suoi occhi appartengono al mare.
Ritorna, oh torna!*

*Mi fioriva un'isola nel cuore,
annegava nell'anima un grande
fiore di luce.*

A wind knows me

*A wind knows me
from the sea foam.
The wind looks for me at dusk
in front of the house that was mine
a desperate time ago.
Like a horse in the night,
its ebony mane
gone mad, its neigh resounding
into the empty air
from the west:
return, you, return!*

*A land too remembers me
dreamy, azure, of agave,
blazed with golden lichen.
Here people walk in the wind,
their words are made of air,
their eyes belong to the sea.
Return, you, return!*

*An island would bloom in my heart,
a great flower of light would drown
in my soul.*



Figure 1. Giovanni Corona, third from left, on the hill overlooking Santu Lussurgiu in the 1940s. The wind ruffles his hair. (Courtesy Archivio Corona, Santu Lussurgiu)

Santu Lussurgiu, a Crater

Corona's Sardinia opens like a Chinese box, revealing its depths in layers—from the sea to the island's core, from the mountains to the crater, and from the crater to his vertical home. The poet's hometown geography serves as a potent metaphor for a general consideration of his poetics, marked by a sustained inward motion. The town of Santu Lussurgiu is nestled in an extinct volcano, resting on two ancient basaltic streams that in time have spawned forests of holms, oaks, chestnut trees, wild olive and lentisk trees, shrubs of hollies and laurels, alders along the water streams, and healing herbs such as thyme and heather, broom and ivy. The crater walls envelop the tight square, the main church, the skein of alleys, and even the grain warehouse, Monte Granatico, one of the oldest mutual aid societies (Porcu 2013). In its center, 'to see the sky, you have to lift your head' (Ciusa Romagna 2010: 10). Within the geometaphoric framework, winding roads may be perceived as tracing the contours of an

embrace, transforming the landscape into a metaphorical extension of human experience. In a revelatory hinge, the image of the huddled town offers a visual illustration to Corona's poetics, deeply rooted in its sense of intimacy and belonging. Two of his poems share the same title, 'My Town,' possessive expression dear to him because associated with a sense of safety. 'Mio Paese' (*Richiamo d'amore*: 27-28) is a cadenced love song to his protective home. Here, the verses exceptionally rhyme, and they rhyme with delight, capturing a reassuring musical geography and describing a maternal embrace, the scent of healing lavender and the sweet chiming of bells (called with a Latinism, *tinnule*).

Mio paese

*Dal mio cuore bambino sgorga un canto
lieve come battito d'un'ala
e l'anima al sentirlo s'incanala
in un mondo fiabesco nell'incanto*

*d'un sereno Paese, il mio paese
sparso tra i monti, colmi di lavanda,
che ogni ferita ridiventa blanda*

*al suo profumo, come per fattura.
E lo vedo nel suo nido di rapace
il mio paese, simbolo di pace
al mondo, dove eterna lotta dura.*

...

*Son le campane della nostra chiesa
tinnule e chiare, che dicono d'andare.
Sono fiamme di fede, sempre accese,
che dicono quando è l'ora di rientrare.*

*Altrove vita ha nome di città
e scorre sempre più vertiginosa,
ma, qui soltanto, l'anima riposa
nella trovata sua serenità.*

My Town

*From my childlike heart springs forth a song,
as light as the beating of a wing,
and, on hearing it, the soul is guided
into an enchanted fairy world*

*into a serene town, my town
scattered on the mountains, lavender filled
that every wound heals*

*with its scent, as if by magic.
And I see my town in its raptor nest
as a symbol of peace
for the world, enduring eternal struggle.*

...

*The bells of our church are
bright and clear, telling us to go.
They are flames of faith, always burning,
telling us when it's time to return.*

*Elsewhere life has a city name
And flows ever more giddily,
But, here alone, the soul rests
In its found serenity.*

In the second poem titled 'Mio paese' (*Ho sentito la voce del vento*: 52), Corona watches his village and suddenly sees it in a different light, darker and more ominous. No longer merely a site of comfort and belonging, it emerges as a 'raptor's nest,' a vulture's lair. Here, Corona confronts the harsher aspects of his native landscape, invoking the severe, unwritten codes of conduct that define ancient Sardinian society. The rain-washed stones are its inhabitants, hardened by tradition and time. With a swift swing of the hinge, the *genius loci* – the spirit of the place – is anthropomorphized, no longer a benign presence but a spectral figure, taking the form of a skull.

MIO PAESE

*Mio paese,
in te s'annida la furia del vulcano
e gli alberi hai contorti
come il corpo degli uomini.
Lava la tua roccia la pioggia
quando un fulmine reca la tempesta
e il tuo volto si sgrassa
e appare il teschio, nido di avvoltoi.*

MY TOWN

*My town,
in you hides the fury of a volcano
and your trees are gnarled
like the bodies of men.
The rain washes your rocks
when lightning brings the storm
and your face is cleansed,
and your skull appears, a vulture's nest.*



Figure 2. View of Santu Lussurgiu. (Photograph by the author)

Corona lived near the outer edge of the town of Santu Lussurgiu, on the road to Oristano, in a home dominated by women: his three sisters, Antonia, Pepe and Mariangela, and his mother Maria (who died in 1961). He lived a stone's throw from the school where he taught Italian Literature. Like other village homes in steep towns, Corona's house is shaped vertically and looks like a well. In the ecopoetical gaze, this home becomes a geometaphor of severity and introversion: it is a severe, tight-lipped, inward-facing house – closed in on itself, shaped by silence and restraint. Corona's poetry is born in the depth of an interior space, soft and shadowy, feminine and fertile, somewhere between a nest and an involuntary prison, as he hints in this bitter poem, 'Non mi dirai altre menzogne' (*Ho sentito*: 53).

*Non mi dirai altre menzogne,
 o mio paese,
 unico e solo
 tra questi scoperti monti.
 Seduta
 sul tuo vuoto cratere
 sta la mia casa
 da secoli.
 Io t'odio
 perché di notte
 non t'accorgi nemmeno
 che altri astri
 ruotano vertiginosamente.
 Sei sempre fermo
 all'odio
 e alla rapina
 come tanti secoli
 prima.
 Il basalto
 ti nasconde
 come un abito
 fatto d'ipocrisia.*

*Thou shalt tell me no more lies,
 o my town,
 unique and lonely
 among these naked mountains.
 Sitting
 in your empty crater
 my home has stood
 for centuries.
 I hate thee
 because
 at night
 you don't even notice
 other stars
 spinning dizzily.
 You are stuck
 in hatred
 and robbery
 as many centuries
 ago.
 The basalt
 hides you
 like a dress
 made of hypocrisy.*



Figure 3. The deep courtyard of Corona's home. (Photograph by the author)

If we walk a little further, at the back of the house, we find the garden, also a steep, stony slope that the inhabitants have laboriously cleared by building dry walls with the stones taken from the land. Here the *elighes* (the Sardinian name for the holm oaks) grow together with almond trees, carob, quince, apricot, and peach trees. At the foot of the garden opens Corona's little room, 'full of books, notes, notebooks, and papers with verses' (Cossu 2010: 8), where he would meet friends and students. Poet and critic Arnaldo Beccaria describes this deep dwelling in a poem he dedicates 'to Giovanni Corona. Sardinian poet from Santulussurgiu [sic]' ('Sull'orlo del cratere' 1964) 'Your town slouches / inside the crater of an extinct volcano / in a funnel: a well of cooled lavas. . . . O Giovanni Corona, in your / little room, your cell / of lay cenobite . . . O Giovanni Corona, / who, unlike me, / found the moon at the bottom of the well' (Porcu 2009: 27). The position, depth and shape of this home easily becomes a metaphor for the poet's outlook on life, a possible hinge to peek in his inner poetics.

The Well of Santa Cristina

The island of Sardinia is punctuated by prehistoric sites, many of which lie abandoned: *nuraghe* villages, megalithic fortresses made of basalt boulders covered with rust-colored lichens, rock cavities believed to be the homes of fairies (*domus de janas*), large vertical stones (tombs of the giants). In Paulilatino (Oristano province), the archaeological site of Santa Cristina features a mysterious well that is still a destination for pilgrimage and devotion. This monumental work from the Nuragic period consists of twenty-five sloping steps leading to a freshwater spring, framed by perpendicular light. The site radiates mysticism and spirituality, embodying feminine, creative, and subterranean religiosity.

'Pozzo di Santa Cristina' ('Well of Saint Christina,' *Richiamo*: 203) is a poem dedicated to Antonietta Sanna, the town librarian and a dear friend of the poet, on her wedding day. The identification between the bride and the sacred space is evident from the opening verses, which resonate with mirroring words: 'te stes'yourself,' 'himself' (the groom) or 'itself' (the well). In this poetic correspondence (*à la* Baudelaire), the earth's vein pulses with the woman's blood, while the sacred water symbolizes fertility. The steps, depicted on the page in staggered blocks of verses, lead toward spiritual interiority and hint to the conception of new life.

Pozzo di Santa Cristina

*Ti specchi nell'acqua del pozzo
dentro te stessa, lui stesso.
 acque sfumanti arbitrarie
 nate da un intimo ignoto.
A rampa la scala – gli anni trascorsi –
in cerca di un sapore di frutto.
 Tu scendi i gradini del pozzo
 acqua di vena fresca al tatto*

Santa Christina's Well

*You reflect yourself in the water of the well
inside yourself, himself.
 Arbitrary shading waters
 born from an intimate unknown.
Climbing the ladder - the years passed -
in search of the taste of fruit.
 You descend the steps of the well
 vein water cool to the touch*

*nel candore dell'abbandono.
 Stai nel vestibolo tanto chiara
 al primo incontro con la tua sorte
 e in te sotterraneo si forma il sangue
 come quest'acqua che arriva da secoli
 per quella vita che un giorno verrà.*

*in the candor of abandonment.
 You stand in the vestibule so clear
 at the first meeting with your fate
 and in you subterranean blood is formed
 like this water arriving from centuries past
 for the life that one day will come.*

I have chosen this wellspring as a suggestive spatial hinge within the Sardinian landscape, a metaphor to describe the island's feminine vitality and Corona's poetry. Linguist Leonardo Sole described Corona's style as a play on light and shadow where epiphanies of water and sunrays create 'foundational' and 'fulminating metaphors' (Sole 2009: 257). I would say more: Corona's words seem to flow from the well of his soul, perfectly capturing the spirit of his island. Deep and sacred, interior and hypogean, his words feed on the contrasts between light and shadow, shore and crater, happiness and sadness, wind and well. As a geometaphor, the ancient natural spring transforms from a mere archaeological site into a manifestation of the poet's inner world.

Sardinia on the Page

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to one more aspect that unites geographical and written landscapes in a porous relationship. Rivulets, stairs, narrow streets, pieces of rocks, stone walls and woven blankets enter his poems and leave their imprint on the white page. Giovanni Corona plays with the spatial dimension of the blank sheet – perhaps influenced by his brief Futurist experience. The graphic composition of his verses takes on a significance that reflects physical conformations. Sometimes the verses percolate like a rivulet of the Siete Fuentes, a freshwater spring by Santu Lussurgiu wrapped in a mystical atmosphere that makes it a place of pilgrimage, or they leap from one short word to another like the waterfall of the Rio de Sos Molinos, a deep forest waterfall on the river where the grinding mills used to be. At other times, cobblestone-words appear in uneven verses that describe a road ('Via Salvatore Cambosu,' *Richiamo*: 195) or pile up squarely close together like the dry-stone wall of a *tanca* (the shepherd's fenced field), compact even in their graphics. The love poem 'Alla mamma' ('To Mom,' *Richiamo*: 92) builds four walls of equal size in four stanzas, four walls that seem to enclose a warm kitchen, a mother's hearth. Still other times, words are stacked in bold type that contrasts with the white of the paper just like the basalt stone inserts in the trachyte walls of the homes in the Santu Lussurgiu or like the two-colored Romanesque churches in basalt and marble that dot the Sardinian landscape. The poem 'Odiai le grandi patrie' ('I Hated the Great Fatherlands,' *Richiamo*: 87) emphasizes in black some expressions that stand out like screams in a pacifist march.

*Dall'infanzia
 odiai le grandi patrie
 Ora odio le patrie
 Le piccole e le grandi
 (...)
 Cosa sono i sogni di gloria?
 Un
 grande
 cimitero*

*From childhood
 I hated the great fatherlands
 Now I hate all fatherlands
 the small ones and the big ones
 (...)
 What are the glorious dreams?
 One
 great
 cemetery*



Fig. 4. Basalt decoration on a Santu Lussurgiu home. (Photograph by the author)

Elsewhere, it is the woven work of the women's loom or the decorations of chests or windows that enter Corona's verses in the shape of triangles and zigzagging lines. Until thirty years ago, Santu Lussurgiu was the site of one of the last schools dedicated to the teaching of the ancient Sardinian technique of loom weaving. Each weaver kept with jealousy her own design. Bedspreads, rugs and towels are neatly folded in the women's hope chests or the armoires carved with the typical geometrical designs of Sardinia. It happened that, looking at the woven carpets piled on an ancient closet in Corona's house, I started to see instead the zigzagging of his verses. In the same way, if one looks from a distance, many of Corona's poems follow a diagonal direction, reminding of critic Marcus Doel's description of the 'text

qua textile [...] a tissue of signs, a sign sponge, sponge-cloth or sponge-towel, or even a crisp white sheet stained with spilt ink' (Doel 2023: 282). See for example the textured zigzagging composition of the poem 'Come un fiore' ('Like a flower,' *Richiamo*: 145) dedicated to Francesca, a far cousin.

Come un fiore. A Francesca figlia di Lenico

Like a flower. To Francesca, Lenico's daughter

Francesca

*la tua immagine
a ricordo
d'altri nomi
di gente e di terre
Il tremolare
delle tue mani di neve
l'aroma
delle labbra
la leggerezza d'acqua
del respiro
e
la voce che non si stacca
ti creano
simile
ad altre persone
che
in altri tempi
in altre terre
hanno vissuto.*

Francesca

*your image
in remembrance
of other names
of people and lands
The flickering
of your hands of snow
the aroma
of your lips
the watery lightness
of your breath
and
the voice that remains
make you
similar
to other people
who
in other times
in other lands
have lived.*



Figure 5. Handicrafts woven by Corona's mother and sisters. (Photograph by the author)

Conclusion

This essay aimed to articulate a theory of geometaphor in an Italian context, drawing inspiration from the discussion on the tangential but different concept of the *spatial hinge*. The wind-swept landscape of Sardinia, its cork trees, the town nestled in a crater, the sacred well, even the basalt insert on the walls of the house, or the work of the loom leap out of the island clothed in literary meanings. Tying a metaphor to its birthplace or a poem to its landscape in a mutual pollinating process entails some risks: it may seem a contradiction to look for precision in a geography as imprecise as that of fiction. The concept of *hinge* however allows for this vagueness because it attaches a meaning even to places that are unassociated with the text, allowing for interpretative freedom. The danger of pathetic fallacy is undeniable: it is easy to fall into the temptation to over-interpret places and verses in search for geometaphors or hinges. However, they are risks worth taking. Echoing Leopardi, the world is richer if we consider it though the double gaze. The sounds of Sardinia – winds, rustling of foliage, tolling of bells, barking of dogs, dripping waters and silences – spill over and transpire into the poems' aural dimension. Rivulets and waterfalls, low walls, stones and textiles are captured in the physical composition of the verses, making the island alive with the affects of poetry, one in which 'island meanings, divergent or convergent, emerge from a deeply visceral lived experience' (Hay 2006: 34).

Corona's short poem, 'Anelito' ('Yearning,' *Ho sentito*: 70) imagines his own death, which came on 12 December 1987. These verses acquire a profound specificity through their material inscription on his tombstone, located in the small cemetery of Santu Lussurgiu, just a short walk from his home. Death is present as an element of the landscape: an evening shadow stretching across the terrain, a dark cypress tree standing in silent vigil and, ultimately, the wish to return to the earth in the humble form of a wild lily (a clear echo of the Gospel of Matthew, 6:28-33).

Anelito

*La mia vita ho colmato.
S'è distesa la sera senza luce.
Ho sognato il cipresso
e il mio cuore frustato.
Oh potessi, Signore, rifiorire
come giglio dei campi.*

Yearning

*My life I have filled.
The evening stretched out without light.
I dreamed the cypress tree
and my whipped heart.
Oh could I, Lord, blossom again
as a lily in the field.*

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