The Photographic Eye:
Poetry and the Visual in 1950s and 1960s Italian Experimental Writers

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This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

I acknowledge that this thesis has been read and proofread by Dr. Nina Seja.

I acknowledge that parts of the analysis on Amelia Rosselli, contained in Chapter Four, have been used in the following publication:

Abstract

This PhD thesis argues that, in the 1950s and 1960s, several Italian experimental writers developed photographic and cinematic modes of writing with the aim to innovate poetic form and content. By adopting an interdisciplinary framework, which intersects literary studies with visual and intermedial studies, this thesis analyses the works of Antonio Porta, Amelia Rosselli, and Edoardo Sanguineti. These authors were particularly sensitive to photographic and cinematic media, which inspired their poetics. Antonio Porta's poetry, for instance, develops in dialogue with the photographic culture of the time, and makes references to the photographs of crime news. Furthermore, his poetry relies on the technique of poetic montage, and juxtaposes photographic and cinematic sequences through the use of percussive meter and frequent punctuation. Amelia Rosselli, on the other hand, refers to photography as a medium to capture and record her life story. Her poetry seems to work like a camera, recording a precise personal experience in both space and time. The still camera and film camera also inspire her metrical system, presented in her manifesto of poetics *Spazi metrici*. Finally, Edoardo Sanguineti claims to see the world photographically through a camera eye as well as through a cinematic mind. His poetry also borrows formal techniques from other artistic practices – such as collage and montage – and aims to deconstruct normative syntax as a form of resistance to bourgeois hegemony.

This thesis intends to provide new and unexplored perspectives on the work of the authors analysed. It also suggests that there is a broader interrelation of literary and photographic cultures beyond the presented case studies. In post-war Italy, experimental and neo-avant-garde writers reshaped their poetry in direct dialogue with both photography and cinema. By recognising that the interactions between literature, photography, and cinema lay at the core of the poetic research of several authors in the 1950s and 1960s, this thesis aims to fill a gap in Italian Studies scholarship on poetry and calls for further research in this area.

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Several years ago, as a graduate student, I roamed the corridors of the Italian Department at the University of Syndey looking for someone to discuss my potential PhD topic with. There I met Dr. Giorgia Alù, who listened to my tangled ideas and advised me on the next steps to take. Her supervision unofficially started in those corridors and has since then unfailingly guided me throughout this journey. Giorgia has been a careful thinker, a dedicated supervisor, and a long-lasting mentor. To her go my heartfelt thanks. I would like to equally thank my auxiliary supervisor, Associate Professor Gian Maria Annovi (USC), for his careful reading of my thesis and for passionately sharing his ideas with me. His work was introduced to me by Niva Lorenzini and Stefano Colangelo at the Univeristy of Bologna, and it has been a source of insipiration ever since.

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Introduction

(ho scattato qualche istantanea mnemonica, insomma,
con l'assonnata coda della mia kodak retinica):

Edoardo Sanguineti[1]

la sanità degli altri in questo mondo
cinematografico

Amelia Rosselli[2]

In 1960, 'cineclubs' in Italy screened Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita.* The film opens with a helicopter transporting a statue of Christ over the city of Rome. From darkened cinema rooms all over the country, millions of spectators heard the deafening noise of the engine: they watched the helicopter fly over the ruins of an ancient Roman aqueduct, past a residential area in the outskirts of the city – a crowd of kids cheering and running after it – and then over a construction site, where two builders in their singlets wave at it from the ground. With the suburbs in the background, the aircraft moves closer to the city centre, soaring over a group of bikini-clad women sunbathing on a rooftop. From a second helicopter, Marcello Rubini – a journalist and aspiring writer – and Paparazzo – a news photographer – gesture to the startled women asking for their telephone numbers, but the noise is too loud and muffles the sound of their voices. In the next scene, Paparazzo, Rolleiflex in hand, frantically takes snapshots of the statue of Christ floating over Piazza San Pietro, in the Vatican City.

Photography deeply underpins Fellini's film: it is the most intrusive presence and yet the unofficial protagonist of *La dolce vita.* Throughout the movie sequences, the clicking of the camera sets the pace of the narration and, at the same time, captures images of a new Italy. Fellini's film can be used to introduce and anticipate the topic of this thesis: the relationship between writing and

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[1] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 252.
[2] From *Appunti Sparsi e Persi*, in Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 809.

photography in Italy between the 1950s and the 1970s.[3] *La dolce vita,* in fact, tells the story of a writer who works in a society saturated by the presence of photography. The writer, Marcello Rubini, and the news photographer, Paparazzo, work closely together to the point that, in a country increasingly driven by the dominance of visuality, the writer could not exist without the photographer. The pervasive presence of Paparazzo is recorded in virtually every scene of the film, sketching the portrait of a society where everything was potentially liable to be photographed. The film also offers a wide-angle picture of Italy immediately following the reconstruction years (1945–1955), outlining the contradictions of a country that was rapidly moving towards the economic boom and a consumer lifestyle.[4] Furthermore, by speaking of still photography in the increasingly familiar language of cinema, Fellini's film reminds us that both still and moving images occupied a foreground role in defining visual culture in 1950s and 1960s Italy. *La dolce vita* thus maps out the socio-cultural background for the years relevant to this thesis, calling attention to the upsurging role of photographic culture.

In the 1950s, in fact, visual culture started to center around visual media: the introduction of television in 1954, the increasing availability of photographic images in newspapers and magazines, and the sudden growth of the Italian film industry were all factors contributing to a society dealing with visuality on a daily basis. The image – both still and moving – became an undeniable presence in the everyday life of the Italians. Like Marcello in *La dolce vita*, writers and intellectuals had to respond to and interact with the ubiquitous presence of still and moving images and technologies.

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[3] In terms of periodisation, this thesis analyses the work of three authors who started their writing careers in the 1950s and focuses on the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. However, it includes some textual examples from the early 1970s.

[4] Italy, after having come out of the Second World War and two decades of a fascist regime, was rapidly transforming its economic structure, cultural models, lifestyle and values to embrace a different identity. The Italianness proposed in Fellini's film would eventually become synonym with the glamorous and perhaps superficial lifestyle ascribed to the Italians. But *La dolce vita* also depicted the paradoxical character of a nation caught in between post-war reconstruction and the upsurge of urbanisation: a country in which the old clashed with the new; the Catholic with the secular; high culture with popular culture; national habits with global cultural trends (often imported from the United States), at a time when, due to the introduction and diffusion of new systems of communication, the individual was progressively lost to the mass. For an overview on this historical period see, for one, Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy.*

Italian poets, too, frequently made use of photography to renew their writing and also to renovate the artistic and cultural landscape in which they were living.

This thesis examines the interplay of poetry and photography in the period spanning from the 1950s to the 1970s. It argues that post-war experimental and neo-avant-garde Italian poets saw the world as if they were looking at it through a camera eye, and wrote about it photographically, following the assumption posited by Horstkotte and Pedri that "[t]he proliferation of photographic images and a heightened awareness of a photographic literacy" has an impact "not only on the way reality is perceived but also on how it is narrated".[5] While this study takes still photography as its starting point, it further claims that poets interacted with and adopted techniques from both still and moving image technologies to reshape and transform their poetic writing, as in the case, for instance, of poets using verbal montage and collage in their works. In this context, therefore, photography is understood as an umbrella term encompassing both still and moving images and technologies, with a focus on the visuality these media engender.[6] Building on Marra's cine-photographic aesthetics and recent scholarly studies in the still/moving field, this project adopts a theoretical approach that moves beyond medium specificity and that considers photography and moving image technologies – especially cinema – as inextricably linked, since both allow for the same phenomenologically-mediated relationship with the world through their lens and camera.

The analysis of three of the most influential experimental poets of the second half of the twentieth century will offer textual evidence. Antonio Porta (1935–1989), Amelia Rosselli (1930–1996), and Edoardo Sanguineti (1930–2010) all included references to photography, both still and moving, in their writing. The choice to work on these canonical poets is twofold: on the one hand, it shows how analysing Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti's work by looking at their relationship with photography highlights unexplored aspects of scholarship on these authors; on the other hand, it

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[5] Horstkotte and Pedri, "Introduction: Photographic Interventions," 9.

[6] While this project is aware of the aural quality of cinema, it rather foregrounds its visual aspect, since the authors discussed in this thesis especially focused on ways of seeing through the film camera, or adopted cinematic techniques in their writing.

purports to suggest that, from the 1950s onwards, poets increasingly made references to photographic media in order to innovate and rethink Italian literature.

Italian poet Andrea Zanzotto also falls in this category, and while his poetry will not be discussed in detail in this thesis, his comment below tellingly shows how the increased availability of photographic images and media pushed poets to engage with photographic technologies as a way to rethink their writing. For Zanzotto, photography and cinema can in fact offer more exhaustive ways of expression to speak of contemporaneity because not only have these forms entered the space of daily life, but they have also unavoidably transformed it:

> Il riferimento alla fotografia ed al cinema rientra spesso nelle mie poesie, perché appartiene alla nostra esperienza quotidiana; tutti gli apparecchiati della civiltà tecnologica hanno ormai condizionato la nostra quotidianità, ma possono anche fornirci delle chiavi di espressione più complete.[7]

In line with the account on photographic culture offered by Fellini, it is possible to highlight another interesting point through Zanzotto's words: while technologies of vision, at least since the camera obscura, have always influenced the way we perceive and speak of the world, from the 1950s onwards, photographic images and media acquired novel relevance precisely because, in a process of democratisation, they became increasingly available to the masses, as well as to artists, writers and poets.

In those years, in fact, it was common for writers to refer to photography: poets who engaged with photography included, for instance, the neo-avant-garde members of Gruppo 63 – such as Antonio Porta, Edoardo Sanguineti, Nanni Balestrini and Giulia Niccolai – but also other experimental poets working outside of poetic groups or schools, like Amelia Rosselli, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Andrea Zanzotto, and Vittorio Sereni. These writers could see, imagine, and reframe the world as if looking at it through the lens of a camera. If they, as viewers, were exposed to an

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[7] Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 104. Quoted in Moroni and Butcher, *From Eugenio Montale to Amelia Rosselli*, 57. While Zanzotto's comment was published in 1981, Zanzotto's engagement with photography and film goes back, according to Raffaella Scarpa, to the decade of the 1950s, when Zanzotto published *Vocativo* (1957), Scarpa, "'Denotazion i/clic'. Visibilia fotografiche di Andrea Zanzotto." In 1976, Zanzotto also collaborated with Fellini to create "Filò" ("Peasants Wake" [1976]), see Luzzi, "Verbal Montage and Visual Apostrophe: Zanzotto's 'Filò' and Fellini's 'Voce Della Luna.'"

abundance of photographic images across stillness and motion, as users, they potentially had access to the technology of the camera and the film camera. Photography was readily available both as a commodity – in the form of illustrated magazines and newspapers, photo-novels, and advertising – and as a social practice, thanks to the new technological advancements that during the 1960s brought into play the portable camera, the Kodak. This immersive experience ultimately taught poets how to envision the world, and hence how to write about it, in photographic terms. In other words, photography allowed them to reimagine how reality could be seen, captured and represented; it pushed them to reconceptualise memory, presence, absence, and even death; it drove them to adopt new metaphors, techniques and themes.[8] Thus, seeing photographically led them to write photographically.

In the same period, Italian prose writing was experiencing a similar transformation, with writers such as Elio Vittorini, Italo Calvino, Alberto Moravia, and Tommaso Landolfi all making references to photography.[9] While the interest in photographic media was common to authors across fiction and poetry, it was also presented differently in their artistic practice. Some writers, for instance, directly included photographic images in their work, thus giving way to a hybridisation and cross-pollination of genres resulting in intermedial works – that is to say, artworks across two or more different artistic media – such as photo-texts, photo-books or visual poetry. Examples include the experiments of visual poets, principally those gravitating around the Gruppo 70, as well as the intermedial collaborations of writers and photographers, as in Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia*,[10] or Zavattini and Strand's *Un paese*.[11] On the other hand, others engaged with photography by simply including references to, or borrowing techniques from, the photographic medium. Photography, in other words, was present in many writers' work *in absentia*, rather than materially. These cases

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[8] See Ceserani, "L'impatto della tecnica fotografica su alcuni procedimenti dell'immaginario letterario contemporaneo."
[9] Papers dedicated to each of these authors can be found in the second volume of Dolfi, *Letteratura e fotografia*.
[10] The first edition is from 1941; the illustrated edition with Luigi Crocenzi's collaboration is from 1953.
[11] Published in 1955; a second version with Gianni Berengo Gardin came out as *Un paese vent'anni dopo* in 1976.

perhaps most clearly uncover how writers and poets, far from being passive bystanders, were actively taking part in the shaping and negotiation of Italian visual culture through their very writing practice.

In exploring the interactions between poetry and photography, this thesis predominantly looks at those cases when still and moving images or technologies are not materially included in a book or in a collection of poems, but rather, they are mentioned, evoked, or imitated through writing. The thesis tries to answer the following research questions: what are the exchanges between photographic culture and poetry? What happens in the narrow space between seeing photographically and writing photographically? More particularly, in what ways is poetry, as a genre, transformed through the encounter with still and moving images and technologies, and how does poetic style and meter respond to such an encounter?

Attention to the interactions between literature and photography is recent and has become more systematic since the 1970s, when a number of critics, including Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes, started thinking about the social meaning of photography and of photography as a text.[12] Later, moving away from the former notion of a "linguistic turn",[13] scholars such as W. J. T. Mitchell (1994) and Gottfried Bohem (1995) theorised a "pictorial" or "iconic turn" to indicate the increasing emphasis on the visual in the social sciences and humanities.[14] The notion of a visual turn, along with Mitchell's claim that "all media are mixed media",[15] urged a rethinking of the relationship between the visual and the verbal and consequently sparked new interest in the exchanges between literature and photography. The 1990s therefore saw a new wave of studies on literature and photography, including Jane Rabb's *Literature and Photography: Interactions 1840–1990* (1995), Marsha Bryant's *Photo-Textualities: Reading Photographs and Literature* (1996), and Nancy Armstrong's *Fiction in the Age of Photography* (1999). More recently, Cunningham, Fisher, and Mays dedicated a collection of essays to the theme – *Photography and Literature in the Twentieth Century* (2005) – and Francois

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[12] Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*; Sontag, *On Photography*.
[13] Richard Rorty's 1967 anthology titled *The Linguistic turn*, for instance, contributed to introducing analytic philosophy of language to specialists in other disciplines. Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn*.
[14] Mitchell, *Picture Theory*; Boehm, *Was ist ein Bild?*.
[15] Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 5.

Brunet produced a monograph titled *Photography and Literature* (2009). Special issues on scholarly journals also include Karen Jacobs' *Photography and Literature* (2006) and Horstkotte and Pedri's *Photography in Fiction* (2008).[16]

In Italy, scholars have essentially focused on the interaction of prose writing with either still or moving photographic media and culture. These studies have often adopted a transnational, rather than a national approach, thus leaving a gap on how the interactions of literary writing and photographic culture were linked to national identity. Diego Mormorio's *Gli scrittori e la fotografia*, published in 1988, is one of the earliest examples in this line of research. While Mormorio's contribution has undoubtedly prompted critical dialogue for further research on literature and photography, the book addresses authors across different nations and timeframes (including Guillaume Apollinaire, Roland Barthes, Jean-Paul Sartre, Elio Vittorini, and Italo Calvino) and focuses on the general relationship between writers and photography. A similar comparative approach has been endorsed in later studies, as for example in Giuseppe Marcenaro's *Fotografia come letteratura* (2004), Silvia Albertazzi and Ferdinando Amigoni's *Guardare oltre – Letteratura, fotografia e altri territori* (2008), Remo Ceserani's *L'occhio della medusa* (2011) and Albertazzi's *Letteratura e fotografia* (2017). Even though these works provide a valuable perspective when dealing with photography and literature, they do not specifically address the Italian case, nor do they attempt to develop a critical reading on national photo-literary awareness.[17]

Only recently a more thorough and systematic approach to investigate the relationship between these *media* in Italy has emerged. The key studies in this field are Anna Dolfi's *Letteratura e fotografia* (2005), followed by Epifanio Ajello's monograph *Il racconto delle immagini: la*

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[16] Rabb, *Literature and Photography*; Bryant, *Photo-Textualities*; Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*; Cunningham, Fisher, and Mays, *Photography and Literature in the Twentieth Century*; Brunet, *Photography and Literature / François Brunet*; Jacobs, "Photography and Literature"; Horstkotte and Pedri, "Introduction: Photographic Interventions."

[17] Mormorio, *Gli Scrittori e la fotografia*; Marcenaro, *Fotografia come letteratura*; Albertazzi and Amigoni, *Guardare oltre*; Ceserani, *L'occhio della medusa*; Albertazzi, *Letteratura e fotografia*. Similarly, on the relationship between literature and cinema, see Cortellazzo and Tomasi, *Letteratura e cinema*; Tinazzi, *La scrittura e lo sguardo*; Maggitti, *Lo schermo fra le righe*; Tomasello, *Ma cos'è questa crisi*; Di Martino and Verdicchio, *Encounters with the Real in Contemporary Italian Literature and Cinema*.

fotografia nella modernità letteraria italiana (2008), and by Giorgia Alù and Nancy Pedri's *Enlightening Encounters. Photography in Italian Literature* (2015).[18] These works prove to be of crucial importance as they manage to draw attention to an increasingly critical research gap in the field of Italian Studies, while at the same time laying the grounds for a new field of interdisciplinary criticism, up to date with international trends. These studies employ a number of different theoretical approaches, ranging from historical and sociological reflections, to literary and visual analysis, to name a few. In so doing, they facilitate a proliferation of discourses on the relationship between photography and literature.

A more unified critical framework has been put forward by Sarah Patricia Hill in her doctorate dissertation, *Photographic Fictions: Photography in Italian Literature, 1945–2000* (2004). Hill's work offers a precious overview on the debates of photography theory intersecting with Italian literature by focusing predominantly on the narrative genre.[19] Hill discusses, in particular, the format of photo-texts, such as *Conversazione in Sicilia* by Vittorini and Crocenzi and *Un paese* by Zavattini and Strand, and photography as a literary and sociological theme, analysing Calvino's work. Some of the case studies the thesis explores include Italian writers Lalla Romano, Giulia Niccolai, Andrea De Carlo, and Gianni Celati. *Photographic Fictions* also provides useful critical tools to incorporate photography theory in literary criticism. By mostly referring to fiction and narrative, Hill's study actively calls out for contributions dealing with the genre of poetry, which is, at present, quite marginalised and only discussed in occasional articles or essays.

As a matter of fact, the relationship between Italian poetry and photographic media across stillness and motion is still lacking appropriate consideration in Italian Studies, not only for the timeframe here specified, but also across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries more broadly.

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[18] Dolfi's *Letteratura e fotografia* is comprised of two volumes, and while a few essays are dedicated to non-Italian authors, the majority of them offer some insightful and original analyses on Italian case studies. Dolfi, *Letteratura e fotografia*; Ajello, *Il racconto delle immagini*; Alù and Pedri, *Enlightening Encounters*.

[19] *Storytelling and the Photographic Image: Interactions, Boundaries and Displacements in Italian Culture, 1839–2009* by Sarah Anna Carey (2010) is another unpublished dissertation that researches the cross-contamination of photography, film, and fiction writing.

An exception to the shortage of scholarly attention paid to poetry and media culture is the recent collection of essays edited by Francesco Giusti, Damiano Frasca, and Christine Ott, *Poesia e nuovi media* (2018).[20] The book addresses the changes in the genre of lyrical poetry since the 1950s to the present day in light of its interactions with what Giusti defines "new media" (with a focus on digital media[21]). *Poesia e nuovi media* opens up a conversation on the relationship between Italian poetry and media and offers a panoramic view of a variety of phenomena such as poetry and mass media, poetry and experimental music, and kinetic and digital poetry. However, Giusti's work primarily focuses on new media culture, rather than on visual and photographic media, and it thus leaves aspects of visuality as a backdrop to the analyses proposed.

This thesis, ideally complementing *Poesia e nuovi media*,[22] aims to fill a noticeable gap in Italian Studies scholarship on poetry and photographic media. It aims to offer a wide-ranging overview of the way poets interacted with photographic media and culture in the crucial period from the 1950s to the 1970s. At the same time, it aims to develop a methodological model for further research in this direction by providing an interdisciplinary framework that uses recent theories on intermediality and literary visuality studies, and by placing itself within the still/moving field.

In pursuing these objectives, this study directly addresses Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri's recent project, *Italian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (2017), and answers its call to adopt an interdisciplinary framework to analyse artistic works in the field of Italian Studies. This recent study moves from the premise that the hybridity of artistic forms necessarily calls for a hybridity of critical and analytical tools,[23] and identifies three periods that mostly epitomise the shift towards interartistic

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[20] Giusti, Frasca, and Ott, *Poesia e nuovi media*.

[21] Although new media generally indicate digital media, Giusti uses the term with a broader nuance: "*nuovi media* – considerati qui in un'accezione molto ampia che va da cinema e televisione fino a computer, internet, *social network* e Realtà Aumentata". Giusti, "Poesia e nuovi media, una relazione pericolosa?," 7.

[22] Differently from Giusti's work, my study focuses on visual media and on technologies of vision to further investigate the interplay of literature and visual culture.

[23] Brook et al. also provide some examples of hybrid forms: "in twentieth and twenty-first century Italy, hybrid genres and art forms have seen a rapid expansion. From the last years of the nineteenth century when cinema emerged, itself a hybrid practice, to the growth of performance art (art, literary expression, music, theatrical performance), from the computer-generated poetry of the 1960s, to the post-Internet developments, such as blogs and the cellphone novel, digital visual poetry, and sound art, there has been an explosion of new hybrid genres and artistic forms", Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, "Italian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," 382.

and intermedial practices in need of further scholar attention – futurism and the first avant-garde; early postmodernism and the neo-avant-garde; and the intermedial experimentations of the digital age of the 1990s. This study's incitement to rethink the cultural and artistic history of the 1960s and 1970s is especially relevant for this thesis:

> There is scope, we suggest, for a new history of the period, which relates the experiences of *neoavanguardia* and early postmodernism to contemporaneous developments in the areas of photography, architecture, fashion and design, and which pays greater attention to underexplored links between literature, music and the visual arts. An interdisciplinary approach, we propose, also serves to highlight the influence of creative artists and thinkers (…) who saw themselves as heirs to the cultural wealth of earlier avant-gardes, and who expressed themselves in more than one medium.[24]

This thesis responds to the gaps identified by Brook et al. in two ways. Firstly, it attempts an analysis of the period spanning from the 1950s to the 1970s by offering an interdisciplinary reading of works of literature in light of photographic culture across stillness and motion. Secondly, it aims to construct an interdisciplinary framework that is able to tackle the complexity of its objects of study. To this end, in this work the analytical tools of literary criticism will be integrated with notions from cultural theory, as well as photographic theory (with particular attention to the thought of Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and Walter Benjamin). The framework will also incorporate definitions and concepts proposed in the fields of intermedial studies, literary visuality and the still/moving field.

Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter, dedicated to the thesis framework, will discuss in more detail theoretical aspects of intermediality, literary visuality, and the still/moving field, since these have seldom been considered in Italian Studies scholarship. These theoretical approaches have the power to innovate and provide original viewpoints for the interdisciplinary criticism of Italian literature and poetry. Theories of intermediality, for instance, provide this study with precise and up-to-date definitions to describe the references to still and moving photography in Porta's, Rosselli's, and Sanguineti's texts, not as

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[24] Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, 390.

material artefacts or images, but as a presence *in absentia*. The complementary field of literary visuality is crucial in acknowledging the active, rather than passive, role of poetry in the definition of visual cultures; at the same time, theories of literary visuality are useful in foregrounding notions of textual visibility, readerly visualisations, and description that underpin the textual analysis in this thesis. Finally, the ideas put forward by both Italian photography scholar Marra and international scholars in the still/moving field are crucial to considering photography and cinema – and, more interestingly, still and moving images and technologies – as profoundly interconnected.

After providing the theoretical background to this thesis, the second chapter offers an account of Italian literary and visual culture – and of their interplay – from the 1950s to the 1970s. The chapter sketches the picture of a country caught in between the reconstruction years, after the Second World War and the onset of the economic boom. It focuses on the rise of experimental and neo-avant-garde literary practices as a response to a changing national landscape, increasingly revolving around systems of mass communication and consumerism. At the same time, this chapter illustrates the advancements of photographic culture and its interplay with the literary culture of the time.

Chapter Three introduces the first case study and discusses the poetic works of neo-avant-garde writer Antonio Porta. In his work, Porta interacted with visual culture by drawing references to crime news and by adopting a photographic eye akin to that of a photojournalist in order to depict a dysfunctional and violent society. Porta's work stemmed from a civic commitment and critiqued both Italy and Europe: by referring to crime news images, his poetry sought to expose the sadistic relations amongst humans in the contemporary world. This chapter further illustrates how Porta utilised photographic and cinematographic techniques, and montage chiefly, to innovate the forms of poetry at the level of syntax as well as meter.

The fourth chapter discusses the work of trilingual experimental poet Amelia Rosselli. At the very beginning of her writing career, Rosselli spent time photographing and filming while walking around Rome. As this chapter argues, taking photos and filming was a way for young Rosselli to understand and assess the relationship between subject and object in reality, and to further explore

questions around memory. The chapter thus draws a link between Rosselli's photographic practice and the fact that she later mimicked such practices in her writing, in an attempt to develop a unique metrical system that could record the time and space of her life experiences. Photography was also used in Rosselli's writing as a metaphor to explore memory and identity. By retracing her past, Rosselli could emancipate herself from both her biological father and from the literay fathers of a patriarchal canon.

Finally, Chapter Five introduces and discusses the work of neo-avant-garde writer Edoardo Sanguineti, who was particularly drawn to intermedial and interartistic practices. In his poetry, he imitated photographic and cinematic techniques, collage and montage predominantly, to denounce a historical crisis of alienation. The chapter argues that Sanguineti's intermedial references to collage and montage were functional to dismembering the linear order of syntax and thus to ideologically challenging the language of the bourgeoisie.

Together, these authors offer a preliminary and yet complementary view of Italy's post-war years in light of the interplay of literature with photography, uncovering how references to photographic media contributed, on the one hand, to raising issues related to gender, identity, and civic and political commitment in poetry writing and, on the other, to structurally renewing the form and meter of poetry. This thesis, therefore, suggests that the joint analysis of poetic writing and photographic culture can powerfully inform new and original perspectives not only on the scholarship of canonical authors, but also on the complex cultural account of post-war Italy. Ultimately, the thesis stands as an invitation to reconsider how literature, and principally poetry, is transformed in response to its exchanges with photographic media and culture.

Chapter One

Intermediality, Literary Visuality, Still/Moving Field: An Interdisciplinary Approach

One of the aims of this thesis is to propose an interdisciplinary theoretical framework with which to analyse references to photographic media and culture in literary works. The theories developed in Intermedial Studies, Literary Visuality and in the Still/Moving Field offer a complementary approach to more traditional literary and textual analysis. The employment of an interdisciplinary framework in this thesis stems from the conviction that literary criticism, when used on its own, proves insufficient to account for the complex exchanges between photographic and literary practices and cultures. For this reason, the framework here proposed synthetically brings together definitions, tools, and perspectives from Intermedial Studies, Literary Visuality and from the Still/Moving Field which can contribute to highlight "patterns of connectivity" between photography and literature, as recently advocated by Brook, Mussgnung, and Pieri.[25]

This chapter will present the core notions and approaches that form the main theoretical framework underpinning this work: it will start by presenting the principal tenets of intermediality, focusing on the definition – central to this thesis – of "intermedial references". It will then outline the adjacent field of Literary Visuality, which reclaims the active power of literature in the definition of visual culture, and linger on the notions of textual visibility, readerly visualisations, and description used in the textual analysis of this doctoral project. Finally, in the last section, the chapter will foreground the interconnectedness of still and moving images and technology through Marra's theory around cine-photographic media and similar understandings recently developed in the Still/Moving field.

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[25] According to Brook et al. the "interdisciplinary turn" that characterised Italians studies scholarship from the 1960s onwards encouraged "a move away from mono-disciplinary, nation-bound modes of enquiry towards a stronger interest in studying patterns of connectivity", in Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, 381.

Intermediality

Since the 1980s, the rapidly broadening field of Intermedial Studies has been committed to analysing the encounter and interactions between media across different disciplines. In a sense, research in intermediality started off as a response to Dick Higgins's 1965 essay "Intermedia", published as the first *Something Else Newsletter* in 1966.[26] In his paper, Higgins claimed that during the 1960s "[m]uch of the best work being produced" seemed "to fall between media".[27] Higgins's term, which he had borrowed from Samuel Coleridge "to define works which fall conceptually between media that are already known"[28] would become the key focus of interest in studies on intermediality, increasingly acquiring a plethora of definitions. In the introduction to the 2015 *Handbook of Intermediality*, Gabriele Rippl offers a retrospective look at the evolution of the discipline and sums up some of the most salient studies as well as definitions in the field.[29] In the handbook, which focuses on "intermedial relationships and networks between Anglo-American as well as Anglophone postcolonial literary texts and other Media",[30] Rippl starts by providing a preliminary definition of intermediality: "Generally speaking, the term 'intermediality' refers to the relationships between media and is hence used to describe a huge range of cultural phenomena which involve more than one medium".[31] Rippl also presents a quick overview of the way in which literary works can be considered intermedial: texts, for instance, "transgress their own medial boundary – writing – (…) by

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[26] Higgins, "Intermedia," 52.
[27] Higgins, 49.
[28] Higgins, 52.
[29] Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, *Handbook of Intermediality*.
[30] Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, 1.
[31] Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, 1. The handbook is comprised of three parts (Text and Image; Music, Sound and Performance; Intermedial Methodology and Intersectionalities) and thirty-four essays, and it thus testifies to the vivacity of this approach in Anglophone scholarship.

including pictures and illustrations or by referring to absent (static and moving, analog and digital) pictures, by imitating filmic modes or by mimicking musical structures and themes".[32]

However, shortly after, he alerts the reader to the fact that it is rather hard to pin down a single definition of intermediality since the term has been used to comply with specific approaches across different disciplines, "such as literary, cultural and theatre studies as well as art history, musicology, philosophy, sociology, film, media and comics studies".[33] Nevertheless, Rippl claims that the notion of intermediality has proven especially valuable in analysing and reassessing literary works and even in gaining new understandings on those literary forms that integrate intermedial configurations in their very structure.[34] In line with W. J. T. Mitchell's famous statement that "all media are mixed media",[35] the premise of Rippl's edited book "is the insight that all media and art forms are interconnected and that intermedial qualities always inhere in cultural phenomena",[36] thus underscoring the importance of seeing literature as a participant in a larger network of other media. What is particularly interesting in Rippl's approach is the paramount role that culture plays in

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[32] Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, 1. I will return to the different modalities of intermediality when discussing Rajewsky's typology. It is also interesting to note that Giusti proposed a similar differentiation in the introduction to *Poesia e nuovi media*: "Tale relazione [tra poesia e nuovi media] si può configurare infatti all'interno di un ventaglio di possibilità piuttosto ampio: come apporto tematico all'interno di una modalità di scrittura che conserva alcune sue caratteristiche specifiche; come adozione di soluzioni tecniche che mutano la forma testuale a cui la poesia ci ha abituato, almeno nelle sue tendenze dominanti; come influenza al livello verbale e nella costruzione delle immagini a causa di un mutato universo verbo-visivo di riferimento; come differenti modalità di produzione, diffusione e ricezione dei testi; come integrazione di materiali non verbali (visivi e sonori) all'interno del testo che assume così una forma composita, facilitata dalla visualizzazione su schermo invece che nel tradizionale formato del libro cartaceo; come messa in crisi di quell'ideale soggetto 'ottocentesco' a cui la lirica, almeno in una certa sua concezione, sembra essere strettamente legata. Le possibilità qui sommariamente identificate, ovviamente, non si presentano quasi mai come isolate, ma interagiscono nella costruzione di una nuova testualità" Giusti, "Poesia e nuovi media, una relazione pericolosa?," 7.

[33] Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, *Handbook of Intermediality*, 1. This ambiguity is strictly linked to the impossibility of grasping a universally valid definition of media, as Marie-Laure Ryan points out: "Ask a sociologist or cultural critic to enumerate media, and he will answer: TV, radio, cinema, the Internet. An art critic may list: music, painting, sculpture, literature, drama, the opera, photography, architecture. A philosopher of the phenomenological school would divide media into visual, auditory, verbal, and perhaps gustatory and olfactory (are cuisine and perfume media?). An artist's list would begin with clay, bronze, oil, watercolor, fabrics, and it may end with exotic items used in so-called mixed-media works, such as grasses, feathers, and beer can tabs", Ryan, *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, 15–16; Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, *Handbook of Intermediality*, 7.

[34] Some examples are: "hypertextually encoded fictions such as Michael Joyce's *Afternoon: A Story* (1990), Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* (1991), Simon Biggs's *The Great Wall of China* (1996) and Caitlin Fisher's hypermedia novella *These Waves of Girls* (2001), all of which exist only in an electronic medial form. Hyperfiction's interactive and multimedial form reminds us that any concept of a purely verbal art does not work and invites us to investigate intermedial configurations" Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, *Handbook of Intermediality*, 2.

[35] "(…)all media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous; there are no 'purely' visual or verbal arts, though the impulse to purify media is one of the central utopian gestures of modernism", Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 5.

[36] Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, *Handbook of Intermediality*, 3.

intermedial networks, following what Ryan has defined as "cultural approaches that are interested in social and cultural aspects of the media as well as in the network of relations among media".[37] Such an approach engenders a theoretical framework that eludes the rigid definitions imposed by media-specificity, in favor of more flexible solutions, like, for instance, Wolf's contextualised understanding of medium, which is placed "between the positions of media determinism and media relativism".[38]

While the major theoreticians of intermediality have offered different definitions and typologies of media and intermediality,[39] the most exhaustive as well as pertinent typology for the aims of this study is the one posited by German scholar Irina Rajewsky. Rajewsky offers a particularly detailed taxonomy that accounts for specific literary cases of intermediality. These include the ones investigated in this study, in which the interactions between media do not cross the boundaries of the medium of writing and in which cine-photographic media are only present *in absentia*. For Rajewsky, there are two general understandings of intermediality: one that considers it as a "fundamental condition or category"[40] of all media, and the other that sees it as a "critical category for the concrete analysis of specific individual media products or configurations".[41] Rajewsky favours the second approach. Drawing on Rajewsky and using the notion of intermediality as a heuristic and critical category, it is possible to investigate intermedial phenomena in works that would otherwise rarely be described as intermedial in their own terms. This approach is particularly illuminating for the study of literature and poetry, since it foregrounds the complex and underexplored interactions that take

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[37] In particular, the cultural approach is one of three common approaches to intermedial studies identified by Ryan; the other two are the semiotic and the material and technological approaches: "semiotic approaches such as that of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1984 [1766]) and Werner Wolf (1999, 2002), who have looked into codes and sensory channels that support various (verbal, visual, and musical) media; (2) material and technological approaches that focus on how the semiotic types are supported by media (Ryan 2005, 15)" Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, 8. For an overview on Wolf's theoretical contributions from the 1990s to today, see Wolf and Bernhart, *Selected Essays on Intermediality by Werner Wolf (1992–2014)*.

[38] Olson, *Current Trends in Narratology*, 16. Quoted in Rippl, Middeke, and Zapf, *Handbook of Intermediality*, 9.

[39] In particular Rajewsky, Schröter, and Wolf: Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation"; Rajewsky, "Border Talks"; Schröter, "Four Models of Intermediality"; Wolf, "Intermediality"; Wolf and Bernhart, *Selected Essays on Intermediality by Werner Wolf (1992–2014)*.

[40] Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation," 47. Intermediality as a fundamental condition refers to the inherent quality that all media have in relating to other media. It broadly aligns with Mitchell's understanding of media as "mixed media". For a more detailed definition, see Rajewsky, 48.

[41] Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation," 47.

place between literary writing and other media, while at the same time it also provides a set of shared definitions and an ideal space for comparative analyses. To this end, Rajewsky firstly distinguishes intermediality from intramediality and transmediality:

> [I]ntermediality may serve foremost as a generic term for all those phenomena that (as indicated by the prefix *inter*) in some way take place *between* media. "Intermedial" therefore designates those configurations which have to do with a crossing of borders between media, and which thereby can be differentiated from *intra*medial phenomena as well as from *trans*medial phenomena (i.e., the appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic, or discourse across a variety of different media).[42]

Rajewsky then proposes the following typology for phenomena of intermediality, which cluster around three subcategories:

- **Medial transposition**: that is, "the transformation of a given media product (a text, a film, etc.) or of its substratum into another medium".[43] This category includes film adaptation.

- **Media combination**: in this category two or more different media are materially present and combine to form a final product, "which includes phenomena such as opera, film, theatre, performances, illuminated manuscripts, computer or Sound Art installations, comics, and so on".[44] The media combination can create an entirely new and independent genre, such as film and opera, where "the genre's plurimedial formation becomes its specificity".[45]

- **Intermedial references**: here only one medium is present, whereas the other or others are present *in absentia*. In fact, "[r]ather than combining different medial forms of articulation, the given media-product thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means".[46] If we apply this subcategory to the interplay of literature and visual media we find that literary texts can include cinema or photography as a theme; they can refer to specific media products (such as photographs, or films); they can ekphrastically describe filmic or photographic images; and they can also imitate

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[42] Rajewsky, 46.
[43] Rajewsky, 51.
[44] Rajewsky, 52.
[45] Rajewsky, 52.
[46] Rajewsky, 52.

photographic or filmic techniques, such as taking photographs, filming, blurring, zooming in and

out, and editing through montage.[47]

This thesis focuses solely on the third subcategory, since the notion of intermedial reference plays a

crucial role in rethinking the role of photographic media in literature. Using Rajewsky's typology,

this study will try to determine what types of intermedial references to photographic media can be

found in the poetry of Antonio Porta, Amelia Rosselli, and Edoardo Sanguineti; and how such

intermedial references contribute to a renewal of the forms of poetry.

Rajewsky provides other critical clues that can help answer these questions, further specifying

the ways in which intermedial references occur in literary texts. Since intermedial references (as

opposed to *intra*medial references)[48] entail a medial difference, the literary text acquires what

Rajewsky defines as an "'as if' character and illusion-forming quality".[49] According to such a quality

"a given media product cannot *use* or genuinely *reproduce* elements or structures of a different medial

system through its own media-specific means; it can only *evoke* or *imitate* them. Consequently, an

intermedial reference can only generate an *illusion* of another medium's specific practices".[50] For

Heinz B. Heller, for instance, in literary references to film an author writes "*as if* he had the

instruments of film at his disposal, which in reality he does not".[51]

My analysis of the works of Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti ensues precisely from this illusion

performed by the text, which often acts "as if" it had acquired the means of expression of another

medium, be it that of photography either in its still or moving manifestations. Furthermore, the

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[47] Rajewsky, 52. It is interesting to note that Rajewsky's description encompasses the one offered by Francesco Giusti in *Poesia e nuovi media*, as I mentioned earlier. Horstkotte and Pedri also recognise the increasing presence of collage and montage techniques in word and image relations: "collage and montage techniques of photography and text developed in the later twentieth century in conjunction with contemporary art practices, especially British pop art, and under the influence of techniques of film montage", Horstkotte and Pedri, "Introduction: Photographic Interventions," 11. However, the same techniques were also used within the medium of writing, and therefore as intermedial references.

[48] In this case, intertextuality – that is, references that remain within the medium of the text.

[49] Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation," 55. Rajewsky also refers to concept of Bolter and Grusin's "remediation" as an alternative way to address the phenomenon of intermedial references. For a more detailed perspective on this take see Rajewsky, 61–64. See also Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*.

[50] Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation," 55.

[51] Heller, "Historizität als Problem der Analyse intermedialer Beziehungen. Die Technifizierung der literarischen Produktion und 'filmische' Literatur," 279.

analysis pays particular attention to those aspects of visuality brought to the foreground by poetry's interaction with visual media and culture. It is in light of this attention to visuality that the recent developments in Intermedial Studies towards literary visuality become especially relatable to this thesis. The choice to adopt literary visuality as a complementary perspective to intermediality also stands in response to W. J. T. Mitchell's much earlier enticement to "a thorough rereading or reviewing of texts in the light of visual culture".[52]

Literary Visuality

Guido Isekenmeier, defines literary visuality as an "alternative or complementary paradigm to intermediality studies in that it posits the larger framework of visual rather than media culture as the context in which to analyse the visualities of literature".[53] In other words, literary visuality elicits the awareness that visual media culture should not be considered as a substitute for the larger domain of visual culture, but rather as an aspect of it. Isekenmeier and Bodola's most original argument, however, is that literature forms an integral part of visual culture, rather than passively reflecting it, or being merely influenced by it. According to these scholars, literature, in fact, actively participates "in visual culture, for [it] is involved in the production of discourses as well as practices and artefacts that negotiate *and* (pre-)configure visualities".[54] Despite the fact that Isekenmeier and Bodola tend to stay away from developing their discourse around visual media and are, at times, openly critical towards approaches that focus on the intermediality of literature, their semiotic approach to culture can significantly enrich the analysis of intermedial references in literature. For Iskenmeier and

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[52] The whole quotation reads as follows: "Literary studies, by contrast, have not exactly been transformed by the new discoveries in the study of visual culture. The notion of an 'iconology of the text,' of a thorough rereading or reviewing of texts in the light of visual culture is still only a hypothetical possibility, though the emergence of studies in film, mass culture, and of larger ambitions within art history make it seem more and more unavoidable" Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 210.

[53] Isekenmeier, "The Order(s) of Literary Visuality: Textual Visibilities – Readerly Visualisations – Visual Modes of Writing," 325. The definition of visuality is the one provided by Tripp as "the dynamic, contextualising interplay of discourses, practices, and artefacts connected to vision, sight and seeing, in short: *visuality*" (Tripp, 2013, 29).

[54] Isekenmeier and Bodola, "Introduction: Literary Visuality Studies," 11.

Bodola, "if we conceive of cultures as semiotic systems (cf. Posner 2008) combining social practices (which constitute societies), material artefacts (which constitute civilisations) and conventional codes (which constitute mentalities) the range of visual cultures extends beyond (the) media".[55] However, while it is true that media cultures do not provide an exhaustive account of the relations between literature and visuality, by the same token, it is also possible to conceive of (visual) media cultures as semiotic systems comprising social practices, material artefacts and conventional codes. If we take the case of photography (or cinema and television for that matter), its semiotic system would include not only the medium of the camera, but also the material photographs, and the social and cultural practices of production and reception that revolve around photography (including, but not limited to, the disparate genres of art, documentary, photojournalistic, scientific, tourist and travel photography, as well as family portraits and advertising). Furthermore, in this cultural understanding of visual media, the material still/moving images, the conceptual process of image-taking and editing, and the ways of seeing that these media elicit all find equal space and are just as likely to engage with literary culture.

Broadly speaking, the approach advocated by literary visuality places the complex notion of visuality (including the visualities prompted by visual media) at the centre stage of literature. In endorsing this framework, we can consider a redefinition of literature as an active (visual) cultural participant that "transmits" cultural visualities and simultaneously "stages" the authors' very "acts of seeing".[56] Some of the concepts proposed in this field, therefore, ideally underpin the analysis expounded in this thesis: in particular, the novel attention devoted to textual visibility (that is, the visual quality of writing[57]); readerly visualisation (the reader's visualisation of images in the process

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[55] Isekenmeier and Bodola, 10.

[56] "Literary texts, then, are one of the means of transmitting (in a mediological sense) visual conditions or events that do not sediment in the pictorial representations to which they pertain (…) literature is probably the only textual genre (not to say 'medium') that not only talks about that observer, but actually stages his or her acts of seeing (in linguistic form), and literary visuality ends up being an invaluable part of any attempt to (re-)construct historically or culturally distinct ways of seeing", Isekenmeier, "The Order(s) of Literary Visuality: Textual Visibilities – Readerly Visualisations – Visual Modes of Writing," 327.

[57] Textual visibilities also include calligrams or picture poetry, font, spacing, and layout. Isekenmeier, 328.

of reading[58]); and visual modes of writing (the literary mode of description and ekphrasis) are all elements taken into account in this study. As will be explained in the following chapters, Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti see and write photographically, that is to say in a way that is partially informed by still and moving images and technologies.[59] Their texts, therefore, engage with some of, or all of, the phenomena highlighted by Isekenmeier. For example, Rosselli's quasi-square-format poems perform her metrical system inspired by photography visually on the page (textual visibility). Porta resorts to a visual mode of writing that is inherently ekphrastic, in which poetic language mimics techniques borrowed from both the camera and the film camera, through a particular use of syntax, meter, and punctuation. Sanguineti engages with his readers and tries to construct poetic texts inspired by the process of blurred photographs that can elicit images in their minds (readerly visualisation).

The combined use of these frameworks and of the definitions they propose, therefore, aims to provide new insights into topics that have seldom been touched in Italian Studies scholarship. In its essence and intention, this work countersigns Brook, Mussgnung, and Pieri's acknowledgement of "the interrelatedness of Italian visual and literary culture", not considered *per se*, but rather as "central to a wider cultural field, which includes music, architecture, design, and the creative use of new media".[60] The intermedial terminology proposed by Rajewsky also works in this direction, since it opens up "possibilities for relating the most varied of disciplines and for developing general, transmedially relevant theories of intermediality".[61] Apart from providing an inclusive critical model,

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[58] "(…) readerly visualisation can be defined as 'the production of mental images in the process of reading' (Esrock 2005, 633)" Isekenmeier, 329. See also Esrock, *The Reader's Eye: Visual Imaging as Reader Response*; Esrock, "Visualisation."

[59] This view aligns with Schwanecke's claim, also supported by Rajewsky and Paech, that: "Based on the assumption that historically and culturally specific ways of perception had developed since the end of the nineteenth century, as a reaction to socio-cultural change and technical developments, *scholars suggested that these ways of perception transmedially influenced all art production, including film and literature*, independently of each other (Paech 1988, 123; Rajewsky 2002, 37–38)". See Schwanecke's essay for a detailed analysis of filmic modes of writing, which can be considered valid for photographic modes of writing as well: Schwanecke, "Filmic Modes in Literature."

[60] Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, "Italian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," 391.

[61] Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation," 44.

theories of interdisciplinarity and intermediality, deployed extensively in other literatures,[62] offer a punctual taxonomy for textual analysis.

By focusing on visuality, this thesis also allows to define, in more detail, the intermedial references to photography in the poetry of Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti. As a matter of fact, these authors all refer to visual media in a fluid way, often largely overlooking the specificity of each medium and at times even mixing the references to photographic images or cinematic sequences, or to the camera and the film camera, in their writing. Such overt media ambiguity seems to stem from a perceptual and embodied approach to these technologies of vision. While this statement is forwarded here as a preliminary supposition, the work of some scholars both in Italy and internationally prove valuable to rethink and redefine the borders of photography: rather than stressing the dichotomic divide between still and moving photographic images – and thus firmly distinguishing between photography and cinema or television etc. – photography can be understood and re-envisioned as a medium fluidly moving between stillness and motion.

Still/Moving Field: Cine-Photographic Media Across Stillness and Motion

The theories developed by Italian photography scholar Claudio Marra first, and later by international scholars in the recently established still/moving field, provide insightful ideas on notions of media ambiguity and fluidity. As such, they also offer an ideal starting point to shed new light on the writing practice of the authors analysed in this thesis.

In 2014, Claudio Marra published *Dal cinema alla fotografia: l'asse Pirandello/Sander*, a comparative analysis of Italian writer Luigi Pirandello and German photographer August Sander.[63] In this essay Marra, who has always looked at photography through the lens of interdisciplinarity,[64] focuses for the first time on Italian literature and photography, particularly commenting on a single

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[62] Rippl's handbook, for instance, looks at Anglophone literatures and provides several case studies that can serve as an ideal reference to develop a coherent discourse on intermedial and interdisciplinary phenomena.

[63] Marra, "Dal cinema alla fotografia: l'asse Pirandello/Sander."

[64] Marra, *Fotografia e arti visive*. See also Marra, *Fotografia e pittura nel Novecento (e oltre)*.

work by Pirandello first published in 1916 and titled, in its later version (1925), *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore.*[65] The book, written in the form of a first-person diary, tells the story of Serafino Gubbio, a camera man working for the Kosmograph production company. Pirandello's *Quaderni* are particularly significant because they record and transmit, in line with Isekenmeier's thinking, aspects of the visual media culture peculiar to the Italian literary scene of the time, one developed shortly after the spread of photography and cinema. Furthermore, by re-negotiating, in written form, the visualities prompted by the camera and the film camera, they also offer a literary background and an ineliminable example for future reflections on visual technologies.[66] In his contribution, Marra takes the *Quaderni* as an example of what he defines an "estetica cine-fotografica",[67] which was then developing as a trait of a whole culture.[68] For Marra's cine-photographic aesthetics, cinema and photography can be considered under the same philosophy since both allow for the same phenomenologically mediated relationship with the world through their lens and camera:

> [N]el momento in cui si ragiona sulle modalità di rapporto con il reale, fotografia e cinema possono essere benissimo raccolti sotto la stessa filosofia. Ecco dunque perché, tornando a noi, abbiamo già più volte definito quella di Pirandello un'estetica cine-fotografica. Essendo la sua riflessione tutta tesa ad analizzare cosa signifchi rivolgersi al mondo attraverso una camera e un obiettivo, di certo essa vale per il cinema quanto per la fotografia.[69]

Pirandello's observations on the mediated relationship between subject and object perform the same phenomenological stance that we find in Porta's epistemological interest in photographic images, in Rosselli's experimentations with cameras and film cameras during her walks in Trastevere, or in Sanguineti's way of looking at the world through a camera eye and a cinematographic mind. For Pirandello and, as Marra argues, for Calvino in his short story *L'avventura di un fotografo* (1970)

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[65] The book acquires the final title only in 1925. Marra, *Fotografia e arti visive*, 81.

[66] Marra quotes, for example, the case of Calvino's *L'avventura di un fotografo* (1955), as a continuation of Pirandello's *Quaderni*: "Il profilo intellettuale attribuito da Pirandello a Serafino Gubbio, l'operatore cinematografico protagonista dei *Quaderni,* e perfettamente coincidente con quello che, quarant'anni più tardi, Italo Calvino utilizzerà per caratterizzare Antonino Paraggi, il tormentato eroe del racconto breve *L'avventura di un fotografo.* Entrambi sono per vocazione filosofi", Marra, 84.

[67] Marra, 81.

[68] In Marra's words: "Siamo insomma convinti che le riflessioni di estetica cine-fotografica svolte da Pirandello nei *Quaderni* siano di grande rilevanza non tanto perché esprimono il pensiero professionale di un autorevole teorico della materia, quanto perché finiscono per dar voce a una determinata idea, che, magari in maniera ancora inconsapevole, la cultura tutta stava elaborando al proprio interno", Marra, 82.

[69] Marra, *Fotografia e pittura nel Novecento (e oltre)*, 83.

a few decades later, "la vera novità portata da fotografia e cinema non riguarda tanto la formalità dell'immagine, il suo carattere visivo, quanto piuttosto gli aspetti di mutata sensibilità verso il reale che si determinano nell'uso".[70] In relating to visual technologies, Gubbio and Paraggi - the characters of Pirandello's and Calvino's stories – are therefore fascinated by the very technological mediation between subject and object. Ultimately, by changing the way the subject looks at the world, technologies of vision, for Marra, also alter the way the body perceives and processes reality:

> Ecco allora: prima che produrre immagini, fotografia e cinema hanno modificato tale interfaccia [che si stabilisce tra uomo e mondo nel loro reciproco rapportarsi], hanno prodotto un affascinante intreccio tra natura e artificio, tra sensi naturali e tecnologia, ed e questo che interessa Gubbio e Paraggi, e questo che li trascina in un palpitante vortice di riflessioni attorno all'identità dei due mezzi.[71]

In Marra's reading, the human body organically fuses with the technology and leads Serafino Gubbio to confess: "Già i miei occhi, e anche le mie orecchie, per la lunga abitudine, cominciano a vedere e a sentire tutto sotto la specie di questa rapida, tremula, ticchettante riproduzione meccanica".[72] This quotation from Pirandello's book will suffice to remind us how it is not only vision to be changing in response to these media, but the whole sensorial apparatus.[73] Overall, Marra's essay underscores two aspects that are crucial to this thesis: that cinema and photography are considered in symbiosis thanks to their phenomenological mediation between subject and object, and that their introduction brings about a new, and technologically informed, sensoriality, which leads the subject to see and "feel" the world through the lens of a camera.

A very similar approach, though developed with a different terminology, has been recently offered within the still/moving field, a term proposed by Eivind Røssaak in *The Still/Moving Field:*

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[70] Marra, *Fotografia e arti visive*, 84.
[71] Marra, 85.
[72] Pirandello, 1973, p. 524, quoted in Marra, 85.
[73] At the same time, in the *Quaderni* the medium is recursively changed and anthropomorphised by its interaction with the human body: "Cammina *lei,* adesso, con le mie gambe. Da capo a piedi, son cosa sua: faccio parte del suo congegno. La mia testa e qua, nella macchinetta, e me la porto in mano", (Pirandello, 1973, 572), quoted in Marra, 85–86. Marra goes on to argue that Pirandello's references to photography and cinema allow him to build a poetics of impassibility and reduce the importance of the author: on these aspects of Pirandello's work the Italian scholar then establishes a comparison with August Sander's unperturbed photographic acts. These elements are also relevant to the literary aesthetics of the 1950s and 1960s: it is the case, for instance, of the "Reduction of the I" operated by Gruppo 63, as well as the general decrease in interest for the author in favour of the reader, advocated by Umberto Eco in his *Opera aperta* (1962), or by Roland Barthes in *The Death of the Author* (1967). See Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*; Eco, *Opera aperta*; Barthes, "The Death of the Author."

An Introduction (2011)[74] to describe a series of studies on still and moving images and technologies.[75] This new area of research, which has emerged in response to the rise of the digital but has also sparked new interest in older media, argues for the interconnectedness of cinema and photography and designates those investigations on "the different uses of stillness and motion in a wide variety of expressions – pre-cinematic, cinematic, post-cinematic and new media".[76] In the introduction to *Still Moving* (2008), Beckman and Ma also acknowledge "the hybridity and promiscuity of film and photography"[77] and invite the reader to embrace the complexity of this ambiguous and yet inextricable link. *Still Moving*, though understanding the separation that exist between media, advocates against the "unproductive model of medium-based inquiry" in favour of considering medium specificity "as a necessarily *inter*disciplinary question", moving from the premise that "photographic and moving image media mutate, recombine, and migrate across disparate contexts".[78] This invitation is especially relevant for this project, which precisely emerges from an interdisciplinary investigation of visual media and poetry writing. Throughout this thesis, therefore, the notions of photographic seeing and writing can be understood in their broader sense, namely as a metaphor to indicate the presence of a technologically mediated way of seeing and writing. In this sense, the still image of photography encompasses and criss-crosses with the moving images of cinema or television and their technologies.

Research in the still/moving field underscores the mutual embeddedness of still and moving images and technologies, thus allowing for a broader understanding of visual media that encourages the open-endedness of boundaries, and moves beyond issues of media specificity.[79] Scholars in the

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[74] "This collection of essays tries to assemble the investigation of the moving image around the emergence of the cross-disciplinary field we tentatively call the still/moving field", Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 13.

[75] Some fundamental titles are: Mulvey, *Death 24 x a Second*; Beckman and Ma, *Still Moving*; Campany, *Photography and Cinema*; Røssaak, *The Still/Moving Image*; Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*; Guido and Lugon, *Between Still and Moving Images*; Chiarini, "Still/Moving Images. Il rapporto dialettico tra cinema e fotografia nelle pratiche artistiche contemporanee."

[76] Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 11.

[77] Beckman and Ma, *Still Moving*, 2.

[78] Beckman and Ma, 3–4.

[79] David Campany in *Photography and Cinema* also reminds us of the stratified nature of these media, shaped by the very "interplay of the technical and the social", Campany, *Photography and Cinema*, 11.

still/moving field, furthermore, recognise, in line with Marra's thinking, the changed corporeality engendered by visual media. Røssaak, for instance, sees the body not just as "the carrier of a personal history, but a storage site and an intensified receptive surface in a media-saturated society. Thus, the body belongs to a history of media and mediations".[80]

This particular view echoes similar ideas drawn from an intermedial approach to literature: when speaking of readerly visualisations, for instance, Renate Brosch informs us that "visual elements in narrative texts are an appeal to embodied experience, because they produce a recall of actual perceptions"; thus, "narratives trigger an enactive embodied response".[81] Conversely, the embodied user experience influences how writing is construed. In commenting on a literary text, Brosch claims that "film has penetrated the collective sensorium to the point of becoming coterminous with consciousness, a consciousness that conceives of reality as cinematic".[82] The writing subject, therefore, acts like "the receptive surface in a media-saturated society",[83] as posited by Røssaak. By doing so, subjects incorporate the new visualites engendered by visual media and restructure the way they phenomenologically relate to the world. Subscribing to Hal's assertion that "visuality involves the body and the psyche",[84] this study thus considers visualities as embodied, and often entailing multiple sensorial affects.[85]

In sum, the still/moving field has added new and valuable elements to studies in visual cultures. By bringing together photographic and cinematographic media – and more broadly still and moving-image technologies and cultures – it destructures the photography–cinema divide to encompass other technologies of production and reception (including television, but also new digital media at large). At the same time, it also calls for a re-envisioning of the understanding of the subject (and their body) in relation to these media. The complexity that this approach calls for also constitutes

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[80] Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 12.
[81] Brosch, "Images in Narrative Literature: Cognitive Experience and Iconic Moments," 347. On the body as a medium for the reception and production of images, see also Belting, *An Anthropology of Images*.
[82] Brosch, "Images in Narrative Literature: Cognitive Experience and Iconic Moments," 356.
[83] Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 11.
[84] Foster, *Vision and Visuality*, ix.
[85] The visual, most definitely, but often the aural and at times the haptic.

the reason for its recent use in literary studies: Alix Beeston has lately adopted the still/moving framework in *In and Out of Sight: Modernist Writing and the Photographic Unseen*,[86] a study that interprets the work of some modernist writers as reflecting photographic technologies across stillness and motion. Beeston regards visual and literary cultures as inextricably conversing with each other, and understands the complex reconfiguration of "subject–object relations" that these exchanges produce. By establishing a link "between modern visual technologies and modernist writing",[87] Beeston hence recognises the permeability of modern visual media and literary cultures.

A similar deduction comes, in the field of Italian Studies, from Hill and Minghelli's *Stillness in Motion: Italy, Photography, and the Meanings of Modernity*,[88] though without explicitly adhering to the still/moving field.[89] Hill and Minghelli, like Beeston, start from the question of modernity: for the two scholars, "[t]o raise the question of photography in Italy, of a medium that has shaped modern experience in ways still mysterious and unexplored, is to raise the equally problematic and unsettled question of how Italy relates to modernity".[90] The book focuses on photography; nevertheless, its critical interest is placed at the intersection between literature, photography, and film, favouring notions of Italian culture at large, rather than emphasising media boundaries. In Hill and Minghelli's words, *Stillness in Motion* vastly explores "how literature, the social sciences, the artistic avant-garde, cinema, popular culture, everyday practice, and politics have confronted the medium and in the process highlight key attitudes towards modernity".[91] Furthermore, it considers "photography as a rich and unstable entity: a technology that embodies and inflects modernity, a cultural practice that affects every sector of Italian society, and a material object embedded in new social and artistic

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[86] Beeston, *In and Out of Sight: Modernist Writing and the Photographic Unseen*.
[87] Beeston, 1.
[88] Hill and Minghelli, *Stillness in Motion: Italy, Photography, and the Meanings of Modernity*.
[89] However, Hill and Minghelli prefer to stay on the margin of the still/moving field to privilege, instead, questions of modernity and cultural change in Italy: "Our volume engages movement and stillness beyond the technological tensions between photography and cinema to address different notions of modernity, temporality, and cultural change in the context of Italy's eccentric historical position", Hill and Minghelli, 23.
[90] Hill and Minghelli, 3.
[91] Hill and Minghelli, 3.

realities".[92] In these scholarly studies, photography (which, in their definition, extends to fluidly comprise still and moving image media) incarnates a modern technology that profoundly interacts and reshapes modern cultures. This thesis countersigns such a view and, moving from the perspective of poetry writing, specifically contributes to exploring visual media's role at the margin of Italian postmodernity.[93]

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[92] Hill and Minghelli, 3.

[93] In this work, Italian postmodernity, as a historical period, and postmodern writing, as a cultural trend, align with the definition offered by Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, for whom Italian postmodernity commences in the 1950s. Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, "Italian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," 389–90. See also Luperini, *Controtempo critica e letteratura fra moderno e postmoderno*; Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*; Antonello and Mussgnug, *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*; Ceserani, *Raccontare il postmoderno*; Donnarumma, *Ipermodernità*.

Chapter Two

Literary and Photographic Cultures in 1950s and 1960s Italy

This thesis analyses the interplay of poetry and photography at a time of profound change for Italy. Antonio Porta, Amelia Rosselli, and Edoardo Sanguineti were all witness to this transformation and reflected it in their writing in different ways. This chapter, therefore, explores the historical and socio-cultural context of Italy from the 1950s to the 1970s, which constitutes the backdrop to these authors' works. By exploring the exchanges between literary and photographic culture, the chapter will sketch the picture of a country traversed by contradictions and still grappling with modernity.

In the years following the Second World War, Italy was at a crossroads. On the one hand, the country was still rural and vexed by the consequences of the war; on the other, like Fellini's *La dolce vita* documented, it was rapidly moving towards its economic boom. In the span of only a few decades the "economic miracle" would end up entirely transforming the face of the nation. In general, people were becoming wealthier, while the country was opening up to foreign influences, especially from the United States.[94] Yet the excitement for new and foreign cultural models, both in lifestyle and in the arts, was counterbalanced by the hovering presence of the Cold War and by the apocalyptic threat of the nuclear bomb. In this context, visual media and channels of communication – such as photography, magazines, television and cinema – became some of the leading agents in the definition of Italian culture.[95]

The 1950s were also particularly transformative because they saw the rise of mass culture and, according to Remo Ceserani, they marked the epochal shift from modernity to postmodernity,

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[94] While the lifestyle and new cultural habits of Italians were largely shaped by American models (see Barron, *Popular High Culture in Italian Media, 1950–1970.*), another source of cultural and visual influence for Italian writers was exerted by the Soviet Union. Theorists and artists such as Dziga Vertov and Sergej Michajlovič Èjzenštejn contributed to fundamental reconfigurations of cinematic montage, a key concept for the development of Italian experimental and neo-avant-garde theories. Translations of Vertov's writings, for instance, reached Italy in 1963, and were published in Berengo Gardin, "Antologia. Scritti di Dziga Vertov."

[95] For more detailed socio-historical accounts see Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*; Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano*.

forging a society where the individual was progressively lost to the mass.[96] Italians – people, including artists and intellectuals – were trying to adjust and simultaneously to make sense of the changing social landscape that lay ahead of them. Two decades later, in 1974, Pier Paolo Pasolini attempted to retrospectively describe this cultural shift and defined it as an "anthropological revolution", which encompassed the collapse of rural Italy and the formation of a new homogenised middle class that collectively embraced the values of American consumerism.[97] The changes highlighted by Pasolini were gradual and reached full maturity in the course of several decades; however, their pathway was already unravelling in the early 1950s. In this chapter, therefore, the 1950s are chosen as a flexible starting point to trace some of the fundamental cultural and literary trends that would play a crucial role in the evolution of literature, including poetry, between the 1950s and into the 1970s.

The next sections of this chapter will provide an overview of the Italian literary scene of the 1950s and 1960s, also including a few examples from the 1940s[98] for their impact on the cultural debates of the 1950s. This chapter will thus situate the rise of experimental and neo-avant-garde writing that emerged as a response to the literary debates of post-war Italy. The focus will be placed on the emblematic experiences of the Italian neo-avant-garde – born with Luciano Anceschi's literary magazine *Il Verri* and leading to the formation of Gruppo 63 and of Gruppo 70 – and on the crisis of representation that they denounced. In fact, their reflections on the relationship between the subject and the world, along with the questioning of the possibility of representing reality, are at the core of the renewal of the very notion of literature. After having outlined the literary scene, the chapter will then present the most salient aspects of visual and photographic culture in the same time frame, along with their active inclusion in the literary realm. It will do so by briefly elaborating on the exemplary

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[96] Ceserani, *Raccontare il postmoderno*, 9–10.

[97] Pasolini speaks of "rivoluzione antropologica", "l'Italia contadina e paleoindustriale" and "l'ideologia edonistica del consumo (…) di tipo americano". For Pasolini, responsible for this change is "lo stesso Potere - attraverso lo «sviluppo» della produzione di beni superflui, l'imposizione della smania del consumo, la moda, l'informazione (soprattutto, in maniera imponente, la televisione)", Pasolini, *Scritti corsari*, 50.

[98] Most notably the pioneering experience of Vittorini's *Il Politecnico* (1947–1949), for their impact on the cultural debates of the 1950s.

cases of Elio Vittorini, Italo Calvino, and Cesare Zavattini, who laid the foundation for future interactions between literature and photography. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a focus on the exchanges between poetic writing and photographic images and technologies. With this aim, it will show how the increasing interactions between literature and visuality gave way to different forms of intermediality: on the one hand, the 1950s and 1960s witnessed a rise in intermedial practices, such as the experiences of concrete and visual poetry, or the ongoing artistic collaborations between writers and visual artists; on the other hand, such interactions also provoked new forms of contamination within the sole medium of poetry writing.

The Rise of Experimental Poetry

Between the 1950s and the 1970s, artists all over the world – including musicians, visual artists and writers – were moved by a common interest to renew and reinvent artistic form, and to challenge the limits of their own disciplines. Reflecting this general trend, and responding to a changing national landscape, Italian poetry, too, became inextricably linked with notions of renewal and openness. After the Second World War and the fall of the fascist regime, during the phase of Italy's "reconstruction years" (1945–1955), poets had struggled trying to understand *what* to speak about and *how* to do so. However, the poetic trends of hermeticism and neorealism that developed around that time did not provide satisfactory solutions, and their inadequacy soon gave way to a wave of experimental writing. Hermeticism and neorealism answered the debate around the notion of "impegno" – that is, whether or not literature should be politically committed – which had underpinned the fascist regime and continued to animate the literary discussion in post-war Italy. In fact, if during fascism several intellectuals were pushed to publicly adopt more neutral positions, thus separating literature and politics, the fall of Mussolini meant that it was finally possible, for writers, to openly take sides. In a sense, hermeticism and neorealism represented the two ends of the spectrum within the "impegno" debate, and for this reason they were also criticised. Hermeticism was seen as a retraction from reality,

and as the writer's seclusion in the ivory tower of literature, while neorealism was accused of interpreting the notion of "impegno" perhaps too literally, thus often subjugating literature to the control of the influential communist party. In this context, several writers felt the necessity to find new balance between literary culture and political inference, and to come up with an entirely new type of literature.[99]

A culture of experimentalism had already been forming since the 1940s, when Elio Vittorini voiced the need for a "nuova cultura" from the pages of *Il Politecnico* (1947–1949) and created the model for an interdisciplinary type of literature open to foreign influences. Due to the fascist politics of nationalism, foreign cultural exchanges had been mostly dormant in the previous decades. Vittorini, however, had already attempted to import some of the most interesting American literary texts to Italy, for instance, with the anthology *Americana*, published in 1941.[100] Vittorini's magazine equally resisted the post-war pressures of the PCI (the Italian Communist Party) for a national popular literature, and re-established connections with Europe and America through the large inclusion of translations of innovative literary and philosophical texts that were still scarcely known in Italy.[101] However, *Il Politecnico*'s very openness to foreign intellectual influences soon led to the termination of the magazine and to Vittorini leaving the party. The experience of *Il Politecnico*, although brief, gave direction to the literary culture of the time. On the one hand, it highlighted the necessity to elude political control on literature in order to reach freedom and "autonomy for culture",[102] since the latter would nevertheless retain its political value.[103] On the other hand, *Il Politecnico* was also fundamental in fostering an interdisciplinary approach to literature and, particularly, in promoting exchanges

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[99] Vetri, *Letteratura e caos*, 13.

[100] Vittorini, *Americana*.

[101] With some of the translated authors being Hemingway, Brecht, Eliot, Kafka and Whitman. See Vetri, *Letteratura e caos*, 9. An account on the history of *Il politecnico* can also be found in Barberi Squarotti, *Poesia e narrativa del secondo Novecento*, 430–49.

[102] "[A]utonomia per la cultura", Vittorini quoted in Vetri, *Letteratura e caos*, 13.

[103] For Vittorini: "la cultura ha sempre un valore anche politico" regardless of its affiliation to a party; however politics "non può pretendere di guidare, giudicare, controllare, fermare o limitare il resto della cultura", quoted in Vetri, 13.

between literature and visual culture.[104] Overall, Vittorini's magazine had set the main trends for the upcoming wave of experimental writing: openness, renewal, interdisciplinarity, and engagement with visual culture, would all become key concepts for the literary and poetic research of the following decade.

After *Il Politecnico*, and from 1955 onwards,[105] experimental writing took centre stage and developed around three crucial journals, and several intellectuals, which were often in open conflict with one another: *Officina* (1955–1959), *Il Verri* (1956–), and *Il Menabò* (1959–1967). Francesco Leonetti, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Roberto Roversi were the founders of *Officina*, and advocated for a type of experimental writing modelled on the socially and historically concerned writing of Alessandro Manzoni and Giovanni Verga, while openly criticising hermeticism, as well as neorealism and novecentism.[106] Pasolini also entered a fierce and long-lasting polemic against the poets behind *Il Verri*, the magazine founded in Milan by Luciano Anceschi, in 1956. The young intellectuals, critics and writers who clustered around *Il Verri* – including Umberto Eco, Renato Barilli, Antonio Porta, Edoardo Sanguineti, and Nanni Balestrini, just to name a few – shared a more radical idea of renewal, and would soon get together to form Gruppo 63, thus officially giving birth to the neo-avant-garde movement in Italy. Pasolini's hostility towards this group, addressed against Sanguineti in particular, was morally charged, since Pasolini juxtaposed Sanguineti's epigonist "neo-sperimentalismo", virtually devoid of any meaning, to his own heartfelt and socially committed notion of "sperimentalismo".[107] Between the extremes of *Officina*, which promoted a culture of

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[104] According to Hill, Vittorini was one of the fundamental role models for the shaping of interactions between literature and photography in the second half of the nineteenth century, Hill, "Photographic Fictions: Photography in Italian Literature 1945–2000."

[105] Several literary historians indicate either 1955 or 1956 as the initial date for the rise of experimental writing. Scalia, for instance, indicates 1955, whereas Vetri favours 1956. Like Scalia, Vincenzina Levato also prefers 1955, since the foundation of *Officina* and the publication of Pasolini's *Ragazzi di vita* both date back to that year, Levato, *Lo sperimentalismo tra Pasolini e la neoavanguardia*.

[106] For a more detailed discussion of the type of experimentalism put forward by Officina see Ferretti, *Officina*; Barbaro, "La rivista 'Il Verri' e la questione dello sperimentalismo." See also Pasolini's "Letteratura italiana 1945–1955", published in 1956 on *Il Presente*, now in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 641–46.

[107] Pasolini's views on neo-experimentalism can be found in Pasolini, "Il neo-sperimentalismo." For a comment on the hostility between Pasolini and Sanguineti see Levato, *Lo sperimentalismo tra Pasolini e la neoavanguardia*, 27–30; Bertoni, "Pasolini e l'avanguardia."

experimentalism, and *Il Verri*, which soon took up a more radical neo-avant-guardist identity, was Vittorini and Calvino's *Il Menabò*. The magazine, while it expressed criticism towards the neo-avant-garde phenomenon,[108] maintained a rather neutral position in the debate and hosted writings from both experimental and neo-avant-garde poets, including poetry by Pasolini, Rosselli, Porta, and Sanguineti. It also continued Vittorini's cultural project, as it discussed the fragile role of literature in a changing national and industrial landscape.[109] As Vittorini pointed out in the first issue of *Il Menabò*, the scope of the magazine was to "cercare di vedere a che punto ci troviamo nelle varie, troppe, questioni non solo letterarie oggi in sospeso, e per cercare di capire come si potrebbe rimetterci in movimento"[110] at a time of crisis. For Vittorini, humanist culture was being levelled by mass culture, and in particular by "le manifestazioni della cultura di massa come il cinema, la televisione, la radio, il giornalismo da rotocalco, il sanremismo, ecc", in a process that led to the "'decadenza' dell'individuo come soggetto di autodeterminazione ideologica".[111] For this reason, *Il Menabò* maintained a degree of open curiosity towards both experimental and neo-avant-gardist literary research throughout its existence. Both, in fact, could potentially develop satisfactory responses to the issues concerning contemporary Italian literature and society.

The common interest to renew and transform not only literature, but also society and the world through the means of literature, was what brought all experimental writers and groups together, beyond the apparent conflict between experimental and neo-avant-garde poets. As Vincenzina Levato points out:

> Lungi dall'essere due vicende reciprocamente estranee o contrapposte, quella di "Officina" e quella della neoavanguardia si presentano allora come due esperienze che si intersecano, che, teoricamente, perseguono lo stesso obiettivo, cioè quello di intervenire sulla realtà attraverso gli strumenti della letteratura.[112]

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[108] In the first issue of *Il Menabò* (1959), and before the official birth of the Italian neo-avant-garde movement, the magazine moved a critique to the national and international tendency towards avant-gardism, considered as a symptom of a time of crisis: "dal fenomeno purtroppo così immobile e irreversibile, così negativo, dei continui "arresti" dall'esterno, artificiali, traumatici, non organici, non "storici", dell'avanguardismo moderno", Fiaccarini Marchi, *Il Menabò (1959–1967)*, 68.

[109] For instance, issue 4 is dedicated to the relationship between "industria e letteratura".

[110] Fiaccarini Marchi, *Il Menabò (1959–1967)*, 67.

[111] Fiaccarini Marchi, 68.

[112] Levato, *Lo sperimentalismo tra Pasolini e la neoavanguardia*, 26.

It is beyond this study to offer a comprehensive discussion of how the various experimental authors and groups pursued such an objective. For the purpose of this project, I will focus on the Italian neo-avant-garde movement. As a matter of fact, the neo-avant-garde research pushes to the extreme elements that are also typical of the coeval culture of experimentalism: thus, by epitomising the salient characteristics of Italian experimental literature, it can be taken as exemplary of a general cultural trend. Furthermore, all the authors discussed in this thesis are in one way or another connected to the neo-avant-garde movement: while Porta and Sanguineti were founding members of Gruppo 63, Rosselli initially took part in their meetings and, even though she distanced herself from the group, her poetic writing shares several traits with those of the authors of Gruppo 63.[113]

Neoavanguardia and the Crisis of Representation: Renewal, Openness, and Crossings

Between the 1950s and the 1960s, the common point of departure for writers both in Italy and abroad was the acknowledgment of the shifting notion of reality, which according to Niva Lorenzini led to an ensuing crisis of representation.[114] For Lorenzini, in the 1960s,[115] Italian poets witnessed a "*complicarsi* della nozione di reale e della distinzione reale-apparente"[116] partly triggered by a new wave of phenomenological thought spread in Italy by Enzo Paci, Antonio Banfi, and Luciano

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[113] Antonio Loreto ascribes Rosselli's poetry to that of the neo-avant-garde, while Annovi acknowledges the similarities between the two experiences but interestingly prefers to consider Rosselli as an "eccentric subject", that is to say, with Teresa de Lauretis, a subject "che contemporaneamente risponde e resiste ai discorsi che lo interpellano", De Lauretis, *Soggetti Eccentrici*, 8; quoted in Annovi, "Un'avanguardia eccentrica." For more perspectives on the debate see: Loreto, *I santi padri di Amelia Rosselli: "Variazioni belliche" e l'avanguardia*; Lorenzini, "Niva Lorenzini presenta Amelia Rosselli"; Santini, "Amelia Rosselli oltre lo schizomorfismo."

[114] "[A]lle soglie degli anni Sessanta il soggetto si trova di fronte alla crisi della rappresentazione", Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*, 61.

[115] But the same holds for the 1950s, when writers were actively working on the poetry they would publish the following decade.

[116] Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*, 61; italics of the author.

Anceschi.[117] The poetic subject, faced with the "frangersi e ispessirsi del rapporto interno-esterno",[118] experienced an equally profound crisis, and as Stefano Colangelo reminds us, in the second half of the twentieth century, it became "da 'io' dialogico, un 'io' del dubbio, dell'esitazione e dell'angoscia".[119] The boundaries between subject and object came to be less and less defined, and for this reason poets felt the need to reassess their relationship with the outer world. The re-evaluation of the dynamics between subject and object propelled a number of different outcomes,[120] in a context in which interdisciplinary research, including references to photography, became a powerful tool to investigate the subject's relationship to reality. For example, the French école du regard, which highly influenced neo-avant-garde poets, imitated photographic media in writing, as a way to try and impartially record reality on the page. Lorenzini describes the école du regard's way of looking at the world through a "tipologia dello sguardo inappartenente e anonimo che finisce per annullare la distanza e il confronto con l'altro, e quindi anche la percezione rinnovata di sé".[121] According to Remo Ceserani, photography itself was a direct cultural agent influencing "i modi stessi del rapporto del soggetto con la realtà, della percepibilità e percezione soggettiva, della riproducibilità della realtà in figure e parole";[122] thus photography also acquired a role in the refashioning of the ways in which writers envisioned the world and wrote about it. The complex relationship between subject and object,

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[117] Renato Barilli clearly synthesises the phenomenological scene in the 1950s and 1960s as follows: "Con il termine di fenomenologia intendo riferirmi a una fascia di posizioni teoriche di diversa origine cronologica anche se più o meno nascenti l'una al seguito dell'altra. Dunque, in primo luogo il pensiero di Husserl, già esso stesso assai esteso nel tempo e ricco di sviluppi interni. Quindi la ripresa ad opera di quella che fu anche detta la Scuola di Parigi, vale a dire il «primo» Sartre, degli anni Trenta e Quaranta, e soprattutto Merleau-Ponty; quindi ancora la *Husserlsrenaissance* di cui, negli anni Cinquanta, si rese promotore Enzo Paci, in stretta affinità e convergenza con le elaborazioni della scuola di Parigi. Una diramazione autonoma rispetto a un tale asse ma per molti versi convergente rispetto ad esso, è quella che ha un iniziatore in Antonio Banfi col suo razionalismo critico, e un continuatore in Luciano Anceschi", Barilli, *Scienza della cultura e fenomenologia degli stili*, 161.

[118] Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*, 9.

[119] Colangelo, *Il soggetto nella poesia del Novecento italiano*, 3.

[120] The influence of phenomenology on poetry is detectable both nationally and worldwide. For a quick overview on how Italian poets respond to this representational crisis see Lorenzini's discussion of Pasolini, Fortini, Sereni, Luzi, Caproni, Porta, Risi, Orelli, Erba, Rosselli and Zanzotto in Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*. Lorenzini also mentions the French experiences of Tel Quel and L'école du regard as examples of a similar line of research. Outside Europe, Charles Olson's phenomenological approach to poetry is particularly influential both on the neo-avant-garde poets and on Rosselli herself. See for example Colangelo, *Metrica Come Composizione*.

[121] Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*, 26. See also Calvino's La follia del mirino, discussed later in this chapter.

[122] Ceserani, "L'impatto della tecnica fotografica su alcuni procedimenti dell'immaginario letterario contemporaneo," 54.

therefore, inevitably prompted a "problematizzarsi del linguaggio",[123] leading writers to experiment with the medium of language itself, since, as Picchione pointed out, "the formal transgression of language" responded to the urge "to go beyond accepted and mystifying conceptions of reality".[124]

The young intellectuals who in 1956 were gathering around *Il Verri* were ready to accept the challenges posed by this ongoing crisis of representation. They aimed to critically renew literature by operating on three main levels: first, they reassessed the relationship between subject and object; second, they challenged the limits of language by vastly experimenting with it;[125] and third, they questioned and crossed the very boundaries of literature, by opening it up to international and interdisciplinary influences. Luciano Anceschi was to some extent leading their artistic research. In fact, Anceschi, who in 1936 had written *Autonomia ed eteronomia dell'arte*,[126] advocated for a phenomenological approach to literature. This meant that literary texts could not exist in isolation (or autonomy),[127] but were rather the result of their relation to the external context (heteronomy). In this sense, for Anceschi, and later for the poets of the *Neoavanguardia*, poetry had to be created *in re* (inside reality), rather than *ante rem* (before reality).

Anceschi's "nuova idea di letteratura", similarly to Vittorini's *Il Politecnico*, was pursued through the pages of *Il Verri* particularly by opening up to other artistic disciplines, as well as to foreign influences. The actual notion of "openness" was conceived years before the influential formulation of Umberto Eco's *Opera aperta* (1962), which would become the "unofficial manifesto" for the neo-avant-garde movement.[128] In the first issue of *Il Verri*, Anceschi advocated for a "letteratura aperta" according to which "tutto (dalla filosofia alla scienza, dalla morale alla politica,

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[123] Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*, 61. Tomaso Lisa also agrees with Lorenzini: "il linguaggio si incarica di rappresentare lo scarto che lo separa dall'oggetto; ciò si riflette nelle pratiche testuali, nel disorientamento espressivo dovuto al complicarsi della nozione di reale, al frangersi del rapporto interno-esterno", Lisa, *La poetiche dell'oggetto*, 93.

[124] Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*, 12.

[125] Language was in fact the medium which allowed them to express their relationship with the outer world.

[126] Anceschi, *Autonomia ed eteronomia dell'arte*.

[127] "[L]'autonomia della poesia si dà solo nella pienezza delle relazioni della poesia con se stessa e con le altre attività umane", from Il Verri, n.3, 1957; quoted in Luti and Verbaro, *Dal Neorealismo alla Neoavanguardia. Il dibattito letterario in Italia negli anni della modernizzazione: 1945–1969*, 67.

[128] Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, "Italian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," 390.

dal costume allo sport) tutto rientra nel discorso".[129] In line with this proposition, the magazine paid

particular attention to international literary trends,[130] while at the same time it considered literature

interdisciplinarily, as the "'punto di connessione e di riferimento' per una larga ricognizione nel

territorio delle altre arti (dalla pittura alla musica, dal cinema al teatro)".[131] The experience of *Il Verri*

and the precious mentorship of Anceschi brought together a group of like-minded poets who would

also become some of the future members of Gruppo 63: Elio Pagliarani, Alfredo Giuliani, Edoardo

Sanguineti, Nanni Balestrini, and Antonio Porta. Together, they published their poetry in the 1961

anthology *I Novissimi. Poesie per gli anni '60*, edited by Alfredo Giuliani. The title chosen for the

book, suggested by Sanguineti, fully embraced Anceschi's proposition for a new literature. In

choosing the term *Novissimi*, Sanguineti was nodding in the direction of Anceschi's former anthology

Lirici nuovi (1943)[132] to indicate yet a newer and more significant generation of poets, since for

Sanguineti the poetry of the *Novissimi* corresponded with the "possibile novità ultima a noi

storicamente offerta".[133]

Commenting on the anthology a few years after the first edition, Giuliani noted that the book

led the poets of the *Novissimi* "nel mezzo dei movimenti di punta che agitano la letteratura in altri

paesi",[134] and brought them closer to the "linguaggio della musica e della pittura",[135] thus confirming

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[129] Literature therefore directly engages with external reality. Barilli and Guglielmi, *Gruppo 63: critica e teoria*, 212–13.

[130] In a 2003 interview titled "Prolusione", Eco looks back at the first issues of *Il Verri*: since the beginning, the magazine had included an anthology of American poets (n. 1), one of new French poets (n. 2) and of new German poets (n. 4). In 1959, it displayed works by Spanish and Russian poets, while introducing in the same year "il discorso sul Nouveau Roman a opera di Barilli e con testi di Robbe-Grillet", with the aim to provide some "anticipazioni sul 'nuovo che avanza'", Barilli, Curi, and Lorenzini, *Il Gruppo 63 quarant'anni dopo*, 22–23.

[131] Vetri also reminds us that some issues were entirely dedicated to visual arts, such as n. 3 in 1961 (on the *Informale*); n. 12 in 1963 (After the *Informale*); n. 22 1966 (*Arte programmata*). Others discussed the international music scene, such as nn. 1 and 3 in 1959 (*A proposito di una fenomenologia della musica contemporanea*); or n. 30 in 1969 on *Nuova musica*. *Il Verri* also extensively discussed theatre and philosophy. Vetri, *Letteratura e caos*, 78–81. See also Chirumbolo, Moroni, and Somigli, *Neoavanguardia. Italian Experimental Literature and Arts in the 1960s*, 5.

[132] Anceschi, *Lirici nuovi*.

[133] From *Fiera letteraria*, 3 July, 1960; quoted in Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 16. In fact, for Giuliani "tra i 'nuovi' e i 'novissimi' non c'è continuità, anzi rottura", Giuliani, 18.

[134] Such as L'école du regard or the Tel Quel group.

[135] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 14.

the international and interdisciplinary nature of the group.[136] The interactions with other artistic disciplines, and especially music and the visual arts, proved crucial for the formation of the neo-avant-gardist Gruppo 63, whose first meeting in Palermo in 1963[137] took place at the same time as the international new music festival *Settimana Internazionale di Nuova Musica*, following the invitation by the Italian experimental musician Luigi Nono.[138] Anceschi saluted the 1963 meeting as follows:

> [S]olo da poco tempo, non senza il travaglio e i meravigliosi equivoci che sempre accompagnano alla fine eventi tanto delicati e improbabili, pare veramente si dichiarino nel nostro paese, una realtà di nuova poesia, una volontà di nuovo romanzo, una condizione di coerente convergenza tra le arti nella ricerca comune, e un orientamento di pensiero capace di intendere, di dominare, di sollecitare il tumulto del nuovo.[139]

The quest for "il tumulto del nuovo" thus brought together artists from different disciplines, who often experimented in the same direction (for instance, John Cage's combinatory practices in music quickly permeated to experimental literature[140]). The very boundaries between artistic disciplines became less rigid, and the 1960s saw a rapid increase of interartistic collaborations between writers, musicians, theatre and film directors, and visual artists.

The idea of traversing boundaries became crucial to the Italian experimental artistic research to the point that, besides the crossing of national and disciplinary borders, poets also started to challenge the confines of their own artistic *medium*, which is to say of poetic writing. According to Picchione, across the 1950s and the 1970s, the poetic research of several experimental writers and groups (in particular of Gruppo 63 and Gruppo 70) was characterised by an "aesthetics of

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[136] Picchione sums up the main international and interdisciplinary influences on the neo-avant-garde as follows: "the *neoavanguardia's* theoretical positions and literary practices cannot be disengaged from a number of aesthetic models that include the American avant-garde (Pound, Olson, Cage), the Frankfurt School, Abstract Expressionism, post-Weberian music, and the *nouveau roman*", Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*, viii.

[137] Amelia Rosselli also attended the meeting. An account of all the meetings of Gruppo 63 can be found in Barilli and Guglielmi, *Gruppo 63: critica e teoria*, 337–38.

[138] Barilli, Curi, and Lorenzini, *Il Gruppo 63 quarant'anni dopo*, 144.

[139] Balestrini and Giuliani, *Gruppo 63*, 7.

[140] The interactions between music and literature are an underlying theme of Eco's *Opera aperta*. As per John Cage in particular, Picchione points out: "The avant-garde solutions of chance and assemblage play in Cage a role very much in tune with the reduction of the I that Giuliani presents as a central feature of the Novissimi's poetics", Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*, 20. Picchione also links Cage's artistic research to that of Charles Olson, an American avant-garde poet who influenced both *I Novissimi* and Amelia Rosselli's work.

transgression both of the linguistic code and of conventional literary models". [141] The model of poetry was particularly revisited to accommodate for the changing role of the subject within reality, as well as for the new national landscape, more and more centred around images, media, and consumerism, in a society that – in the artists' eyes – was irremediably slipping into alienation.

For Lucio Vetri, the "transgression" of codes and literary models was manifested in two different ways: either intrinsically, that is to say within the traditional borders of literature (through intermedial references), or extrinsically, that is to say across them (by creating intermedial works). In the first instance, the experimental thrust was meant to renew the institution of literature ("*le istituzioni interne*") without modifying its overall structure ("*le strutture esterne*"), and thus remaining within the *medium* of literary writing. For Vetri, the *Novissimi*'s "poesia schizomorfa", and the "poesia tecnologica" [142] are examples of this trend because in both cases authors experimented with poetic writing with the aim to renew the institution of literature and yet remained within the traditional form of poetry, challenging and deconstructing its status from within. As we shall see, poets in this category often conceived of still or moving photography as a tool to innovate and rethink writing, in line with Hill's suggestion that "writers who make use of photography in their works" often do so "because they are in some sense struggling against the institution of Literature and are looking for alternative models". [143] Giuliani's mention of "asyntactism" – the shattering of linear syntax and the subsequent montage of fragments of discourse – in the introduction to the 1961 anthology also falls into this category. Asyntactism, thus, constitutes an intermedial reference to photography, since the notion was directly moulded upon a photographic technique while still remaining within the boundaries of poetic writing.

The second modality for transgressing and crossing borders took place at the margins of literature and across artistic disciplines "in uno spazio intermedio, inter-artistico ed inter-estetico (...)

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[141] Picchione, 180.

[142] "Poesia schizomorfa" is a synonym for the poetry of the neo-avante-garde, whereas "poesia tecnologica" referred to those experimental writing practices that addressed the technologically mediated language promoted by mass media of communication. See Vetri, *Letteratura e caos*, XIV.

[143] Hill, "Photographic Fictions: Photography in Italian Literature 1945–2000," 3.

penetrando nei territori delle altre arti – delle arti grafiche, della pittura, della musica, delle arti dello spettacolo".[144] This type of experimentation transformed the very notion of literature and resulted in intermedial practices beyond traditional literary labels, giving way to new literary forms, such as those of total poetry ("poesia totale"), visual poetry ("poesia visiva") and sound poetry ("poesia fonetico-sonora").[145] The case of visual poetry is particularly relevant for this thesis, since it openly testifies to the intensity of the exchanges that were happening from the 1950s to the 1970s between literature and visual culture.

Italian Photographic Culture Between the Reconstruction Years and the Economic Boom

Before exploring the specific role photography played in the evolution of literature, however, it is necessary to better understand the peculiarities of Italian photographic culture between the 1950s and up to the 1970s. As we have already seen, by the 1950s photographs had become an ever-increasing presence in the life of the Italians, and more people than ever before owned cameras.[146] Photography, at this time, had taken full hold of Italy and, alongside literature and the other arts, it was reflecting the peculiar moment of transition – so lamented by Pasolini – from a pre-industrial and mainly rural Italy to a country driven by the thrusts of the economic boom towards a mass society of the spectacle.[147] What's more, the all-pervasiveness of photography transformed ways of seeing, behaving, and thinking, while at the same time it interacted with art, literature and poetic writing, thus overall reshaping the habits of Italians, both in the domestic and socio-cultural spheres.

In post-war Italy, photography came to be, first of all, a powerful tool to re-create, and perhaps to invent, a new identity for a country deeply traversed by paradoxes. As Minghelli argues, still

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[144] Vetri, *Letteratura e caos*, XIV.
[145] Vetri, XIV.
[146] Hill, "Photographic Fictions: Photography in Italian Literature 1945–2000," 33. But see also D'Autilia, *Storia della fotografia in Italia dal 1839 a oggi*; Zannier, "Storia della fotografia italiana."
[147] Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*. First edition 1967.

photography, alongside moving photography, played a crucial part "in ferrying Italy to the shores of democracy and modernity"[148] and "contributed to moulding a new historical sense and new awareness of Italy's position in an expanded geopolitical context".[149] This privileged role was partly due to the nature of the medium itself, since, by being "[a]mbiguously balanced between the promise of modernity and nostalgia", it brought to the foreground a confrontation between Italy's past and Italy's present and alluring future. For Minghelli, the two opposing trends of "memory" and "modernity" found a visual equivalent in different photographic practices. On the one hand, memory (and Italy's long-standing rural and folkloric tradition) was echoed in documentary photography: Minghelli brings the example of the work of Franco Pinna and anthropologist Ernesto De Martino in the south of Italy, though this was a trend followed by several other photographers of the time. On the other hand, modernity was appearing in the glamorous images of scandal photography – with Tazio Secchiaroli being the model upon which the character of "Paparazzo" in *La dolce vita* was modelled – but also, more broadly, through the photographs taken by photojournalists, a new professional figure that Federico Patellani had already addressed in 1941.[150]

Documentary photography was thus showing the old face of Italy – a rural and extremely poor country still developing around popular traditions and rituals[151] – while the burgeoning presence of photojournalist photography, along with its predisposition to record and produce scandals, was sketching the image of another Italy. Scandal and crime photographs were being largely featured in

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[148] The section reads as follow: "The Italian post-war period saw the explosion of photography as a medium of mass communication. (…) A story still largely to be told concerns the role, momentous if more hidden, more 'naturalised' in the folds of social life, that photography played in ferrying Italy to the shores of democracy and modernity", Minghelli, "Icons of Remorse: Photography, Anthropology and the Erasure of History in 1950s Italy," 383.

[149] Minghelli, 384. As Hill claims, photography at this time came to be at once "an ambiguous product of industrial modernity, a fragile record of a vanishing past, and a primary symptom of the birth of the society of spectacle", Hill, "Photographic Excess: 'Scandalous' Photography in Film and Literature after the Boom," 217.

[150] In *Il giornalista nuova formula* Patellani writes: "ma già sin d'ora è nata una nuova specie di giornalista inseparabile dalla macchina fotografica, che gli è indispensabile strumento di mestiere", Patellani, "Il giornalista nuova formula."

[151] Such as, in particular, the healing dancing practice of Tarantella, explored by Pinna and De Martino. In her paper, Minghelli juxtaposes a photograph of a Tarantella dancer with the specular notorious photograph of Aichè Nanà's striptease, which Fellini would re-enact in *La dolce vita*, see Minghelli, "Icons of Remorse: Photography, Anthropology and the Erasure of History in 1950s Italy."

newspapers and magazines,[152] and they particularly depicted the controversial glamour of popular public figures and of high society – ranging from politicians, to artists and film stars. At the same time, they made crimes as well as catastrophes immediately visible, and thus also vividly imaginable.[153] The cases of Secchiaroli, Pinna, and De Martino discussed in Minghelli's essay confirm "the intricate connections between still photography, photojournalism, the press and the Italian film industry"[154] highlighted by Pelizzari[155] and restated by Grespi.[156] Such connections also characterise the work of other photographers of the time, such as Chiara Samugheo, who documented both the poverty of Neapolitan children and the stylish lifestyle of celebrities; or Enzo Sellerio, Alfredo Camisa, and Nino Migliori, the latter of whom introduced elements of abstraction in his documentary photography.[157]

Alongside providing these clashing, and yet complementary, images of Italy, photography was also taking ground in illustrated magazines and in the advertising industry, endorsing a new culture of consumerism, which was made possible by the onset of the economic boom and the

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[152] Patellani in 1943 discussed the transitioning role of photography in the news as follows: "Un tempo i giornali che andavano per la maggiore si guardavano dal pubblicare fotografie, e tenevano alla nudità delle pagine come ad una tradizione dalla quale non ci si può staccare (...) In Italia, il tentativo [di inserire fotografie nei periodici] venne fatto da «Tempo» e la diffusione raggiunta in Europa dal settimanale italiano sta a provare anche per l'Italia la vittoria della formula «giornale settimanale fotografico». Forse domani si arriverà al quotidiano fotografico, ma già sin d'ora è nata una nuova specie di giornalista inseparabile dalla macchina fotografica, che gli è indispensabile strumento di mestiere", Patellani, "Il giornalista nuova formula." Some of the most popular magazines were *Tempo* (founded in 1939 and modelled on the American *Life* magazine), *Famiglia Cristiana* (1931), *Oggi* (1945), *L'Europeo (*1945), *Epoca* (1950), *Le Ore* (1953), *Gente* (1957), *Panorama* (1962), *Il Mondo* (1949–66) and *L'Espresso (*1955); photonovels were also popular in magazines such as *Grazia* (1938), Pelizzari, *Photography and Italy*, 105. For more on "magazine culture" see Barron, *Popular High Culture in Italian Media, 1950–1970*. Barron retraces the influence of American photographic culture on Italian magazines (most of the above mentioned magazines imitated the *Life* logo and typography) while at the same time underlining the differences and the importance of high culture in Italian magazines.

[153] Along with the scandals and the crimes, photography was also alimenting a culture of "celebritisation" by both providing role models for Italians to imitate in their daily life, and by making common people famous when touched by tragedy, Hill, "Photographic Excess: 'Scandalous' Photography in Film and Literature after the Boom."

[154] To these I would add literature, since Antonio Porta and Edoardo Sanguineti both largely refer to newspapers and cinema in their poetry.

[155] Pelizzari also notes that both Pinna and Secchiaroli work for Fellini, Pelizzari, *Photography and Italy*, 116.

[156] Grespi retraces the interconnections between cinema and photography in post-war Italy and argues that neo-realist cinema was inspired by American social photography of the 1930s and 1940s while in turn it influenced Italian neo-realist photography of the 1950s, Grespi, "Italian Neo-Realism between Cinema and Photography."

[157] During the 1960s and into the 1970s, photographers would move away from social and documentary photography to rather investigate their relationship with the *medium*, often responding "to linguistic explorations that had developed through the 1960s, such as Umberto Eco's *Opera Aperta* (1962), and the introduction of semiotics", which resulted in meta-photographic reflections, such as in the work of Ugo Mulas, Mario Cresci, and Franco Vaccari, see Pelizzari, *Photography and Italy*, 127–49.

growing wealth in urban environments. Photographic images, across stillness and motion, also promoted lifestyles imported from the USA, and testified to a growing cultural trend edging towards globalisation. In fact, in the 1950s, a number of magazines were closely following the model set by the popular New York based *Life* magazine.[158] *Life*, since the acquisition by Henry Luce in 1936, had specialized in high quality photographic contributions, with particular emphasis on photojournalism. Photographers like Margaret Bourke-White, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Peter Stackpole, Thomas McAvoy and Carl Mydans were all part of the initial project, and would soon be joined by many other important names. In Italy, *Tempo* (1939–1976) was one of the first magazines to reproduce the *Life* layout, soon to be followed by several others. Founded by the publishing company Mondadori, the magazine was the first in which the photographic image predominated over the text. The conventional word-image hierarchy was overturned and a new format defined as "photo-text" by Federico Patellani, photojournalist for the magazine, became the core characteristic of the periodical. The neologism implemented by Patellani was, all in all, nothing but an adaptation in the national scene of the same concept – a photo paired with a caption – which was already widely used abroad. However, it had the merit to facilitate the diffusion of the concept and its very use in Italian cultural as well as artistic practices.[159]

Illustrated magazines were particularly successful in Italy, since, as Emma Barron tells us: "Italy's magazine circulation was the highest in Europe" and "[b]y the late 1950s, 21 million Italians (around 60% of the adult population) read at least one magazine a week".[160] Magazines especially attracted young audiences, with half of the total readers aged between sixteen and thirty-four years. Young people's high engagement with magazines reflected "a broader generational change in mass

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[158] During the first half of the century, photography, worldwide, had acquired an increasingly foregrounding role in the print. Magazines like the German *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (1892–1945) or the French *Vu* (1928–1940) were at once pioneers of and models for a new kind of information system, which strongly relied on the use of photographs. Outside of Europe, the United States constituted another centre of photographic progress, including the example of *Life* magazine. For more information see D'Autilia, *Storia della fotografia in Italia dal 1839 a oggi*. and Zannier, "Storia della fotografia italiana."

[159] See Zannier, "Storia della fotografia italiana."

[160] Barron, *Popular High Culture in Italian Media, 1950–1970*, 23.

cultural consumption", as Italians were more and more frequently "reading magazines, listening to radios and records, going to the cinema and watching television".[161] At that time, the most popular illustrated magazines were *Tempo* (1939–1976), *Oggi* (1939–) and *Epoca* (1950–1997), which offered their readers "news, entertainment, advice and importantly, information on the increasing range of affordable mass consumer products";[162] other popular magazines were *Grazia* (1938–) and *Famiglia Cristiana* (1931–). Illustrated magazines thus became an ideal avenue for advertising products, since most of the magazines' income was generated from advertisements. Magazines, in other words, shaped new cultural habits and new desires, while they instructed readers on the most appropriate social behaviours. For Barron, they also "incorporated an enthusiastic hyperbole on Italy's future in the modern world".[163] Sketching an account of the magazine culture in post-war Italy, D'Autilia also pointed out how illustrated magazines, consumed by millions of readers, mixed photographs with popular news and crime news, sport and politics, thus contributing to establish a narrative tailored around the average Italian citizen.[164] Antonio Porta, as we shall see in the chapter dedicated to his work, directly referred to the narrative proposed by these magazines and criticised it in his poetry.

Finally, the technology of photography was becoming increasingly available to the masses; photography, along with the other goods of consumerist society, gradually entered the space of daily and domestic life introducing new criteria for image production, such as those pertaining to family portraits and narratives, as well as for images related to travelling and self-identity. The diffusion of the cameras amongst Italians was due to several technological advancements launched at the turn of the 1950s, including the introduction of the Polaroid camera, and the forthcoming reflex cameras,

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[161] Barron, 24.

[162] Barron, 23.

[163] From the same quote: "A smooth integration of international and national news, alongside entertaining articles and celebrity photographs, told the story of the modern world in words and pictures", Barron, 26.

[164] "Per alcuni decenni, a partire dal dopoguerra, milioni di italiani ogni settimana sono stati dunque raggiunti dai contenuti dei rotocalchi, fatti di molta fotografia e di cronaca nera (negata fino allora dal regime fascista), di cronaca mondana, di sport, di politica, il tutto confezionato nella forma di una narrazione del paese e del mondo a misura dell'italiano medio", D'Autilia, *Storia della fotografia in Italia dal 1839 a oggi*, 273.

electronic flashes, or colour film.[165] In the following decade, cameras would consequently become more portable, more affordable, easier to use and specifically targeted to the masses:

> la Kodak Instamatic dal 1963 al 1972 vende nel mondo 60 milioni di esemplari e costa ormai un decimo del salario operaio medio. La pubblicità ne "targhettizza" persino gli utenti: ce n'è una per la mamma che ama la foto di famiglia (è ovviamente "facile come accendere la luce"), una per la nonna a cui nessuno dà mai le foto dei nipotini, una per lui, che è un "professionista" che si è fatto già un nome tra parenti e amici, e anche una per il "perfezionista piu accanito".[166]

For D'Autilia, this shift in the market indicated that Italians and the Italian family were becoming the nuclear centre of consumerism itself, as Pasolini pointed out: "Dunque, la Famiglia (riscriviamola con la maiuscola) che per secoli e millenni è stata lo 'specimen' minimo, insieme, della economia contadina e della civiltà religiosa, ora è diventata lo 'specimen' minimo della civiltà consumistica di massa".[167] Photography had a double role in this process: on the one hand, cameras became products to purchase, and recorded images of new, wealthier lifestyles;[168] and yet on the other, photographic images, through advertising, were responsible for those very purchases and lifestyles.

In sum, the complex and still developing national imagery and identity of the country found expression visually, revolving around the images that were populating television, newspapers, magazines, as well as cinema screens and domestic spaces.[169] For Hill, "[t]he boundaries of what could be and was shown were vastly expanded, as were the ways in which photography could be used" and this very expansion "had a profound impact on a number of important Italian writers of the period".[170] It is therefore only natural that writers turned to this particular medium to critically speak of contemporaneity and often incorporated references to it in their writing – it is the case of Zanzotto, for whom references to photography and cinema provided "delle chiavi di espressione più

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[165] D'Autilia, 248.

[166] D'Autilia, 317.

[167] Pasolini, *Scritti corsari*, 25; quoted in D'Autilia, *Storia della fotografia in Italia dal 1839 a oggi*, 318.

[168] For D'Autilia, "più ancora della pubblicità; è proprio questo tipo di fotografia [famigliare] a raccontare dettagliatamente la nascita (tra gli anni cinquanta e sessanta) della figura della casalinga, lo sviluppo dei consumi e l'affermazione della famiglia nucleare", D'Autilia, *Storia della fotografia in Italia dal 1839 a oggi*, 317.

[169] Barron, for instance, identifies "three dominant forces in Italian mass culture: the magazine industry, the state-run television broadcaster and the advertising industry", Barron, *Popular High Culture in Italian Media, 1950–1970*, 7.

[170] Hill, "Photographic Fictions: Photography in Italian Literature 1945–2000," 34.

complete".[171] Remo Ceserani, in exploring the impact of photography on literary writing, directly links the technology of photography to the changing literary imaginary, as well as to the conception of new literary techniques:

> L'introduzione della fotografia, con le sue tecniche e i suoi procedimenti, di natura ottica e chimica, ha avuto effetti profondi sui modi della percezione e della rappresentazione della realtà, sulle concezioni artistiche, sull'immaginario interiore dell'uomo, sulle stesse tecniche linguistiche usate per pensare, comunicare e raccontare i prodotti di quell'immaginario. La letteratura ne è stata ampiamente investita.[172]

At this time, photography, by impacting "i modi stessi del rapporto del soggetto con la realtà; della percepibilità e percezione soggettiva, della riproducibilità della realtà in figure e parole",[173] came to be an ideal point of comparison for writers and poets who were facing the crisis of representation (including the decentring of the writing subject) that Lorenzini described.[174] It will be therefore useful to see how some of the writers and intellectuals who directly shaped the cultural life in the 1950s into the 1970s responded to photography. As also pointed out by Hill, three writers acted as "precursors" and were particularly influential in normalising the interactions between literature and photography: Elio Vittorini, Italo Calvino, and Cesare Zavattini.[175] The visual research of these authors, though they were not necessarily dealing with poetry, informed the experimental culture of the time and provided the background against which several experimental poets developed their own poetics and literary techniques.

Normalising the Exchanges Between Literature and Photography: Some Precursors

Vittorini, Calvino, and Zavattini acted as precursors for a series of trends in the interaction between Italian literature and photography that would further develop over the second half of the century.[176]

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[171] Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 104. Quoted in Moroni and Butcher, *From Eugenio Montale to Amelia Rosselli*, 57.

[172] Ceserani, "L'impatto della tecnica fotografica su alcuni procedimenti dell'immaginario letterario contemporaneo," 53.

[173] Ceserani, 53.

[174] Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*.

[175] Hill, "Photographic Fictions: Photography in Italian Literature 1945–2000," 25–70.

[176] Hill, 25–70.

Some of these include the enclosure of photographs in literary works (photo-books), the interaction of words and photographic images (photo-texts), the collaborations between writers and photographers, and the metaphorical use of photography in literature. Vittorini was one of the pioneers of photographic image and word relations in Italy, and while he created some photo-books (*Americana* (1941) and *Conversazione in Sicilia* (1953)), his use of photography in his photo-texts was particularly innovative, since it was symbolic and allegorical, rather than naturalist. Zavattini, who was also a prolific screenwriter, worked on photo-books too, collaborating first with American photographer Paul Strand on *Un paese* (1955), and twenty years later with Italian photographer Gianni Berengo Gardin on *Un paese vent'anni dopo* (1976). His approach, however, was more in line with the tenets of Italian cinematographic Neorealism as well as with American social photography, including with Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man* (1955).[177] Finally, Calvino did not include photographs in his literary works, but rather reflected on the medium of photography itself and drew a comparison between photography and writing, as for instance in *La follia del mirino* (1955) and *L'avventura di un fotografo* (1970). My interest and focus in discussing these cases, rather than on the type of specific interaction that each of these authors developed with photography, will be on the impact that these figures had on the experimental literary culture of the time. Vittorini and Calvino, especially, played a crucial role in directing the literary debate from the 1940s to the 1970s.

As we have seen, Vittorini contributed to actively shaping and directing the rise of the culture of experimentalism, first from the pages of *Il Politecnico*, and later, with Calvino, from those of *Il Menabò*. His relationship with and his advocacy for photography were paramount in normalising references to photographic culture in Italian literature, and in informing a new generation of poets. Equally, Calvino contributed to animate the debate on literary culture in the 1950s and '60s: in *Il mare dell'oggettività*, published in the second issue of *Il Menabò* in 1960, he directly addressed the much discussed relationship between subject and reality, touching on one of the key themes that

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[177] For the relationship between neorealism and American social photography see Grespi, "Italian Neo-Realism between Cinema and Photography."

linked poetic research to the photographic medium. As we shall see, the relationship between subject and reality, explored through the medium of photography, also constitutes one of the underlying topics of some of his literary writing. As for Zavattini, it will suffice to point out that his work with Strand, *Un paese* (1955), was at once starkly innovative, since the format of the socially concerned photo-book was "unprecedented" in Italy,[178] and yet in line with the more traditional discourse of neorealist research. The book, in fact, intended to give visibility to a marginalised and obscure social group, and in particular to that of the workers and families of Luzzara – Zavattini's village of origin – who often lived in poverty. It did so by adopting the style of neorealism and a format in which writer and photographer worked as equals, in a manner recalling Walker Evans and James Agee's *Let us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939).[179] In Zavattini and Strand's photo-book, writing and photography worked alongside and yet independently from one another in order to document and narrate a story. *Un paese*, then, contributed to increasing the interlaces between literature and photography, while at the same time providing a milestone in the history of the Italian photo-book.

Vittorini was perhaps the key figure in establishing and normalising connections between Italian literature and photography. His fascination with photography dated back to the 1930s and 1940s, "when he introduced American literature and photography into the country, as a powerful alternative to the monolithic and nationalistic messages of Fascism".[180] Vittorini's anthology *Americana* (1942), for instance, presented forty-eight photographs by photographers such as Mathew Brady, Alfred Stieglitz, and Lewis Hine, as well as images from Walker Evans's *American Photographs.*[181] However, the photographs, albeit they were taken by famous photographers, were often included without photographic credit, and rather accompanied by Vittorini's own captions. The choice of using the images independently from their original context responded to Vittorini's need to endow them with new meaning, since, as Giovanni Falaschi points out, in *Americana* the photographs

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[178] Hill, "Photographic Fictions: Photography in Italian Literature 1945–2000," 51.
[179] Hill, 48. For more on the relationship between image and word in Evans and Agee's work see also Mitchell defines this genre as "photographic essay".
[180] Pelizzari, *Photography and Italy*, 106.
[181] Pelizzari, 106.

are entirely subordinated to Vittorini's pedagocial-political intentions.[182] The inclination to appropriate photographs in order to construct a broader semantic whole is a constant feature of Vittorini's visual engagement, as in the case of *Il Politecnico*.

As we have already seen, with *Il Politecnico* (published between 1945 and 1947) Vittorini was pioneering and shaping the culture of experimentalism that would take full hold of Italian literary research from the late 1950s to the 1970s. While *Il Politecnico* was introducing foreign authors to an Italian readership, and at the same reinforcing the dialogue between different artistic disciplines, the magazine was particularly groundbreaking for its introduction and promotion of an entirely new relationship between literature and photographic culture. Vittorini's use of photographic images in *Il politecnico*, aided by the masterful work of graphic designer Albe Steiner,[183] offered a new possible approach to image and word interactions. Similarly to *Americana*, the combination of photographs and writing in the magazine produced photo-texts in which the images[184] were cut off their original context and instead used to illustrate and to add new meanings to the written text.[185] According to Anna Baldini, each issue of *Il Politecnico* can be conceived as a self-sufficient macro-text made up of "photographs, drawings and articles (…) linked through their captions, titles or the simple fact of being printed on the same page", whose authorship is "entirely attributable to Vittorini".[186]

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[182] "[L]'assoluta subordinazione dell'immagine originaria all'intenzione pedogogico-politica", Falaschi, "Vittorini e La Fotografia," 39.

[183] On the reception of the graphic layout of *Il politecnico* see Baldini, "Working with Images and Texts: Elio Vittorini's Il Politecnico."

[184] Some of the photographs included were selected from American magazines such as *Life* and *Look* and taken by Margaret Bourke-White, Werner Bishof, and crime photographer Weegee.

[185] However, if in *Americana* the forty-eight photographs were clustered together in a single section, in *Il politecnico* the interactions were interspersed throughout the magazine, creating a rather dynamic flow between images and writing.

[186] Baldini, "Working with Images and Texts: Elio Vittorini's Il Politecnico," 59. Baldini provides a detailed description of issue 21 of the magazine: "To give an idea of how crucial the integration of texts and images was in *Il Politecnico*, I will describe, as a sample, issue 21 (16 February 1946). The first page exhibits seven photographs: the bigger one is by the American photographer Margaret Bourke White, and its caption exhorts readers to donate money to 'save the children of Cassino'; at the bottom, five architectural pictures from the city of Zlin, though associated with the article 'The Nationalizations in Czechoslovakia', do not actually illustrate it, but rather tell a story of their own. Finally, the caption to the last image on the first page, a portrait of Salvador Dalì, condemns the painter's appreciation of Franco's regime by stating that he 'gave all to the worst Caesars', and is capped by Ferrata's article 'Give to Ceasar'. Dalì's portrait anticipates the entry about Surrealism of *Il Politecnico*'s 'Encyclopedia' on page 3, signed by R.I.; the article is supplemented by a reproduction of a painting by Dalì, and by quotations from Aragon, Eluard and Queneau, each coupled with photomontages or film frames from *Un Chien andalou*, the Surrealistic short film directed by Luis Buñuel in 1929.

The novelty of Vittorini's visual project, which included his photo-books *Americana* and

Conversazione in Sicilia, was that it consciously made use of photography to expand the possibilities

of narration, and, most interestingly, that this new type of narration was inherently suspended between

stillness and motion. As Vittorini himself claims in "La foto strizza l'occhio alla pagina", published

on *Cinema Nuovo* in 1954, the assemblage of still images and words served the purpose of creating a

story which responded to the logic of cinema:

> Con la rivista *Il Politecnico* fu la prima volta che la fotografia venne introdotta nel linguaggio culturale e portata a far corpo con esso in modo da renderne più evidenti (visivi) i concetti e insieme da caricarsi di significati rinnovatori attraverso l'incombere dei concetti stessi. (…). Per il *Politecnico* io ebbi il mio punto di partenza nell'*Americana* e per *l'Americana* lo ebbi nel cinematografo. (…) Il valore, il tipo, la qualità [delle fotografie usate] intendevo determinarli per mio conto, ricostruendoli in rapporto al testo che illustravo considerato unitariamente, tutto intero il libro *l'Americana*, e numero per numero, con un continuo ammicco all'insieme dei numeri, *Il Politecnico*. (…) Per delle vie affini a quelle seguite dal regista nel cinematografo. Era nell'*accostamento* tra le foto anche le più disparate ch'io riottenevo o tentavo di riottenere un valore più o meno estetico. [187]

Vittorini's proposition was partly built on what Patellani had discussed in *Giornalista nuova formula*

(1941) when he claimed that cinematic techniques inspired a new way of taking and organizing

photographs into a story. The mechanism of cinematic montage was thus used to juxtapose images

and words, and images with one another, in order to construct a storyline. [188] In line with Pelizzari's

intuition that "[t]he interest in storytelling with photographs informed the experimental work of many

photographers and intellectuals of this generation" [189], this collagist technique inspired by montage

would also become fundamental in experimental writing, as in the case of Antonio Porta and Edoardo

Sanguineti, to name but a few. As a matter of fact, Vittorini's artistic and theoretical work proved

indispensable for the formation of 1950s and 1960s experimental writing, and, most importantly, for

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Page 2 is occupied by a reportage from Liguria presenting texts by Italo Calvino and Stefano Terra. Calvino's article 'Riviera di Ponente' is numbered '1', while '2' is a photo-story, namely a sequence of photographs connected into a united discourse by their captions. On the last sheet of the journal, a lecture against consumerism draws on three pictures from American advertisements", Baldini, 59.

[187] Vittorini, "La foto strizza l'occhio alla pagina," 200.

[188] According to Accari, this was an objective also pursued by Crocenzi, who thanks to his collaboration with Vittorini, was able to "realizzare le idee che aveva e andava maturando in merito all'uso dei fotogrammi come parole, della stretta relazione tra parola e immagine, tesa l'una e l'altra a formare 'l'architettura della pagina'; a realizzare, come diceva, 'il film sulla pagina'", A. Arcari, *Viaggio in Sicilia con Vittorini* (presentazione per una mostra di L. Crocenzi), Fondazione Corrente, Milano, 20 marzo 1983; quoted in Zannier, "Storia della fotografia italiana," 300.

[189] Pelizzari, *Photography and Italy*, 106.

the reconceptualising of the relationship between images and words. Vittorini was able to clearly foresee that, if cinema had already informed a new way of understanding photography, still and moving images and technologies were now informing new ways of writing literature.

Alongside Vittorini, Calvino also addressed photography and integrated references to it in his writing. In 1955, Calvino published *La follia del mirino*, a series of reflections on photography that would provide the basis for the short story *L'avventura di un fotografo* (1970). The essay opens with a glimpse on the cultural practice of photography in Italy, showing how, besides the increasing visual presence of photographic images in the media and advertising industry, the 1950s saw an equally massive spread of the domestic practice of taking photographs: "Con la primavera centinaia di migliaia d'italiani escono la domenica con la macchina fotografica a tracolla. E si fotografano".[190] These photographs often consisted of family portraits, – "uno dei primi bisogni dei genitori, dopo aver messo al mondo un figlio, è quello di fotografarlo; e dato il veloce ritmo di crescita dei bambini diventa necessario fotografarli spesso"[191] – with photographic images depicting domestic scenes of family life, like "quel torrente alpino, quella mossa del bambino col secchiello, quell'allungarsi al sole delle gambe della moglie",[192] taken to immortalise memories that would otherwise be lost to the impassible flow of time. The increasing presence of cameras in the domestic sphere also contributed to shape new cultural practices: Italians, for instance, were using the photographic medium to actively record, store, and organise their own personal and familiar narratives.[193] In turn, as Calvino reminds us, photography taught them to look at and to perceive the world according to new photogenic values – "bisogna vivere in modo quanto più fotografabile possibile"[194] – so as to conceive of reality as a series of potential photographic snapshots. Calvino's *La follia del mirino* thus offers first-hand

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[190] Calvino, "La follia del mirino," 12.

[191] Calvino, 12.

[192] Calvino, 12.

[193] "La realtà vista in fotografia assume subito un carattere nostalgico, di preziosa gioia fuggita sull'ala del tempo e già prontamente storicizzata anche se si tratta di due giorni fa, già pregustiamo il piacere di quando la rivedremo – sentimentalmente se non cromaticamente ingiallita – tra vent'anni", Calvino, 12.

[194] "'Ah che bello, bisognerebbe proprio fotografarlo!' e già siamo sul terreno di chi pensa che tutto ciò che non è fotografato è perduto, è come se non fosse esistito, e che quindi per vivere veramente bisogna fotografare quanto più si può e che fotografare quanto più si può bisogna vivere in modo quanto più foto-grafabile possibile", Calvino, 12.

testimony on how photography radically transformed the space of daily life on a number of levels, including those of image conception and image making. Furthermore, Calvino's short story ascertains how the photographic medium irremediably changed people's attitudes towards reality and memory on a large scale, as it taught Italians to see the world through a photographic lens, framing and freezing images that would construct their personal and familiar narrative.

Yet, unlike Vittorini's fascination with photography, Calvino's opinions on the photographic medium appeared from the beginning rather conflicted. Calvino described photography as "un'attività che dovrebbe essere ormai (...) sprovveduta di fascino e d'imprevisto", and at the same time openly professed his antipathy towards the very photographic practice.[195] However, he also expressed interest for "l'opera del fotografo professionista (…) colui che documenta sugli estremi della vita, sui più ricchi e sui più poveri, che sa che la realtà della storia si legge nei suoi continui momenti eccezionali, non nella sua (apparente) mediocrità quotidiana".[196] Calvino's aversion is thus mostly directed to the domestic use of photography (including family portraits) and it particularly addresses those users who need photography to possess and own reality, not in its decisive moments, but rather in its chaotic flowing.[197] In the argument underlying Calvino's reflections, photography becomes a metaphor to assess the possible ways people relate to reality; by criticising a particular photographic practice, Calvino actually criticised a specific mode of interfacing reality. His critique becomes even more explicit in *Il mare dell'oggettività*, the essay published in 1960, which animated the literary debate around the relationship between the subject and reality, and which expressed Calvino's divergence from the neo-avant-garde and experimental approaches to reality and to its artistic representation.

La follia del mirino, as a matter of fact, reveals a close resonance to *Il mare dell'oggettività*. In the first essay, Calvino implies that taking photographs of virtually everything is pointless, and

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[195] "[F]otografie non ne ho mai fatte da quando ho l'età della ragione, e mi guardo bene dal farne, e faccio il possibile per mettere in guardia gli amici dai pericoli di questa loro pratica", Calvino, 12.

[196] Calvino, 12.

[197] "[T]utto ciò che non è fotografato è perduto, è come se non fosse esistito, e che quindi per vivere veramente bisogna fotografare quanto più si può".

only leads to madness (a theme that would become central in the short story *L'avventura di un fotografo*):

> Se un fotografo si mette su questa via di recupero di tutta la realtà che gli passa sotto gli occhi, per lui l'unico modo di agire con coerenza è di andare fino in fondo: da quando apre gli occhi al mattino a quando va a dormire, scatti almeno una foto al minuto, fotografi tutto, ci dia un fedele assoluto *journal* delle sue giornate. Fino al momento in cui non diventerà pazzo.[198]

Calvino then goes on to compare amateur photography to autobiographic writing and criticises them both. Interestingly, in his comparison both journal writing and photography are judged for their disposition to assess and investigate the relationship between the perceiving subject and the outer world, a fundamental theme in the years when the Italian neo-avant-garde was forming in response to international artistic and literary trends. Edoardo Sanguineti, for instance, would later integrate references to both journal writing and amateur photography in his poetry to pursue the "Reduction of the I" theorised by the *Novissimi* and Gruppo 63. For Calvino, sticking to the minute aspects of daily life too closely would imply the risk of folly:

> Perché come nel tenere un diario e in genere nella letteratura autobiografica, così nella fotografia – insomma in queste cose che sembrano il colmo del rispecchiamento della realtà, della sincerità, della razionalità chiarificatrice, - c'è sempre in agguato un tentacolo di pazzia.[199]

If recording everything, both through writing and photography, only leads to folly, carefully choosing decisive moments (*a la* Bergson) would instead be the only way to access the "realtà della storia":

> La vera ragione umana è scelta, organizzazione invenzione. (...) Nella fotografia e quindi anche nella vita, il fotografo dilettante è portato a escludere i contrasti drammatici, i nodi delle contraddizioni, le grandi tensioni della volontà, dell'avversione e dell'amore. Diventerà un mediocre, presto non saprà fare più niente di buono.[200]

Similarly, in *Il mare dell'oggettività* Calvino lamented the passage from a culture based on the balance between subject and object, to one marked by the very loss of the subject, annihilated and submerged by the uninterrupted flow of reality:

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[198] Calvino, "La follia del mirino," 12.
[199] Calvino, 12.
[200] Calvino, 12.

> Da una cultura basata sul rapporto e contrasto tra due termini, da una parte la coscienza la volontà il giudizio individuali e dall'altra il mondo oggettivo, stiamo passando o siamo passati a una cultura in cui quel primo termine è sommerso dal mare dell'oggettività, dal flusso ininterrotto di ciò che esiste.[201]

Like the amateur photographers in *La follia* overwhelmed by the innumerable images around them, liable to be captured, so artists are now faced with an objective reality that threatens to oblitarate them: "è l'oggettività che annega l'io; il vulcano da cui dilaga la colata di lava non è più l'animo del poeta, è il ribollente cratere dell'alterità nel quale il poeta si getta".[202] The poet's leap into "otherness" that Calvino described would eventually lead to the undistinguishable fusion between the subject and the world.[203] Such a fusion, in turn, would largely characterise the literary production of the 1960s and cause the phenomenological crisis of representation.[204]

It is perhaps not surprising that Calvino, in providing some examples of this cultural trend, opens the essay with a reference to the *école du regard*,[205] whose writing style is closely modelled on the functioning of a camera impassively recording the unravelling of objects and events. For Calvino, this inert attitude of the subject towards reality is what reveals, and in turn engenders, the deeper crisis of the "spirito rivoluzionario", or in other words the loss of faith in the ability of man to "indirizzare il corso delle cose".[206] Like the professional photographer of *La follia*, who is able to resist the magma of reality by exclusively selecting the decisive moments, for Calvino the only way left to escape the annihilation of the subject is to affirm one's individual choices and thus ensure "una ripresa dell'intervento attivo dell'uomo".[207] However, in the attempt to speak of contemporaneity,

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[201] Calvino, "Il mare dell'oggettività," 52.

[202] Calvino, *Saggi*, 54–55. Calvino also speaks of "La perdita dell'io, la calata nel mare dell'oggettività", Calvino, 53.

[203] "Il protagonista vedeva a poco a poco svanire la distinzione tra sé e il mondo esterno, la sua faccia allo specchio diventare cosa, e un'unica viscosità coinvolgere l'io e gli oggetti", Calvino, *Saggi*, 53.

[204] As Lorenzini again reminds us: "La 'crisi' che occupava il centro del dibattito veniva a coincidere, nella concreta pratica testuale, con un radicale disorientamento espressivo patito da un soggetto esposto al complicarsi della nozione di reale, al frangersi e ispessirsi del rapporto interno-esterno (...) Una crisi di rappresentazione dunque, *tra soggetto e oggetto*", Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*, 9.

[205] The other examples are: "I romanzi della "école du regard" raccontati attraverso gli oggetti; la calata del mistilinguismo italiano nella babele dei linguaggi parlati; la registrazione scritta delle testimonianze di vita della gente semplice; la musica seriale che si propone di rendere esplicite le leggi interne del "materiale sonoro"; la pittura biomorfa che ci annega nel fluire della lingua, dei succhi terrestri, del sangue delle vene e del brusio e fragore umano", Calvino, *Saggi*, 52.

[206] Calvino, 55.

[207] And also "il momento che vorremmo scaturisse (...) è pur sempre quello della non accettazione della situazione data, dello scatto attivo e cosciente, della volontà di contrasto, della ostinazione senza illusioni", Calvino, 60.

other writers, such as *I Novissimi*, were more inclined to give greater space to reality and less to the subject. They thus theorised the notion of the Reduction of the I, according to which the subject had to be placed metaphorically in brackets in favour of the prominence of the objects.[208]

Both *La follia del mirino* and *Il mare dell'oggettività* offer Calvino's insights on the debated topic of the interactions between subject and object, which, as mentioned, characterise the experimental research of the 1960s and lie at the centre of Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti's poetry. Calvino's reference to photography that speaks of the relationship between the individual and the world has two implications: on the one hand, it testifies of the centrality of photography as a cultural agent, as it was transforming people's approach to reality, and consequently reshaping literary, philosophical, cultural and artistic practices and theories; on the other hand, it calls attention to the special power of the camera (as well as of photographic images) to mediate and alter the relationship between subject and external reality. This latter point is particularly crucial for the authors analysed in this thesis because it establishes an explicit link between photography and perception: photographic media thus acquire an epistemological quality that allows the subjects to investigate and redefine their role within the world. We shall see clear instances of it in Porta's visual epistemology, Rosselli's phenomenological explorations mediated by a camera, and Sanguineti's photographic way of seeing. At the same time, the heuristic role of photography as a mediator of subject–object relations prompted literary reflections beyond these authors and became a focal point of research for other authors and groups, including *I Novissimi* and the visual poets of Gruppo 70.

Poetry's Response to Photography: *I Novissimi* and Visual Poetry

Before exploring how Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti's poetic writing interacted with photographic media, it will be useful to have a look at how poetry, as a genre, was generally responding to changes

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[208] "[L]'inclinazione a far parlare i pensieri e gli oggetti dell'esperienza". Nevertheless, the Reduction of the I was, according to Giuliani, the "ultima possibilità storica di esprimermi soggettivamente", Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 22.

in visual and photographic culture between the 1950s and the 1970s. As discussed earlier, the references to photographic media in works of poetry intensified in response to the emergence of new forms of visual culture. Some notable examples pertaining to this period include experimental and neo-avant-garde poets such as Andrea Zanzotto, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Corrado Costa, Edoardo Cacciatore, Emilio Villa and Giulia Niccolai. For instance, Zanzotto's engagement with photographic media started in the 1950s, when he included some intermedial references to photography in the collection *Vocativo* (1957); it then continued through to the 1970s, when he wrote several poems in dialect for Federico Fellini's film, *Il Casanova* (1976). [209] Pier Paolo Pasolini often worked between media: his documentary *La rabbia* (1963) most clearly epitomises the osmotic fluidity between writing and visuality. Described as a "filmic embodiment of the poet's point of view", [210] this film is in fact entirely made up of pre-existent cinematic materials put together through montage, and it incorporates a script made of poetry sections (read by the writer Giorgio Bassani) and prose extracts (read by the painter Renato Guttuso). [211] As for the poets more closely linked to the neo-avant-garde movement, Edoardo Cacciatore referred to photographic media in his poetry book *Dal dire al fare, cioè: la lezione delle cose* (1967); [212] Corrado Costa published visually inspired poems on literary magazines, such as *Non copiare dagli occhi (D. Vertov)*, [213] and would later publish a poetry collection titled *The Complete Films* (1983); [214] and Giulia Niccolai, who was also a photographer, extensively referred to photography in her books of prose as well as poetry. [215]

It is not the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive analysis of when and in what ways the various authors engaged with photographic media. This section will thus follow Vetri's distinction

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[209] Scarpa, "'Denotazion i/clic'. Visibilia fotografiche di Andrea Zanzotto"; Luzzi, "Verbal Montage and Visual Apostrophe: Zanzotto's 'Filò' and Fellini's 'Voce Della Luna.'"

[210] Rizzarelli, "Un blob su commissione: 'La rabbia' di Pier Paolo Pasolini," 276.

[211] On Pasolini see also Annovi, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Performing Authorship*; Rizzarelli, *Una terra che è solo visione. La poesia di Pasolini tra cinema e pittura*.

[212] Cacciatore, *Dal dire al fare, cioè: la lezione delle cose*.

[213] The poem was published in 1975 on the ninth issue of the literary magazine *Tam Tam*.

[214] Costa, *The Complete Films*.

[215] The influence of photography on poetry can be retraced in her collections *Humpty Dumpty* (1969), *POEMA & OGGETTO* (1974), and *Facsimile* (1976), Niccolai, *Humpty Dumpty*; Niccolai, *POEMA & OGGETTO*; Niccolai, *Facsimile*. Also see Niccolai's poetic memoir Niccolai, *Foto & frisbee*.

between intrinsic and extrinsic changes in poetry[216] to further focus on two aspects. It will discuss, on the one hand, the cases of intermedial references to photography through the example of *I Novissimi*'s use of asyntactism (intrinsic changes), and on the other, that of intermedial works in the visual poetry of Gruppo 70 (extrinsic changes). The experience of visual poetry[217] is especially valuable because it works as a counterpoint to medium-specific poetic research, showing how at the time poets were in fact questioning visual culture and interacting with it on a very broad scale.

In the 1961 preface to *I Novissimi*, Giuliani explained that the poetry presented in the anthology was an attempt to tell the stories of a "schizophrenic age"[218] in which language had become a commodity and mass culture had introduced elements of disorder in the minds of people: "Le tecniche della cultura di massa comportano una scomposizione mentale di cui occorre tener conto quando si vuole produrre una ricomposizione dei significati dell'esperienza".[219] While the need to address the "chaos" of a reality increasingly ruled by the dictates of mass culture had become a priority for both experimental and neo-avant-garde poets, *I Novissimi* focused in particular on the problem of language and theorised the notion of a "visione schizomorfa" (schizomorphic vision), which could counteract and demystify the alienation of contemporary society. The defining characteristics of this schizomorphic vision were the "discontinuity of the imaginative process, *asyntactism*, [and] the violent treatment of signs".[220] These primarily affected linguistic style and poetic syntax, which was systematically questioned, subverted, and often deprived of its conventional linearity.

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[216] Vetri, *Letteratura e caos*, XIV.

[217] While visual poetry is a broad term that includes several different artistic experiences – including the work of some precursors such as Carlo Belloli or Emilio Villa; or other poets such as Adriano Spatola – here it is explored through the activity of neo-avant-garde Gruppo 70. For more on Italian visual poetry, see Ballerini, *Italian Visual Poetry*; Balboni, *La pratica visuale del linguaggio*; Jackson, Vos, and Drucker, *Experimental - Visual - Concrete*; Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*.

[218] "[N]oi siamo andati certamente più in là nello smascheramento, sfidando il silenzio che sempre consegue, insieme con le chiacchiere, al deperimento di un linguaggio, esasperando l'insensatezza, rifiutando l'oppressione dei significati imposti, raccontando con gusto e con amore storie pensieri e bubbole di questa età schizofrenica", Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 18.

[219] Giuliani, 19.

[220] "[H]a quali tipici caratteri la discontinuità del processo immaginativo, l'asintattismo, la violenza operata sui segni", Giuliani, 20.

The *Novissimi*'s interventions on language sought to exert direct effect on their readers and on reality, since for Giuliani "what poetry *does* is precisely its content".[221] In other words, as Picchione puts it:

> For the Novissimi, writing had to become a blasphemous activity, a programmatic laceration and fragmentation of language, and a project aimed at thwarting the reader's habitual horizon of expectations. The new style was to fracture linear discourse and, at the same time, violate worn-out or standard interpretative grammars of reality.[222]

Language thus acquired performative values since it had the power to engage the reader: "poetry acts directly on the reader's vitality",[223] while at the same time, it challenged the alienating functioning of mass society.[224] The fragmentation of language, and its underlying critique of society, was in turn achieved by employing some of the very mechanisms of mass communication, since the concept of asyntactism, championed by Giuliani and used by the *Novissimi*, was a notion developed by Gillo Dorfles and an intermedial reference to photography across stillness and motion.

In the *Novissimi*'s introduction, Giuliani directly referred to Dorfles' *Il divenire delle arti* (1959) to explain the notion of asyntactism.[225] Asyntactism, in Drofles' definition, is a deviation of syntactical and logical connections from their normative use:

> [C]ol nome di *asintattismo,* intesi dare a questo termine un valore assai lato e al tempo stesso specifico, considerando cioè il deviare dei nessi grammaticali del verso e della prosa dal normale nesso sintattico e anche il deviare del *ductus* del pensiero informatore del verso e della prosa dal normale nesso "logico" cui di solito viene a sottostare.[226]

Later in the passage, Dorfles drew a link between the emergence of literary asyntactism and the influence exerted by the cinematograph on literature:

> [U]na delle ragioni del sorgere dell'asintattismo nella letteratura, va probabilmente ricercata anche nel potente influsso esercitato dal cinematografo sulla nostra arte (...) è stato proprio il cinematografo che ci ha abituati a bruschi "balzi di consequenzialità logica" nel contesto del suo discorso narrativo; a

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[221] "Perché ci siamo tanto preoccupati del lessico, della sintassi, del metro e via dicendo? Perché se conveniamo che, in quanto 'contemporanea', la poesia agisce direttamente sulla vitalità del lettore, ciò che conta in primo luogo è la sua efficacia linguistica. Ciò che la poesia *fa* è precisamente il suo 'contenuto'", Giuliani, 17.

[222] Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*, 7.

[223] "[L]a poesia agisce direttamente sulla vitalità del lettore", Giuliani, *I Novissimi: Poetry for the Sixties*, 17. For Sanguineti, as a matter of fact, language and ideology were inextricably linked together.

[224] The idea of intervening on reality through poetic language was in line with Eco's Eco, "Del modo di formare come impegno sulla realtà"; later included in Eco, *Opera aperta*.

[225] In the relevant footnote, Giuliani specifically indicated pp. 232–238 of Dorfles' book.

[226] Dorfles, *Il divenire delle arti*, 232.

trapassi di luogo e di tempo, che - ad uno spettatore non esercitato - potrebbero parere assurdi; tale "asintattismo e asincronismo" cinematografico è stato spesso e volentieri trasposto nel romanzo con effetti analoghi. [227]

Dorfles here particularly addressed the mechanism of montage, along with its peculiar role in the economy of the narration of events characterised by the presence of logical gaps. Cinema, furthermore, is understood as a sequence of photographic images: "un sistema di rapida riproduzione delle immagini fotografiche che, attraverso la loro successione, davano quella sensazione di moto e di continuità e di profondità". [228] Dorfles' conception of cinematic montage was remarkably close to that put forward by Patellani and Vittorini, who recognised in the juxtaposition of both images and words the narrative potential of montage.

Poetic asyntactism can be therefore read in these very terms as an intermedial reference: that is to say as a way to borrow a photographic technique in order to refashion poetic writing. [229] In *Il divenire delle arti*, Dorfles argued that both Giuliani and Balestrini made use of asyntactic structures in their poetry, and offered the following examples:

Misura l'orologio di sabbia e l'orme ineguali
dell'ansia. Lo scrimolo del mare, oltre di me
nel mio canto si sporge.

(ALFREDO GIULIANI, *I giorni aggrappati alla città).*

(…)

Nonostante i colchici
Un pomeriggio tradito coi fiori
poiché il gatto di picche aveva
traversato il ritorno può ancora
far caldo e riproporre le equivoche
conseguenze assai dannose per l'anima.
Crediamo soffrire e ai codici
Era pressapoco l'ora sesta
(i parafulmini fossero indulgenti
come l'ulivo sulle meduse che affiorano)
seppellimmo nella natura morta
la carogna del legislatore. Cadeva
la grandine. Forse avemmo commercio

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[227] Dorfles, 236.
[228] Dorfles, 255.
[229] Vetri also linked linguistic montage to the *Novissimi*'s "Reduction of the I", Vetri, *Letteratura e caos*, 161–62.

con donne sulla spiaggia e corolle
d'acquaviva nella spina vertebrale.
Le farmacie sono tutte chiuse ...

NANNI BALESTRINI (*Documenti d'arte d'oggi,* MAC, 1958).[230]

In Balestrini's case, the collagist technique of asyntactism is particularly apparent, since both the syntactical and logical gaps are brought to the extreme, almost edging nonsense.[231] In sum, Giuliani's inclusion of the notion of asyntactism in the preface to the anthology speaks of the permeability of this feature in the experimental writing culture of the time (Rosselli's famous logical and syntactical gaps, for instance, undoubtedly respond to this type of asyntactic writing), and more specifically in the *Novissimi*'s experience, like in the case of Balestrini, Giuliani, Pagliarani, Porta and Sanguineti.[232] Both for Porta and Sanguineti, for instance, asyntactism – along with other intermedial references to photographic media and culture – became a structural component of their poetic writing and social critique. The centrality of such stylistic feature in their work is therefore indicative of the exchanges occurring between poetry and photographic culture.

In 1963, a couple of years after the *Novissimi* had published their anthology, the Italian neo-avant-garde movement would officially be born: 1963 was in fact the year in which both Gruppo 63 and Gruppo 70 were founded. While Gruppo 63 mostly continued the poetic and medium-specific research of *I Novissimi*, Gruppo 70, created by Eugenio Miccini and Lamberto Pignotti,[233] developed a radically new understanding of poetry.[234] As Miccini and Perfetti clarified in a manifesto published in 1972 on the journal *Techne*, the group, which was particularly concerned with the issues posited

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[230] Dorfles, *Il divenire delle arti*, 235–36.

[231] Giuliani, aware of the component of non-sense in the *Novissimi*'s poetry and in his very own, recalled Humpty-Dumpty in the introduction, Giuliani, *I Novissimi: Poetry for the Sixties*, 35.

[232] Pagliarani's poem *La ragazza Carla* was originally written as a script for De Sica-Zavattini (Pagliarani, "Cronistoria minima," 466.). It is another example of collagistic writing, juxtaposing materials using the literary technique of montage. See Lisa, *La poetiche dell'oggetto*, 189.

[233] Besides Miccini and Pignotti, the other members were Lucia Marcucci, Ketty La Rocca, Emilio Isgrò, Sarenco, Luciano Ori, and Michele Perfetti. See Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*, 185.

[234] However, the distinction between the groups should be considered as more nominal than factual, since several members contributed to both experiences either artistically or theoretically. Some of the artists and thinkers who fluidly moved between them were, for instance, Balestrini, Sanguineti, Porta, Barilli, Dorfles and Eco. For Pieri and Patti, what the two groups shared was "a sense of the transformation of linguistic structures in relation to the new conditions of industrial society", Pieri and Patti, "Technological Poetry," 326.

by mass communication and techno-industrial advancements, [235] aimed to deny "the privileged status of the verbal use of the word" and push poetry beyond the page and outside the borders of literature. [236] The objective was to respond to the common trend in the contemporary art world that saw "a convergence of the arts, freed from their strict semantic 'institutions' and creating interactions between different linguistic, iconic and expressive areas" [237] and to create a similar poetic experience by crossing the disciplinary boundaries of literature. Poetry, thus, had to free itself from its verbal limitations and from the restrictive definition of its own genre to rather favour an interartistic – and intermedial – practice, revolving around the use of other semiotic codes, including, but not limiting to, (photographic) images. [238] As Picchione points out:

> These poets make extensive use of extralinguistic materials selected from images produced by mass media (commercial photographs, advertisements, comic strips, photo romances, and so on). Their primary goal is to establish a connection between poetry, technology, and the products of consumer society. As a result, poetry shifts from an exclusively verbal practice towards a general art of the sign. [239]

Miccini and Perfetti would explain their engagement with images of mass communication as an act of resistance and poetic warfare to the system imposed by mass communication: "Visual poetry, then, is guerrilla warfare"; "Visual poetry transforms mass-media into mass-culture". [240] The interactions between poetic words and photographic images were particularly obvious in the collages,

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[235] Gruppo 70, first gathered in Florence in May 1963 for a conference on art and communication (Arte e comunicazione); the following year, the group met again to discuss the relationship between art and technology (Arte e tecnologia). In his 1962 "L'industria che non si vede", Pignotti defines techno-industrial advancements as an invisible force bound to transform any form of artistic practice: "L'industria sta cessando di essere una cosa per diventare una maniera: una maniera di comportarsi, di sentire, di vedere, di esprimersi. L'industria si fa proposta di vita. Lo si voglia o no, ogni forma di espressione, ogni forma d'arte, risulta ormai determinata dall'industria", Pignotti, "L'industria che non si vede," 59.

[236] "Visual poetry, on the other hand, denying the privileged status attributed to the verbal use of the word or to the word 'tout court', places itself outside literature", Miccini and Perfetti, *Poesia visiva, poesia politica, poesia pubblica*; quoted in Ballerini, *Italian Visual Poetry*, 63.

[237] Ballerini, *Italian Visual Poetry*, 63.

[238] As the group noted: "this necessity arose from an awareness that 'words sound derisory and are not able to survive noise' if they are not supported by images, as the new media of communication created by mass society teaches", Gazzotti and Zanoletti, "Lamberto Pignotti Poet, Artist, Essayist and the Experience of Gruppo 70. From Literature to Visual Art, from Florence to Rome"; quoted in Pieri and Patti, "Technological Poetry.". The group was equally interested in exploring other forms of contamination, including interartistic collaborations, sound-poetry and performance: *Cinepoesie*, for example, was a montage of several frames taken from documentaries or film, whereas *Poesie e no* (1964–1966) included a series of collaborative performances with painters, musicians, writers and the public.

[239] Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*, 185.

[240] Ballerini, *Italian Visual Poetry*, 64.

where the cut-out images of consumer society clashed with a "technologic" language[241] that often had to be read antiphrastically, since it equally adopted the tools of mass communication to criticise them from within. For Miccini and Perfetti, poetry had to move "toward the transformation of its own means (…) into those of mass communication, up to the point where (as Bourroughs hoped) it takes control of them, and 'with' them transforms society itself".[242]

Like Gruppo 63, Gruppo 70 attempted to actively critique and change consumerist society by working on language and on its relation to other semiotic codes. The notion of asyntactism championed by Giuliani found an equivalent in the montage and juxtaposition of photographic images and words, usually taken from newspapers and magazines. The verbal component of the artworks was often entirely transplanted from channels of mass communication, and was itself the result of a stitching together of fragments, using the same collagist technique inspired by photographic media that Gruppo 63 was experimenting with in their poetry (such as in the case of Giuliani, Balestrini, and Porta). The experience of visual poetry corresponded with the need to think outside the box of disciplinary boundaries, restating the "aesthetics of transgression" that characterised much of the experimental and neo-avant-garde culture of the time. Moreover, by linking poetic diction to photographic images and techniques, visual poets played a prominent role in reshaping the very notion of writing, a role that is still relevant to this day, and yet has been underexplored. During the 1960s and 1970s, they contributed to reinforcing the exchanges between visual culture and literature. They thus fostered other poets' interest in the relationship between words and images, and between writing and photographic techniques, that this thesis explores.

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[241] Pignotti defines technologic language as follows: "Sotto l'incalzare della tecnologia il linguaggio poetico, per non perire, ha dovuto rinnovarsi. Ne è scaturito quello che Max Bense definisce 'stile tecnologico', un linguaggio cioé che si rifà 'alla particolare dilatazione di alcuni valori, alla particolare efficacia del cartellone pubblicitario, della pubblicità in genere e di certo stile burocratico-commerciale, assicurativo, ecc. che riesce ad acquistare in certe occasioni una efficacia ignota al consueto stile letterario'", Pignotti, "L'industria che non si vede," 60.

[242] Ballerini, *Italian Visual Poetry*, 64.

Conclusion

These first two chapters have provided the backbone to this thesis: they invite the reader to conceive of Italian literary and photographic interactions as part of a larger cultural trend that needs to be adequately addressed and studied. The chapter on the framework has precisely this purpose: it aims to extend the tools of literary criticism by offering an array of critical resources to tackle the complex exchanges between literature and photographic media and culture. The notion of intermedial references mutuated by Rajewsky, as well as those of textual visibility, readerly visualisation, and visual modes of writing pertaining to the field of literary visuality, will constitute the basis on which to build more traditional textual analyses. In turn, the fluidity between photographic and cinematographic media advocated by Marra and by scholars in the still/moving field also proves central to this thesis. Marra's understanding of visual media is particularly apt to describe the trend developed in Italy's 1950s and 1960s, which considered visual technologies as inextricably linked to perception and phenomenology, as the case of Calvino exemplifies.

The chapter on the socio-historical background aims to contextualise this study. More importantly, it purports that the interactions between literature and photographic media pertain to a broader phenomenon within the Italian context, documented by the flourishing of intermedial practices – such as those proposed by Vittorini, Zavattini, and by visual poets – and of more traditional literary research. Accordingly, the ensuing analysis on Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti must not be considered in isolation, but rather as an illustration of the interest in the interplay of poetry and photographic media that was particularly vivid in the 1950s, and that still largely characterises Italian literary culture today.

Chapter Three

Antonio Porta: Crime Photographs and Montage

Son of Pietro Paolazzi – the co-owner of the "Rusconi e Paolazzi" publishing house – Leo Paolazzi (1935–1989) was a successful Italian editor and an eclectic intellectual who adopted the pseudonym of Antonio Porta for his artistic production. This shift in name marked an inaugural crossing of borders and an inclination towards change and renewal that would characterise all his prospective creative production.[243] Porta was in fact one of the driving forces of the Italian neo-avant-garde movement. Not only was he a founding member of the *Novissimi*, and later of Gruppo 63, he was also involved with the visual poets of Gruppo 70; in 1959, he had signed the Naples Manifesto of nuclear art. His work crossed genres and disciplines, ranging from theatre to fiction, and from poetry to visual poetry. Even when he remained within the borders of poetry, Porta sought to "pierce the page" and cross that threshold that his very pen-name ("porta" means "door" in English) alluded to.[244]

Porta's poetic work, therefore, provides an ideal case to begin to investigate the complex relationship between literature and visuality. While scholarship on Porta fully undersigns Porta's commitment to visuality in the early stages of his poetic career, studies thoroughly addressing the implications of Porta's visual approach in his writing, especially his interest in photography and cinema, are still lacking. This chapter, therefore, aims to reconsider the intermedial references to photography and cinema in his poetry. It will focus on Porta's early collections *I rapporti. Poesie 1958–1964* – which enclosed the previously published *La palpebra rovesciata* (1960), *Zero* (1963),

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[243] Porta thus described the idea of a daily inclination towards renewal: "La piccola frase cantabile e necessaria è sempre quella di ogni minuscola apocalissi quotidiana: 'farò tutto nuovo'", quoted in Annovi, "Undoing Porta," 103.

[244] Porta clarified: "Che significato do alla frase 'bucare la pagina'? Questo: uscire dalla letteratura per raggiungere quell'immagine dell'esistenza che in qualche modo intuiamo possibile (…) Oppure: *anche* rimanere nell'ambito della letteratura purché si identifichi «letteratura» come luogo delle interazioni tra storia e immaginazione, il cui prodotto è quell'immagine forte che segna ogni passaggio o trasformazione dell'esistenza", Porta, *Il progetto infinito*, 14–15.

and *Aprire* (1964) – as well as *Cara. Poesie 1965–1968.*[245] By discussing Porta's ideas on visuality contained in his writings and interviews, and through textual analysis, this chapter will particularly argue that *i)* visuality in Porta's early poetry is photographic, and refers to both photography and cinema; *ii)* such visuality directly shapes the forms of poetry; and *iii)* syntax and meter, in particular, become the tools to recreate, on the page, a type of poetic montage suspended between photographic stillness and cinematic motion.

Porta's poetic work embodies what John Picchione has defined a "transgressive mode of writing" precisely unravelling through a "visual approach to reality".[246] Porta himself admitted that the scope of his poetry was to "definire le *immagini* dell'uomo o degli uomini, delle cose e dei fatti che operano all'interno e all'esterno dell'esistenza".[247] The strong prominence of the concept of the gaze in his poetry, largely acknowledged by literary critics, has been repeatedly linked to the author's phenomenological stance towards reality;[248] for Porta, the very act of seeing constituted a way to relate to the world and to try to epistemologically understand it in all of its complexity.[249] In this sense, John Berger's definition of *image* is particularly fitting to Porta's work because it draws a link between images and ways of seeing: "an image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved – for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing".[250] Motivated by a strong civic commitment, Porta systematically questioned the relationship between the subject and the object, and – more specifically – between the writer and the world he lived in. For Porta, poetry had to focus on contemporary issues and reflect

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[245] *Cara* was also included in *Quanto ho da dirvi. Poesie 1958–1975* and it is now in *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*. Porta, *I rapporti. Poesie 1958–1964*; Porta, *La palpebra rovesciata*; Porta, *Zero*; Porta, *Aprire*; Porta, *Cara. Poesie 1965–1968*; Porta, *Quanto ho da dirvi. Poesie 1958–1975*; Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*.

[246] Picchione and Smith, *Twentieth-Century Italian Poetry*, 412.

[247] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 194; italics of the author.

[248] Porta's use of the word reality mostly hints at society, where human beings are forced to relate to one another. The title of his collection *I rapporti. Poesie 1958–1964* reflects this interest, as it provides an insight in the poet's view on human relationships ("rapporti umani").

[249] As Porta himself claimed: "I sensi non sono una colpa: essi sono, agiscono, ad esempio noi conosciamo prima di tutto attraverso le immagini", Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 151.

[250] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 9–10.

the relationship "tra lo scrivente e il mondo o l'attualità del mondo".[251] Moving from Picchione's claim, and acknowledging Porta's visual approach to the world, this chapter will attempt to further determine the visuality inherent to his poetry.

After providing an overview of his poetic journey, I will move from an analysis of Porta's gaze, defined as phenomenological by critics and admittedly by Porta himself. I will argue that Porta's way of looking at the world around him was also photographic, since it developed in dialogue with the photographic and cinematographic culture of his time. A brief survey into Porta's visual poetry, documented in the posthumous *Poesie in forma di cosa* (2012), will serve as a confirmation of Porta's heightened interest in visual practices. Such a survey will in fact uncover his conflicted fascination for the varied verbal and visual language used in mass communication, popular magazines, and crime news.

I will then take the photojournalist images of crime news as a point of entry to reconsider the photographic visuality in Porta's early works, by focusing on *Europa cavalca un toro nero* (1958) and *Aprire* (1961). Through a textual analysis of these poems, I will furthermore argue that Porta's poetry is constructed thanks to an intermedial reference to the montage technique and I will comment on *Come se fosse un ritmo* (1967) as a further textual example. His interest in cinematographic montage is reinforced by references to film, like for instance to Munk and Lesievicz's film *La passeggera* (1964). Characterised by the concurrence of stillness and motion, Porta's poetic montage is particularly constructed through the alternation of verbal sections that mimic the juxtaposition of photographic images and cinematographic sequences. Thus, continually torn between immobility and movement, Porta's poetic work openly speaks of his ambivalent relationship with photographic and cinematographic media.

Overall, Porta's early poetry testifies to a decided engagement with visual culture on the one hand, and on the other of a renegotiation of visuality within the space of poetry, achieved through the

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[251] Porta, "Antonio Porta. Le lettere di Leo," 27.

innovation of poetic language, including syntax and meter. The last section, dedicated to Porta's cinematographic meter, will finally posit that Porta's meter can be ascribed to a broader trend in the metrical and linguistic research of the 1950s and 1960s, which developed in dialogue with cinema and photography, and was pursued by Edoardo Sanguineti and Amelia Rosselli in the same years. By reconsidering Porta's poetic work from the perspective of visuality, this chapter ultimately aims to enrich the existing scholarship on Porta with innovative insights that uncover the interaction between Porta's poetry and the photographic and cinematographic culture of his time.

From the Gaze to the Voice: Antonio Porta's Poetic Journey

Among the most notable animators of the cultural scene of his time, Leo Paolazzi devoted his professional life to the Italian cultural industry. From 1956 to 1967, he was the manager of the Rusconi e Paolazzi publishing house where he was the editor of popular magazines (such as *Gioia*, *Gente*, *Rakam*, and *Il corriere dello sport*) while also taking care of the book sector. A few years after Paolazzi's appointment, 'Rusconi e Paolazzi' published Anceschi's *Il Verri* (since 1958) and the first edition of *I Novissimi* (1961), thus becoming a point of reference for the Italian experimental and neo-avant-garde movement. Subsequently, Paolazzi occupied managerial roles in the most influential Italian publishing houses, moving to Bompiani in 1968, and Feltrinelli in 1977. Throughout his life, he was also on the editorial board of influential literary journals, including *Il Verri*, since 1958; *Malebolge*, since 1964; and *Alfabeta*, since 1979. In 1958, he adopted Antonio Porta as the pseudonym for his artistic practice, thus starting a transformative journey that, at the culmination of his poetic career, would eventually merge his literary identity with his private life: "con il passare degli anni (…) uno pseudonimo non è più uno pseudonimo: è il vero nome".[252]

Porta's unremitting and ever-changing poetic practice spanned from 1958 to 1989, the year of his premature death. His poetry can be divided into two phases: according to Terreni, for instance,

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[252] Kidney, Carravetta, and Verdicchio, "Intervista con Antonio Porta: La scommessa della comunicazione," 2.

Porta's poetics, in 1977, shifted from the predominance of sight to that of the voice ("il passaggio, dalla scelta della vista alla scelta della voce"[253]). While the first phase (1958–1976) broadly aligned with the experience of the Italian neo-avant-garde, and in general with an experimental use of language, the second phase (1977–1989) reflected Porta's intention to inaugurate a more communicative approach to poetry. In 1977, his choice to publish all of his work written until then in a single collection titled *Quanto ho da dirvi* was a way for Porta to retrospectively reflect on his experience with Gruppo 63 and, at once, to distance himself from it:

> [U]n progetto come quello della nuova avanguardia ha bisogno di una rispondenza di gruppo. Quando questo progetto linguistico finisce, si prova per forza il desiderio di ripartire da zero per esplorare le forme più dirette, più semplici, più comunicative. Di qui anche il titolo che ho dato alla raccolta [*Quanto ho da dirvi*], titolo che non avrei mai dato negli anni Sessanta. Ecco che allora comunicare diventa il nuovo progetto.[254]

The neo-avant-gardist project of Gruppo 63 had officially come undone in 1969, when the literary journal *Il Quindici* ceased its publications due to a debate on the ideological and political stance literature should (or should not) hold. The debate was sparked by the journal's engagement with the 1968 student protests.[255] Not surprisingly, Porta identified the year 1968 as a crucial date not only for the splitting of the Italian neo-avant-garde, but also for his own poetry: "una data che rimane importante sia per la storia della nuova avanguardia che per me, come poeta".[256] This was thus a year that marked Porta's distancing from Gruppo 63 on the one hand, and on the other his gradual transition from a poetics of the gaze – which also aligned with the *Novissimi*'s dictat of the "Reduction of the I" – to a poetics of the voice. Porta's poetic production until 1968 can be therefore considered, within this project, as emblematic of an experimentalism characterised by the predominance of visuality in his poetry, and it will for this reason constitute the focus of this chapter.

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[253] Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 88.
[254] Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 5.
[255] On the overall trajectory of the Italian neo-avant-garde see Barilli, *La neoavanguardia italiana: dalla nascita del "Verri" alla fine di "Quindici."*
[256] Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 5.

In 1960, Porta published *La palpebra rovesciata* (*The Eyelid Inside Out*),[257] his first poetry collection under the pseudonym of Antonio Porta – however, *Calendario* was published in 1956, and signed as Leo Paolazzi. In so doing, before the publication of the *Novissimi* anthology was even announced, Porta had already presented his poetry to the public as an act of incessant looking. In a 1960 letter to Giuliani, Porta commented on the title of his book and wrote that it communicated "il senso di uno sguardo stravolto".[258] Deprived of the eyelid, the poetic eye was urged to stay open and impassibly witness the violent indifference of nature, along with the deliberate cruelty of human beings. This scopic regime performed in Porta's poetry embodied the neo-avant-gardist "Reduction of the I" that, shortly after, Giuliani would advocate in the 1961 *Novissimi* anthology, which contained some of Porta's poems together with his declaration of poetics.[259] In both publications, Porta's poetic I was systematically reduced to an observing eye: on one hand, this reduction moved a critique to the lyrical tradition that still characterised post-hermetic poetry, claiming, at the same time, a new subjectivity construed on the very act of looking. Conversely, the poet's never-resting eye became a tool to express a strong civic commitment and to denounce the violence underpinning human relations, and society at large.

Porta then published *I rapporti. Poesie 1958–1964*, which specifically focused on the cruelty regulating human relations, and comprised the poetry collections he had published until that moment: *La palpebra rovesciata* (1960), *Zero* (1963), and *Aprire* (1964).[260] In *Nel fare poesia*, a series of

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[257] The plaquette contained: *Di fronte alla luna, Meridiani e paralleli, Il vento soffia sul limite, Europa cavalca un toro nero, La pelliccia del castoro, Vegetali, animali, Quadro sinottico, Contemplazioni, La palpebra rovesciata*, and the declaration of poetics *Dietro la poesia*. For a detailed reconstruction of Porta's publications, see Niva Lorenzini's introduction to Porta's poetry, in Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*.

[258] Milone, *"Queste e non altre": lettere e carte inedite*, 24.

[259] The poems contained in the *Novissimi* anthology were *Europa cavalca un toro nero, Vegetali, animali, La pelliccia del castoro, Di fronte alla luna, Meridiani e paralleli, Contemplazioni, La palpebra rovesciata, Dialogo con Herz, In Re, Aprire*, and the declaration of poetics *Dietro la poesia*. Porta was concomitantly working to the anthology and to *La palpebra rovesciata*, as Federico Milone reveals in retracing the correspondence between Porta and Giuliani, in Milone, *"Queste e non altre": lettere e carte inedite*.

[260] The poems contained in these collections are: *La palpebra rovesciata*, 1960; *Zero*, 1963; *Aprire*, 1964 (*Dialogo con Herz, Aprire, Rapporti umani*). This chapter mosty focuses on Porta's early production, spanning from 1958 to 1964. Porta later published other poetry collections: *Cara. Poesie 1965–1968*, 1969; *Metropolis*, 1971; *Week-end. Poesie 1971–1973*, 1974; *Passi passaggi (1976–1979)*, 1980; *L'aria della fine. Brevi lettere 1976, 1978, 1980/1981*, 1982; *Invasioni (1980–1983)*, 1984; *Melusina. Una ballata e un diario*, 1987; *Il giardiniere contro il becchino*, 1988. But see Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 56–63.

retrospective reflections on his poetic journey published in 1985, Porta described his early poetry as driven by "una passione civile e politica", which engendered the need to "cogliere le immagini prodotte dal vuoto maligno del nuovo autoritarismo".[261] The metrical style adopted in this early phase, which revolved around a percussive use of rhythm, was for Porta a method to pierce through reality: "La metrica accentuativa è soprattutto un metodo di penetrazione",[262] which amplified "la dilatazione del linguaggio, la penetrazione, spappolando e scomponendo le immagini fino ad acutizzarle al massimo".[263] Porta's reflection on images – his will to dismantle them in order to make them sharper and even more visible – constituted the starting point to develop his poetry. Porta, who tellingly conceived of literature as "il luogo delle interazioni tra storia e immaginazione, il cui prodotto è quell'immagine forte che segna ogni passaggio o trasformazione dell'esistenza",[264] clarified in his poetic manifesto, *Poesia e poetica*, that the aim of his writing was to "definire le *immagini* dell'uomo o degli uomini, delle cose e dei fatti che operano all'interno e all'esterno dell'esistenza",[265] thus further asserting his intention to interrogate the status of the images that populated contemporary reality. In this sense, Porta's work intuitively and tentatively tried to answer the questions that W. J. T. Mitchell would pose in later years:

> In what is often characterized as an age of "spectacle" (Guy Debord), "surveillance" (Foucault), and all-pervasive image making, we still do not know exactly what pictures are, what their relation to language is, how they operate on observers and on the world, how their history is to be understood, and what is to be done with or about them.[266]

The resolution to explore the link between images and reality also underpinned Porta's visual poetry, which he developed concomitantly to his poetry collections between 1959 and 1964. In those years, Porta actively engaged with visual poetry: in 1964, he exhibited some of his visual works

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[261] Porta, *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985*, 9–10. The new authoritariansim is later explained in more detail: "Identificavo così nel sistema dei poteri politici che dominavano l'Europa un vuoto, cioè una mancanza di vero rinnovamento rispetto alla tragica storia dell'Europa della guerra", Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 123.

[262] And "Il variare del numero degli accenti è il variare dello spessore e della profondità di lavoro di una trivella, il variare del ritmo è il variare della lunghezza d'onda che si sente idonea", Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 195.

[263] Milone, *"Queste e non altre": lettere e carte inedite*, 43.

[264] Porta, *Il progetto infinito*, 15.

[265] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 194; italics of the author.

[266] Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 13.

during the Gruppo 63 meeting in Reggio Emilia; in 1965, he published a few visual poems in an anthology titled *Il dissenso*, which contained works by the visual poets of Gruppo 70 and was edited by Alfredo Giuliani and Lamberto Pignotti (members of Gruppo 63 and 70 respectively).[267] Finally, in 1965, he took part in an exhibition in London with Italian visual artist Romano Ragazzi.[268] Yet, Porta's visual poetry was published by Rosemary Liedl only very recently, in 2012, in *Poesie in forma di cosa*, presenting an aspect of Porta's work that went mostly unnoticed until that moment. The book, with a preface by Mario Bertoni, contains Porta's poetic collages and provides an invaluable insight into his relationship with the visual and photographic culture of the time. As a poet and a visual poet, and as the editor of illustrated magazines such as *Gioia*, *Gente*, and *Rakam* for 'Rusconi e Paolazzi', Porta perceived that the prevailing visual culture of the 1950s and 1960s was being increasingly driven towards becoming a constitutive element of poetry "making".[269] Thus, the poet's eye, urged to catch glimpses of reality and at once exposed to an overabundance of images, was reflecting the shift towards visual communication that Italy was experiencing at that time. The photographic reproductions and the cut outs Porta chose for his collagist visual poetry clearly reveal his engagement with the photographs that appeared in popular illustrated magazines and daily newspapers, which – as we will see – also constitute a crucial feature of and a source of interference for his poetry writing.

From this very brief survey into Porta's early poetry, it is clear that visuality lies at the core of Porta's experimental research and, consequently, is thematically and stylistically developed in his work. I will continue my discussion by building on the work of the literary critics who recognised the eidetic visuality underpinning Porta's early poetry, in order to explore the ways in which photographic culture interacted with Porta's writing.

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[267] Pignotti and Giuliani, *Il dissenso. Poesie visive, Marcucci, Martini, Ori, Porta.*
[268] See the catalogue, Institute of Contemporary Arts, *Between Poetry and Painting*.
[269] In line with the poetics of *I Novissimi*, Porta also stressed the importance of "making" poetry and titled one of his reflections on poetics *Nel Fare Poesia* (*In making poetry*). Porta, *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985.*

A Phenomenological, Photographic Gaze

As Terreni reminded us, the first fundamental handhold to understand Porta's early work is offered by the notion of the gaze. Porta's scholars unanimously recognised both the pervasive presence of the eye in his poetry and the adoption of an act of continual looking, through which images were captured and verbally presented on the page, following what Porta labelled as the need to "inseguire e catturare immagini significative".[270] The prominent role of the gaze in Porta's work has catalysed scholarly attention since the very start. In the introduction to the *Novissimi* anthology, Giuliani defined Porta's "un guardare stravolto, accanito sui fenomeni traumatici della cronaca",[271] committed to scrutinising the evil embedded in society: "Lo sguardo ha imparato a vedere il male come un dialogo interno agli eventi e agli oggetti, come una loro interrelazione perpetuamente modificata dall'intervento umano".[272] The correlation between gaze and crime news ("cronaca nera") has also been largely acknowledged; for Stefano Colangelo, the gaze of the "autore-osservatore" was that of a "messaggero che riporti fedelmente la cronaca del delitto consumato dietro la scena tragica",[273] while Lorenzini identified the poetic I with a "sguardo che si posa netto, tagliente su una realtà ridotta a cronaca crudele e oggettiva".[274] For all these scholars, the lyrical I, in Porta's poetry, *became* the observing eye: Lorenzini, for instance, suggested that Porta transformed "l'io in un occhio che osserva",[275] and Terreni titled a section of his book on Porta "L'io-occhio" ("The I-eye").

Similarly, Luigi Sasso, Mario Moroni, and John Picchione[276] all addressed the function of the gaze in his work, and while Sasso broadly spoke of a "sguardo gettato impassibilmente sugli aspetti più crudi e violenti della realtà",[277] both Moroni and Picchione went further and claimed a "poetics

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[270] Porta, 51.

[271] Giuliani, *Immagini e maniere*, 139.

[272] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 31.

[273] For Colangelo Porta also exemplified "nel modo più aperto e rigoroso che la poesia italiana del secondo Novecento abbia conosciuto, il passaggio del poeta dallo stato di veggente a quello di osservatore"; Colangelo, "'Usus Videndi': commento ad Antonio Porta," 62.

[274] Lorenzini, *La poesia: tecniche di ascolto*, 145.

[275] Lorenzini, 145.

[276] Sasso, *Antonio Porta*; Moroni, *Essere e fare*; Picchione, *Introduzione a Antonio Porta*.

[277] Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 18.

of the gaze" ("poetica dello sguardo") in Porta's early work.[278] However, it is Picchione who

elaborated a more convincing reading of Porta's poetics of the gaze. Picchione linked the "poetica

dello sguardo",[279] and the act of looking, to the phenomenological "Reduction of the I" put forward

by Giuliani and *I Novissimi*:[280]

> La riduzione dell'io si manifesta nel primo Porta anche tramite quella che si potrebbe definire la
> poetica dello sguardo. Il mondo è colto innanzitutto attraverso la percezione. Esso si offre ad iniziare
> dalla percezione. E da qui che si può ipotizzare un possibile accostamento della prima poesia portiana
> alla fenomenologia di Merleau-Ponty. Il filosofo francese, infatti, in *Phénoménologie de la perception*
> (1945), partendo dalla generale premessa fenomenologica di un soggetto inseparabile dal mondo e
> respingendo pertanto i presupposti del cogito cartesiano inteso come un soggetto a sé stante, riscontra
> nella percezione la nostra consapevolezza primaria del mondo, anteriore agli atti del pensiero e della
> riflessione. Il mondo che ci è dato tramite la percezione è il mondo concreto dell'esperienza immediata.
> In Merleau-Ponty come in Porta, le verità non sono da scoprire nell'interiorità del soggetto (…) ma
> nella concretezza del mondo a partire dalla percezione.[281]

For Picchione, the root of Porta's seeing and looking is therefore phenomenological and

specifically informed by the thought of Merleau-Ponty. Lorenzini and Terreni further developed

Picchione's claim; both scholars, in fact, consider Porta's gaze as phenomenological and place it at

the intersection between the influence of the *École du regard* and Surrealism, while also underscoring

the Artaudian influence on Porta's cruel and sadistic writing.[282] For Terreni, moreover, the sense of

sight plays a crucial role in Porta's poetry, since it synecdochally mediates perception at large: "la

sintesi percettiva del reale viene integralmente sussunta, dal soggetto lirico, sotto la funzione dello

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[278] Stefano Agosti, too, retrieves the notion of the gaze and rather speaks of the "function of the gaze" (*Porta: come gestire la scena della crudeltà. La funzione dello sguardo*). Interestingly, Agosti illustrates how Porta turns the things he looks at – both objects and events – into the material to construct the poem, which he then offers to the reader as a gift. As Agosti specifies "Gli oggetti del vedere diventano gli oggetti della poesia, che sono gli oggetti del dono chiamati ad assolvere il compito di mediare tra il Soggetto e l'altro: gli altri, i destinatari, i lettori, tutti i lettori del mondo", Agosti, "Porta: come gestire la scena della crudeltà. La funzione dello sguardo," 23. In this sense, the function of the gaze anticipates the poetics of communication that will become prominent in the second phase of Porta's work after 1977.

[279] Picchione, *Introduzione a Antonio Porta*, 16.

[280] The Reduction of the I is, in Picchione's words, "il tentativo di pervenire ad una messa in parentesi della soggettività e di stabilire un contatto conoscitivo immediato e non falsificante con il mondo". However, for Picchione the Reduction of the I in Porta does not equal to a denial of the subject. Rather, "soggetto e oggetto, soggetto e mondo, non sono mai concepiti come entità separate, ma sempre interdipendenti", Picchione, 16.

[281] Picchione, 16–17.

[282] Lorenzini wrote: "Si sono cercati i possibili antecedenti di quello sguardo, che si situa tra fenomenologia – quella di Merleau-Ponty, in particolare, con gli sviluppi dell'*École du regard* – e surrealismo (Ponge, Daumal, i nomi di riferimento; ma poi sicuramente Artaud e le tematiche della crudeltà, e Buñuel)", Lorenzini, *La poesia: tecniche di ascolto*, 145. And Terreni: "sembra agile collocare la visività portiana al punto di convergenza tra la suggestione del Surrealismo con il più recente (negli anni Sessanta) influsso *dell'École du regard* (…): l'incontro avviene sul terreno della fenomenologia", Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 72. On Porta's sadistic writing see also Curi, *Struttura del risveglio. Sade, Sanguineti, la modernità letteraria*.

sguardo".[283] This visually informed perception, in turn, is used by Porta as the method to know and understand the outer world.[284]

In an interview with Luigi Sasso, Porta himself admitted his poetry was traversed by an epistemological urge to understand reality and reach what he termed "il vero", driven by "una forte influenza della fenomenologia anceschiana".[285] Interestingly, Porta defined "il vero", which he differentiated from "la verità",[286] as "[il] punto di interazione tra il soggetto e l'esperienza".[287] The interaction between subject and world constituted, accordingly, one of the constant driving forces of Porta's writing: in a series of letters to Anceschi, he reiterated, throughout the years, his understanding of poetry as "un confronto tra me e le cose e i fatti e me stesso in quanto esistente ed operante in un certo mondo".[288] Cast in the intricate and tangled web of reality, Porta's gaze thus highlighted the phenomenological and relational aspect of looking, recalling Jean Starobinski's definition of "[t]he gaze [as] the living link between the person and the world, between self and others" according to which "the writer's every glance questions anew the status of reality".[289] Tellingly, in his *Poesia e poetica*, Porta identified the origin of his poetic project in the importance of the "external event" ("l'importanza dell'evento esterno"), which pushed him to tackle "il problema del *vero* e della *verità*, in simbiosi con la ricerca delle immagini e il bisogno di penetrazione".[290] Porta's phenomenological

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[283] Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 72.

[284] For Terreni: "all'atto fisico del guardare («il vedere»), corrisponde l'operazione mentale del raffigurare e quindi del comprendere («gesto della coscienza»)", Terreni, 72.

[285] "In tutta la mia poesia c'è una tensione verso questo tipo di conoscenza", Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 3–4.

[286] "Vorrei fare una precisazione: non ho mai parlato di conoscenza della verità, ma di vero, il che è diverso;(…) il vero è quel punto di interazione tra il soggetto e l'esperienza, in cui si fissa un punto fermo che però non è definitivo come la verità (…) insieme è dato per scontato che non si conosca la verità, che la verità non esista", Sasso, 3–4.

[287] But Porta was also well acquainted with the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Sasso, 3.

[288] Letter to Anceschi, 1972; Porta, "Antonio Porta. Le lettere di Leo," 26.

[289] In the same passage Starobinski describes how this gaze is lured on by a desire of discovery, aimed at pursuing a hidden reality, which is very much the case for Porta's way of looking: "My studies here are all concerned in one way or another with literary works that deal with the pursuit of a hidden reality, a reality temporarily dissimulated yet within the grasp of anyone who knows how to force it out of hiding and compel its *presence*. What was needed, accordingly, was to retrace the history of a gaze lured by desire from discovery to discovery"; in Starobinski, *The Living Eye*, 6. Porta's gaze can also be linked to that envisioned by French poet Yves Bonnefoy, based on the double connotation of the French word *regard* (*ce que je regarde / ce qui me regarde*) and encompasses both what one sees and what concerns one. This peculiar type of gaze is pointed out by Donati, *Nella palpebra interna*, 8.

[290] Adding immediately after: "Qualcosa si vuol trovare, alla fine", Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 194.

and visual perception of the external world, therefore, underpinned his epistemological quest to reach "what is true".

This emphasis on the visuality of perception pushed Picchione to suggest that Porta's way of looking and writing was tailored around the models of photography and cinema. He wrote:

> Porta *fissa sulla pagina spezzoni di realtà*, *fotogrammi colti con occhio vigile e apparentemente freddo*, distaccato. L'enfasi posta sulla percezione, sulle proprietà visive dell'oggetto, si presenta in questa raccolta con marcata evidenza. (…) Lo sguardo viene a svolgere una duplice funzione: da un lato fissa immagini di una realtà traumatizzante e, dall'altro, le scruta affannosamente come se si trattasse di enigmi da decifrare (…). L'avvicinamento percettivo al mondo è quindi guidato dalla necessità di andare oltre i dati del sensibile (…). *La palpebra rovesciata* esemplifica la poetica dell'evento esterno e presenta testi costruiti essenzialmente tramite un *assemblaggio di accadimenti* (…). Si tratta di *montaggi* apparentemente casuali, di giustapposizioni asciutte, nervose, che fanno leva soprattutto su episodi di cronaca, situazioni abnormi, da incubo.[291]

For Picchione the poetic eye photographically captured fragments of reality and organised them into a montage. Besides Picchione, most scholars have suggested the connection of Porta's gaze with either photography or cinema. Edoardo Sanguineti, for instance, spoke of "enigmatiche istantanee",[292] Fausto Curi of "un mobilissimo scorrimento cinematografico delle immagini",[293] Niva Lorenzini of "allucinati e cruenti fotogrammi",[294] whereas Luigi Sasso defined the poet's gaze as "vitreo e gelido, impassibile e predeterminato come lo 'scatto' di una macchina fotografica".[295]

All these critical claims build on the assumption that Porta's way of looking modelled his writing: more specifically, the fragmented nature of Porta's visual perception engendered a poetic style equally characterised by the juxtaposition of syntactical and logical fragments. Colangelo, for instance, recognised the profound correlation between Porta's gaze and the poetic rhythm of his early

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[291] Picchione, *Introduzione a Antonio Porta*, 30–31.
[292] Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 125.
[293] Curi, *La poesia italiana nel Novecento*, 383.
[294] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 14.
[295] Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 43.

poetry ("la correlazione tra ritmo e sguardo"[296]), while Terreni, in agreement with Lorenzini,[297] maintained that the visuality performed by the lyrical subject moulded the linguistic, rhetorical, and metrical structures underpinning Porta's poetry.[298] Terreni, furthermore, established a link between Porta's gaze and his poetic language based on the sexually connoted adjective "penetrating" ("penetrante"[299]). It is a reading that Porta himself allowed when, commenting on *La palpebra rovesciata* and *In Re*, he wrote:

> La trama dello sguardo lento e preciso si forma lentamente. La realtà viene penetrata profondamente dai cinque accenti, che scavano con insistenza. La strofa a 5 accenti forma anche una trama larga e dilatata, che sorge nella materia usata. (…) il tentativo di *fissare l'attimo*.[300]

The gaze, in other words, was for Porta responsible for the process of photographically pinning down the truth of existence ("fissare l'attimo"), by transforming the objects of seeing into poetic language.[301]

Building on these scholars' studies, and taking into consideration Porta's declarations of poetics, it is possible to further argue that Porta's gaze was informed by photography and that his photographic way of seeing structured his writing style. In line with the tenets of asyntactism advocated by Gillo Dorfles,[302] Porta's writing style included intermedial references to photographic images on the one hand, and to the cinematic technique of montage on the other, with the result of a poetic diction constantly suspended between stillness and motion. While this claim is crucial for the purpose of this chapter, I will postpone a more detailed analysis of how Porta sees and writes

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[296] This concise definition is offered by Colangelo: "Battendo ostinatamente il passo di una trascrizione della visualità, i suoi occhi si spalancano sul decadimento di oggetti inerti, su attriti violenti di forze, corpi e processi organici; la scrittura (…) prima di finire essa stessa tra gli oggetti sottoposti a dissezione, dà fondo alle risorse della propria attitudine più radicale e coerente: la correlazione tra ritmo e sguardo", Colangelo, "'Usus Videndi': commento ad Antonio Porta," 60.

[297] Lorenzini indeed claimed that "l'oggetto di quell'osservare è dato da una successione di sintagmi non gerarchizzati, accostati per contiguità, nei modi di una sintassi paratattica scandita da un ritmo percussivo", Lorenzini, *La poesia: tecniche di ascolto*, 145.

[298] "[L']ossessiva visualità del soggetto lirico si connette, con rigore davvero crudele, alle specifiche strutture linguistiche, sia sintattiche che retoriche, sia più schiettamente metriche", Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 73.

[299] "[L]a trasparente sessualizzazione di una comune espressione metaforica, lo *sguardo penetrante*, intesa alla lettera, addita le implicazioni sessuali dello sguardo, a sua volta figura dell'indagine conoscitiva. Si dà dunque un intreccio semantico inestricabile tra percezione visiva, coscienza, tensione sessuale", Terreni, 86.

[300] Milone, *"Queste e non altre": lettere e carte inedite*, appendice.

[301] As Agosti suggested: "Gli oggetti del vedere diventano gli oggetti della poesia", Agosti, "Porta: come gestire la scena della crudeltà. La funzione dello sguardo," 23.

[302] Dorfles, *Il divenire delle arti*, 232.

photographically to a later section. In fact, before uncovering Porta's imbricated relationship with photographic media and culture, it is necessary to further understand the implications of Porta's gaze for his own poetics.

Porta's Tragic-Estranged Gaze: Between Vision and Blindness

Aware of the importance of visuality in his poetry, Porta described his poetic gaze as being simultaneously tragic and estranged ("tragico-straniato"[303]). The two adjectives significantly connote Porta's way of looking: on the one hand, the gaze is estranged because the eye, metaphorically deprived of eyelids, is forced into a non-normative scopic regime, incessantly scrutinising images of cruelty. On the other hand, the gaze is tragic because it seeks what is true ("il vero") while directed towards an unjust society, traversed by brutality and violence. The notion of the tragic, mediated through Karl Jaspers's thinking, has been recognised as central to Porta's poetics[304]. In an article titled *Il grado zero della poesia*, published in *Marcatrè* in 1964, Porta himself identified "il senso del tragico" as the founding pillar for his poetic work, and explicitly linked it to Jaspers's reading of the tragedy of Oedipus:[305]

> Il senso del tragico è alla base di ogni mia possibilità di operazione poetica. Gli oggetti, gli eventi, gli uomini sembrano sfuggire ad ogni condizione di struttura: liberati in una sorta di vuoto pneumatico, senza pesi e senza misure, essi cercano di far funzionare la ragione e quindi di strutturarsi, o, in parole povere, di dare un senso alla vita. Sembra che questo tentativo continui a fallire, nonostante il perfetto

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[303] Porta, *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985*, 17.

[304] See for one Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*.

[305] Porta explicitly quoted Jaspers: "Là dove il pensiero riesce ad illustrarla interamente, l'opera poetica risulta superflua, o meglio, non è, a priori, una vera opera di poesia (...) Nelle opere di poesia si manifesta la costruzione concettuale del poeta. Quanto più, però, emerge il pensiero come tale, senza incarnarsi in figure viventi, tanto più fiacca è la poesia. In tal caso è il pensiero filosofico, non già la forza della visione del tragico, a generare l'opera letteraria. I pensieri contenuti in un'opera di poesia, comunque, possono avere una grande importanza filosofica" (Karl Jaspers, Del tragico, 21), in Porta, "Il grado Zero della poesia," 41. The English edition of *Tragedy is not enough* reads: "Where complete rational interpretation is possible, poetry becomes superfluous – indeed, there has never been truly poetic creation from the very beginning (...) In all poems the intellectual construction of the poet asserts itself. In proportion, however, as the thought emerges as such without being made incarnate in dramatic figures, poetry grows weaker. To that degree, then, the work is generated not by the power of tragic vision but by philosophical preference. This is not to say that thoughts in tragic poetry may not have crucial philosophical significance"; in Jaspers, *Tragedy Is Not Enough*, 43–44.

funzionamento di tutti gli strumenti; *di qui il senso del tragico, il mito di Edipo, l'uomo sapiente, che si acceca.*[306]

Jaspers's essay on the theme of tragedy and his commentary on the myth of Oedipus are valuable for clarifying the role that Porta's tragic gaze plays in his poetry.[307] The tragedy of Oedipus, "the man who wills to know",[308] closely circles around the quest for truth and the question of sight: in fact, it is Oedipus's firm intention to "see clearly" and his desire to unmask reality that pushed him, maddened by the discovery of having unknowingly killed his father and having started an incestuous relationship with his mother, to paradoxically blind himself.[309] Jaspers claimed that, for Oedipus, the sense of sight was to be held responsible for either the lack or the acquisition of truth, placing at the very core of the tragedy the problem of truth and the consequences that supervene with its unveiling.

As Jaspers maintained, the quest for truth is inextricable from the act of looking – "It is essential to the nature of man that he should *look* into the depths of truth".[310] Truth itself is handed down "in the form of images",[311] which are then transformed into tools for philosophical, and in Porta's case epistemological, enquiry.[312] Yet, the very pursuit of truth unavoidably elicits the risk of blindness: Oedipus, faced with the weight of truth, tore out his very eyes – "When he has uncovered the truth he tears out his own eyes. Henceforth they are to stare into night because they failed to 'behold such horrors as [he] was suffering and working!'".[313] Porta's reference to Oedipus, therefore, becomes especially revealing when considering that the theme of blindness largely underpins his early poetry.

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[306] Porta, "Il Grado Zero Della Poesia," 41–42. My italics.

[307] "[I]l senso del tragico" as a general theme is a crucial aspect in the poetics of the *Novissimi*: Sanguineti, in his *Il trattamento del materiale verbale nei testi della nuova avanguardia*, adopts Porta's quote as a sort of manifesto for the experience of the neo-avant-garde poets, arguing that: "il ritorno al disordine è la via maestra del ritorno al tragico", Sanguineti, "Il trattamento del materiale verbale nei testi della nuova avanguardia," 130.

[308] Jaspers, *Tragedy Is Not Enough*, 57.

[309] Cecilia Minciacchi Bello, building on Sanguineti's reading of Porta's work in *Il materiale verbale*, underscores how the Oedipal complex and the trauma of the "scena originaria" – intended in psychoanalytical, and particularly Freudian terms – especially underpin Porta's early poetry, Minciacchi Bello, "Antonio Porta, l'ostinazione del conflitto originario," 31.

[310] Jaspers, *Tragedy Is Not Enough*, 23.

[311] Jaspers, 23. Jaspers furthermore holds that the "mental images" aroused by poetry "enable us to grasp reality firmly", Jaspers, 27.

[312] "Philosophers who continue to deal with these irreducible images, for whatever purpose, will eventually see them evolve into the instruments of philosophic inquiry", Jaspers, *Tragedy Is Not Enough*, 24.

[313] Jaspers, 60.

The complementary interplay of vision and blindness is particularly apparent in *I Rapporti* (1958–1964). While for Sasso, Porta's way of relating to the world "si presenta sotto la forma della contemplazione, dello sguardo gettato sugli eventi e le cose",[314] this very contemplation[315] and Porta's acknowledgment of a violent and cruel society are the cause for the "accecamento edipico"[316] of the poetic persona, and for its own very dissolution. Like Oedipus, the lyrical I, faced with "the disaster of knowledge",[317] feels the urge to blind and to annihilate himself. Sasso retraces some of the images of blindness included in Porta's early poetry:[318] in *Europa cavalca un toro nero*, for instance, "Gli occhi crepano come uova" and "Gli occhi / sono funghi presi a pedate";[319] in *La pelliccia del castoro* the eyes are overturned, "sopra gli occhi si placa arrovesciati";[320] in *Aprire*, instead, the eye is explicitly blind, "Il corpo sullo scoglio, l'occhio cieco".[321] The theme also appears in *Zero*, where the eyes are unable to see or else entirely absent from the body: "gli occhi fissi nell'ipnosi";[322] "hanno troppe mani sugli occhi";[323] and "dice, senza occhi".[324]

The eye is equally forced into vision, and at once susceptible of blindness, in Porta's *La palpebra rovesciata*,[325] a poem in four parts that, moving from organic to inorganic matter, describes a decaying panorama. In the first section, the eye is "contratto nell'orbita dal nervo"[326] and thus forced into an unnatural and prolonged scopic act. Yet, the whole body, not the eye only, is undergoing a process of dismemberment: "Il naso sfalda per divenire saliva e il labbro / alzandosi sopra i denti

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[314] Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 31–32.

[315] *Contemplazioni* is also the title of a poem in three sections, surveying images of horror, such as: "sparano mazzate sulla fronte, / battono forte sul ponte // tra le ciglia folte del pazzo / scava lento il suo strazio // l'unghia che scopre il cervello / dal fondo nero per un secchiello", Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 99.

[316] "La conoscenza e la contemplazione del male, di una realtà macerara, porta così alla dissoluzione del personaggio, all'accecamento edipico", Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 32.

[317] Jaspers, *Tragedy Is Not Enough*, 60.

[318] Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 32–33.

[319] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 79.

[320] Porta, 98.

[321] Porta, 125.

[322] Porta, 109.

[323] Porta, 113.

[324] Porta, 118.

[325] Significantly, this title was also used to present a collection of poems that was later included, along with other writings, under the title *I Rapporti*.

[326] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 103.

liquefa la sua curva masticate".[327] The body has embarked into a dissecting journey, in a process of dissolution that eventually spreads to the whole landscape.[328] As Lorenzini noted, the poetic subject, moving from a "critique of the eye" "che prismatizza lo sguardo sino ad accecarlo",[329] is pushed into becoming "disarticolato, multiplo, ibrido, reificato, smembrato" and thus liable to be penetrated by reality, "to chew it and graze on it".[330]

Within *I Rapporti*, the theme of blindness is further foregrounded by the presence of intertextualities between poems. *Quadro sinottico* (*Synoptic chart*), for instance, seems to refer to, and simultaneously elucidate, section three of *La palpebra rovesciata* by offering a variation on similar poetic images:

Quadro sinottico

> La vista e i colori
> Le qualità del frutto
> Composizione dei semi
> Le vene delle radici
> i vermi si torcono
>
> nel cunicolo molle
> i vermi continuano
>
> nell'orbita del marcio
>   nel seme lacerato
>
> nell'iride stupefatta
> nel bulbo vanificato
>
> ricoprono le radici
>   il frutto diviene ragnatela
>   ha un sapore disgustoso
>   non reggono più
>   succhiate dal verme
>
> penetrato dal verme
>
> 1960[331]

3.

> I bruchi attaccano le foglie premono col muso
> a rodere l'orlo vegetale mordono le vene dure

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[327] Porta, 103.

[328] The closing section seems to focus on the scene of a car accident: "Le fibre della tela distese lungo i vetri sulla strada / (…) inguainano il ferro e il legno", Porta, 104.

[329] Porta, 22. My translation.

[330] "[L]asciarsi penetrare dalla realtà, masticarla, brucarla", Porta, 22.

[331] Porta, 101.

e lo scheletro resiste. Sbavano il tronco, deviano,
scricchiola la fibra meno tenera, a ingurgitare il verde
inarcano le schiene bianche, l'occhio fissato nell'incavo,
fan piombare gli escrementi giù dai rami, si gonfiano,
riposano sullo scheletro sgusciato, distesi sul vuoto masticato. [332]

For Annovi, both texts describe the dismembering of a face[333] that culminates in the dissolution of the eye, "nell'iride stupefatta / nel bulbo vanificato".[334] As Annovi points out: "al centro del testo è l'occhio, la possibilità del vedere, come provano sostantivi quali 'vista', 'orbita', 'iride', 'bulbo'. I vermi penetrano il 'frutto' della visione, lo fanno marcire, lo succhiano, lo vanificano, lo riducono a cosa sformata".[335] "La vista", the very first word of *Quadro sinottico*, is therefore compromised because the eye is annihilated by the worms' chewing; in both poems the worms (or the caterpillars) attack what initially seems to be a plant or a fruit. However, the overlaying of human and vegetal attributes – "le vene delle radici" (*Quadro sinottico*), "I bruchi attaccano le foglie (…) mordono le vene dure" (*La palpebra rovesciata*) – allows for the construction of a metaphor that substitutes the vegetation with a human body. In *Quadro sinottico*, this overlapping is vividly expressed by a chiasmus placed at the center of the poem, which links together the corrupted fruit to the empty eye bulb, and the seed to the iris, "nell'orbita del marcio / nel seme lacerato / nell'iride stupefatta / nel bulbo vanificato". This image of blindness is then mirrored in *La palpebra rovesciata*, where "l'occhio fissato nell'incavo" turns into a "vuoto masticato".

Annovi, retracing some of the sources for these texts, links their surreal quality to an intermedial reference to the work of Buñuel: "L'immagine della *Palpebra rovesciata*, occhio fisso che richiama i fotogrammi di Luis Buñuel"[336]. Like in the famous first scene of *Un Chien Andalou*

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[332] Porta, 103. My translation.

[333] Annovi particularly speaks of "faciality" borrowing Deleuze's term, see Annovi, *Altri corpi*.

[334] Both, moreover, constitute a hybridisation of the human ("vista", "vene", "iride", "scheletro", "occhio"), animal ("vermi", "bruchi"), and vegetal ("frutto", "semi", "radici", "foglie", "tronco", "rami") domains.

[335] Annovi, *Altri corpi*, 204. My translation.

[336] Other than recalling the surrealist images of Luis Buñuel, Porta's poem, for Annovi, also pays tribute to Bataille and Artaud, to Baudelaire and Lautremont; it is finally possible to detect the influence of Dylan Thomas' *The Burning Baby*, which had been published on *il verri* in 1959, the year before these poems were written. Annovi, in fact, shows how some terms recur in Dylan and in Porta's poems, see Annovi, 208. His argument finds new strength in other segments of the texts, as for example in section 1 of *La palpebra rovesciata*, "il labbro / alzandosi sopra i denti" and Dylan's «her teeth came over her lip»; in Roughton, *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, 14.

(1929), the eye in these poems is slit and blinded, reverberating the broader surreal fascination with the image of the eye.[337] Yet, in Buñuel's film the blinding act serves the function of introducing a new way of looking, which Porta seems to echo in his poetry.[338] By forcefully slitting an eye open, Buñuel metaphorically invites the spectator to refute a normative way of seeing and to embrace, instead, a different visual logic: in fact, the short film consists of a series of oneiric and apparently unrelated segments that the viewer is invited to connect and make sense of. The non-linear narrative of the story, obtained by a peculiar use of montage, is merely suggested by the juxtaposing of fragments, rather than being logically explicated. Porta's visuality owes much to Buñuel's[339] and recreates a similar effect by stringing images of cruelty together on the page, one after the other, making his poetry similar to a film without a clear narrative structure or "un film senza trama",[340] in Porta's words.

In this sense, Porta's poetry is also an open work as intended by Eco. By relying on readerly visualisation (i.e. the "production of mental images in the process of reading"[341]), it asks the reader to visualise and mentally recreate the images it verbally offers on the page, and to actively take part in the quest for truth. As Porta himself pointed out: "la poesia trasmette immagini e ognuna di queste viene poi interpretata a suo modo dal lettore, come anche le immagini nel loro insieme",[342] and more explicitly, "il lettore è anche un coautore".[343] At the same time, the inherent ambiguity of the narrative, which for Porta has the power to "far proliferare immagini e aperture",[344] tragically suggests that a universal truth is ultimately unattainable: "In tutta la mia poesia c'è una tensione verso

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[337] Bataille's *Story of the Eye* (1928) epitomizes such fascination in the form of a literature of cruelty and sadism. See Bataille, *Story of the Eye*.

[338] In Annovi's words: "che sia necessario rivoltare l'occhio per poter istituire nuovi rapporti", Annovi, *Altri corpi*, 180.

[339] Annovi also links the recurring image of the body covered in ants in Porta's poetry, to a similar scene in Buñuel's film, where a hand is covered by this insect. Annovi, 211.

[340] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 76.

[341] Esrock, "Visualisation," 633.

[342] Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 128.

[343] Bertolucci et al., 137.

[344] "[R]icche di racconto, cioè della forza che ha il narrare di far proliferare immagini e aperture", Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 6.

questo tipo di conoscenza, ma insieme è dato per scontato che non si conosca la verità, e che la verità non esista".[345]

In an essay written in 1964, and titled *Il trattamento del materiale verbale nei testi della nuova avanguardia*, Sanguineti moved precisely from this ambiguous quality of the text to discuss Porta's reference to Oedipian blindness in his work. Sanguineti recognised the influence of Oedipus, partly mediated by the *école du regard*, on Porta's poetry.[346] Analysing Section XIV of *Rapporti umani*, he discussed how the eyes, described as glass marbles, were forced out of their sockets to bounce on the floor and to finally melt in water, "Sono biglie di vetro, ricordati di quegli anni, e li / fa schizzare via, (…) rimbalzano sul pa- / vimento, sciolgono nell'acqua la miscela dell'iride".[347] The image of the eyes as glassy and inorganic marbles intertextually returns in the closing section of *Rapporti N. 2*, where the eyes, ultimately frozen by death, equally undergo the dissolution of their ability to see:

> Il liquido *colava dai suoi occhi*, mentre fuggiva,
> volavano via, le gocce (...)
> *dagli occhi suoi spandeva*, raccolto nelle mani,
> è allora che ha parlato, la bocca si colmava,
> con il sudore del naso, dammi un bicchiere,
> le dita nelle orecchie, avvolta nel lenzuolo, continua
> a cadere, e perde sangue, ora, a colpi di becco, (...)
> ricordati dell'inizio, che è la fine, *con gli occhi*
> *suoi*, è ancora viva, *sono biglie di marmo* (...)
> ma è *la verità, morente*, continui a dir sciocchezze,
> oramai, questo volevi dire, questo, morendo,
> per fortuna si muore, così *le chiude gli occhi*,
> verso il basso, con l'indice, dall'alto, e il pollice.[348]

The pervasive presence of the eyes – threatened by blindness and ultimately deprived of their function by death ("per fortuna si muore, così le chiude gli occhi") – is here linked to the notion of truth and

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[345] Sasso, 3–4.

[346] "([L]a carriera poetica di Porta incomincia con un libretto dal titolo: *La palpebra rovesciata),* sarà pura combinazione, ma certo siamo a un finale da Edipo Re, che di meglio non si può desiderare. Voglio aggiungere che, in tema di "aveuglement," con bellissimo rovesciamento onirico, la critica ho subito parlato per Porta di "école du regard". E qui sarà ancora una pura combinazione, ma sappiamo tutti, dopo la stupenda dimostrazione di Morisette *(Les romans de Robbe-Grillet,* Paris, 1963, pp. 37–75), che alle origini dell' "école du regard" sta *Les gommes* (1953), integralmente fondato, in cifra, sopra il mito di Edipo," Sanguineti, "Il trattamento del materiale verbale nei testi della nuova avanguardia," 130.

[347] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 133. My translation.

[348] Porta, 142–43. My translation.

the urge to say it ("ma è la verità, morente, continui a dir sciocchezze, / oramai, questo volevi dire, questo, morendo"), thus drawing a more explicit reference to the myth of Oedipus.

Yet, the quest for truth cannot be obstructed by neither blindness ("in cecità" "gli occhi di porcellana"[349]) nor death ("«no, siamo tutti morti,» «dobbiamo continuare.»"[350]), both reminders of its ultimate unattainability. While the poetic personas in Porta's poetry systematically suffer blinding or the threat of blindness, the poet, as a writer, has instead the responsibility to resist blindness. In *Il grado zero della poesia*, Porta clarified:

> Anche il poeta, dunque deve accecarsi? No. Egli si muove insieme agli altri in una condizione comparabile a quella di assenza di gravità, librato in movimento o in tentativi di movimento, mentre cerca di afferrare gli oggetti in libertà. Cerca di avvicinare i suoi simili e pone le domande fondamentali sulla vita e sulla morte. [351]

In Porta's work, the process to near truth is therefore continually tentative and it directly reflects on the quality of language: the visual fragmentation is mirrored by an equally disjointed syntactical structure that disorients the reader.[352] Sanguineti – who identified the two major features of Porta's writing style in its fragmented narrative and the ambiguity of the fragments[353] – immediately recognised that the reader was called to reconstruct a story out of the seeming disorder of the text, and at the same time that the textual disorder, typical of the neo-avant-garde poetry, was a way to perform a tragic stance: "il ritorno al disordine è la via maestra del ritorno al tragico".[354]

It is important to note that in *Il trattamento verbale* Sanguineti was militantly trying to define the features of the neo-avant-garde movement as it was unravelling: while he decided to discuss the

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[349] Sections X and XI, Porta, 141, 142.

[350] Section IV, Porta, 139.

[351] Porta, "Il grado Zero della poesia," 42. Note that the truth Porta intended to pursue was not merely existential – on the contrary, it was deeply concerned with human relations and the state of contemporary society.

[352] As Agosti pointed out, verbally presenting the images "seized" by the eye on the page was an act of giving, a gift offered to the reader to foster communication. In a way, it was also an attempt to build a community aware of the downfalls and plagues of contemporary society, since the fragments Porta presented dealt with scenes of everyday public or domestic violence, Agosti, "Porta: come gestire la scena della crudeltà. La funzione dello sguardo."

[353] "[I] due aspetti capitali della tecnica di Porta: frantumazione del narrato, ambiguità dei frantumi: e, come avvertito, le due cose sono una", Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 126.

[354] Sanguineti, 130. And also "i 'Novissimi' mossero, con il loro aspro stil novo, da un'ipotesi assolutamente opposta: dall'idea di un ritorno al disordine", Sanguineti, 114.

poetry of Balestrini and Porta in particular, their work was offered as a sample ("campione"[355]) for the whole *Novissimi* group. Interestingly, Sanguineti drew a parallel between Balestrini's and Porta's work based on the active role the reader had to take in interpreting their poems. What's more, Sanguineti pointed out that the references to either photography or cinema in these two poets' work were structural to their writing style. In commenting on Balestrini's *Non smettere*, for instance, he wrote that the text functioned like a series of blurred photographs that the viewer had to interpret: "questa breve proposizione che ora, a lato del titolo, collochiamo idealmente come ideale epigrafe, o come istruzione per l'uso della poesia: 'ha fatto si che la fotografia ri/ sultasse mossa e sfocata senza che nulla perdesse.'".[356] Moving from this point, he then drew a parallel to Porta's work:

> Tocca al lettore risolvere le lacune, colmare le ellissi, ristabilire i nessi occultati. (…) Qui sentite tutta la parentela che stringe insieme, in una stessa famiglia lirica, Porta e Balestrini; ma cogliete subito anche la differenza: non si tratta più di macchie informi, informabili di significazioni, ma di figure determinate, in sé logicamente compiute, procedenti in un senso solo, ma appunto bloccate in quel loro procedere, come i fotogrammi di una pellicola cinematografica, ridotti a enigmatiche istantanee, cui è naturalmente sottratta la compiutezza di senso, loro derivante unicamente dalla continuità del movimento.[357]

While both poets used literary visuality to engage their readers, Balestrini's verbal images gave the impression of being blurred or shapeless, whereas Porta's were extremely eidetic, prompting the formation of detailed mental images in the reader's mind. Sanguineti's intuition proves fundamental to better grasp the role of visuality in the *Novissimi* group, and in Porta's work especially. On one hand, Sanguineti recognised the prominent role of the images and their photographic quality in Porta's poetry. Conversely, and most interestingly, he placed Porta's visuality at the edge of photography and cinema, since, in line with Rajewsky's "illusion-forming quality" of texts, Porta's poetry seemed to be simultaneously construed "as if" it were presenting on the page either photographic snapshots or still frames from a film in a sequence.[358] The type of montage Sanguineti alluded to was therefore hybrid, since it was concurrently encapsulating photographic and cinematic techniques. In fact, rather

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[355] "Anche sul versante della poesia, con fiera ostinazione, tireremo avanti con il metodo dei 'campioni'", Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 113.

[356] Sanguineti, 122.

[357] Sanguineti, 125.

[358] Both quotations are from Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation," 55.

than favouring the flowing motion between segments, it was inclined towards stillness, or in any case firmly suspended between stillness and motion. Thus, Porta's approach to montage perfectly aligns with the tenets of the still/moving, according to which the relationship between still and moving images is fluid and promiscuous.[359]

Porta's engagement with photographic media was not an isolated case. Considering that Giuliani introduced the *Novissimi* anthology with a reference to asyntactism, and that both photographic and cinematic techniques are fundamental in Sanguineti's and Balestrini's poetry, it is easy to see how the interactions between poetry and photographic media were at this time extremely frequent and often essential to meta-reflections on the very genre of poetry. Having broadly established this field of inquiry, the following analysis of Porta's visual poetry will serve as emblematic evidence to explicitly uncover Porta's attitude towards photographic culture, and to illustrate how this, in turn, shaped and informed his poetic writing.

Piercing the Page: Porta's Visual Poetry

In *Il grado zero della poesia* Porta established a clear link between his more traditional poetic practice and his research in concrete and visual poetry. When asked to provide a commentary on his poetry by Sanguineti, Porta offered a reflection on his latest work: a series of poems that, as Lorenzini reminds us, were first published as visual poems with the title *Zero*, in 1963.[360] Porta's gaze was extremely receptive to the visual culture of his time; nevertheless, the experience of visual and concrete poetry within Porta's broader poetic research has been broadly overlooked. As Mario Bertoni notes in *Poesie in forma di cosa*, Porta was involved in the Italian visual art scene since the late 1950s (with friends such as Piero Manzoni, Enrico Baj, and Romano Ragazzi[361]). He was also in

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[359] Such is the definition offered by Beckman and Ma, *Still Moving*, 2.
[360] Retracing Porta's publishing history, Lorenzini noted down: "*Zero*, poesie visive in edizione speciale di 20 copie, stampato in proprio, Milano 1963", Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 56.
[361] Porta, *Poesie in forma di cosa. Opere 1959–1964*, 7.

contact with the MAC (Concrete Art Movement) and with the Nuclearist movement; Milone, for instance, retraced the *Novissimi*'s engagement with the MAC and the publication of some of their poems in *Documenti d'arte d'oggi,* between 1954 and 1958.[362] In 1959, Porta also signed the *Naples Manifesto* as Leo Paolazzi, along with the painters of Gruppo 58, Enrico Baj, and the neo-avant-garde poets Nanni Balestrini and Edoardo Sanguineti. Porta, furthermore, would later exhibit and publish some of his visual poetry along with other members of Gruppo 70, with whom he shared the denunciatory stance towards a corrupted and mass-mediated society.

It is important to note that Porta's concrete and visual poetry was created concomitantly with his written production (particularly with *I rapporti. Poesie 1958–1964*), thus facilitating an osmotic relationship between these poetic genres, which were recursively shaping one another. In the 1960s, his literary research across visual and verbal media was brought together by the attempt to open a breach within and beyond reality in the quest for truth,[363] and by the resolution to pierce the space of the page and reinvent the forms of poetry: "mi sono posto il problema della poesia cosiddetta concreta, che si muovesse cioè in uno spazio inconsueto piuttosto che in quello ritmico-metrico tradizionale".[364] The experiments in visual poetry responded to Porta's need to go beyond the format of the book to encompass other poetic and artistic genres; in turn, they inspired new poetic forms within the more traditional genre of written poetry. A closer analysis of the exchanges between Porta's verbal and visual practice can thus uncover some of Porta's ideas on visuality, including the intermedial references to photographic images and to the techniques of montage and collage in his poetic writing, as defined by Rajewsky.[365]

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[362] For Milone, the crossing of disciplinary genres and the ambiguity of the artworks were the traits in common between the *Novissimi* and the concrete and nuclearist visual artists: "l'allargamento della tastiera compositiva e la predilezione per l'opera ambigua, aperta a prospettive ermeneutiche differenti – sembrano essere i punti di contatto centrali fra la produzione concretista e nucleare e le poesie oggetto dell'analisi", Milone, "I Novissimi nei documenti d'arte d'oggi del Mac," 82.

[363] "[C]ercare di 'Aprire' un varco all'interno della realtà e oltre la realtà immaginata come un muro da sbrecciare, al di là del quale dovessero nascondersi certi segreti", Porta, "Il grado Zero della poesia," 42.

[364] Porta, 42.

[365] See Rajewsky's typology presented in Chapter One, Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation."

Poesie in forma di cosa, which displays Porta's visual and concrete poetry from 1959 to 1964, provides a precious insight into Porta's visual practices, as well as into how they interact with his poetic writing. The poems contained in the book, posthumously edited by Liedl and Moroni, can be divided into three macrogroups: the twenty-four early visual poems – collages of two or three images taken from illustrated magazines or newspapers (Fig. 1); the concrete poems published in *Zero* (Fig. 2); and the *Cronache* – five panels of collages of newspaper reels on wood (Fig. 3). Each of these experimentations had clear echoes in Porta's written poetry: the images in the visual poems testify of Porta's interest and engagement with the photographic and photojournalistic culture of both newspapers and illustrated magazines of the time, which provided the themes of poems such as *Europa* or *Aprire*, centered on the images drawn from crime news; the *Zero* poems prompted a questioning of the space and forms of poetry; whereas the collagist *Cronache* were the starting point for the writing of *L'enigma naturale (epigrammi 1963)* and *Non sono poi tanto bestie (epigrammi 1964)*.


Fig. 1. Untitled, paper collage on wood, 15,5 cm x 21,5 cm. Porta, *Poesie in forma di cosa. Opere 1959–1964*, 16.

Fig. 2. *Zero*, Milano, 1963, first page. Porta, 40.

Fig. 3. Panel of 6 *Cronache*, 21.3 .1963 - 24.10.1963, paper collage on wood, 63 cm x 64 cm. Porta, 42.

All of Porta's visual and concrete poems present two common features: their collagist nature; and the reference to the systems of mass communication, such as newspapers and illustrated magazines. Porta shared the interest in the language of mass media, both written and visual, with the visual poets of Gruppo 70. In fact, the members of Gruppo 70 used images from mass media to criticise and deconstruct the communication system of contemporary society, engaging in what Miccini and Perfetti had termed as an act of poetic warfare – "Visual poetry, then, is guerrilla warfare" – ultimately aimed at transforming "mass-media into mass-culture".[366] The method Miccini and Perfetti used, similarly to Porta's visual poems, was that of collage; by cutting and pasting excerpts from the very language of mass media in their artworks, they encouraged an antiphrastic reading, which relied on the decontextualisation of both images and words to prompt new and unpredictable meanings. Porta retained the collage technique: not surprisingly, Bertoni refers to the elements comprising Porta's visual poems as a form of *objet trouves*, or "ready made tipografic[i]",[367] implying the removal of the single elements from their context of origin and their reassemblage in the new context of the visual poem. However, unlike Miccini and other members of Gruppo 70, who mostly concentrated on the language of advertising and consumerism,[368] Porta maintained a more complex focus on the information system (referring to both the news and the crime news) and on how this clashed with the new lifestyles advertised in magazines and on television.

Porta's interest in the news system is particularly apparent in the *Cronache*, where he focused on the language of newspapers: the cutting and pasting together of unrelated and decontextualized syntagms taken from daily papers created ambiguous poems, in which the original message had been dismembered and thus a new meaning had to be interpreted. As Porta suggested in *Cronaca 3*, poetry

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[366] Ballerini, *Italian Visual Poetry*, 64.

[367] Porta, *Poesie in forma di cosa. Opere 1959–1964*, 10.

[368] Picchione described the members of Gruppo 70 as poets who "make extensive use of extralinguistic materials selected from images produced by mass media (commercial photographs, advertisements, comic strips, photo romances, and so on)" and whose main intent "is to establish a connection between poetry, technology, and the products of consumer society", Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*, 185.

had to be "frozen" and "without clear direction", to entice a "great discovery" in "those who read and chose": "Poesia congelata / in uno stagno / aperto in talune zone, / Scampata alla sedia elettrica / senza un preciso indirizzo / Chi legge e sceglie / per / attività piuttosto limitata / vittoriosa / come turista clandestino / verso una grande scoperta" (Fig. 4).
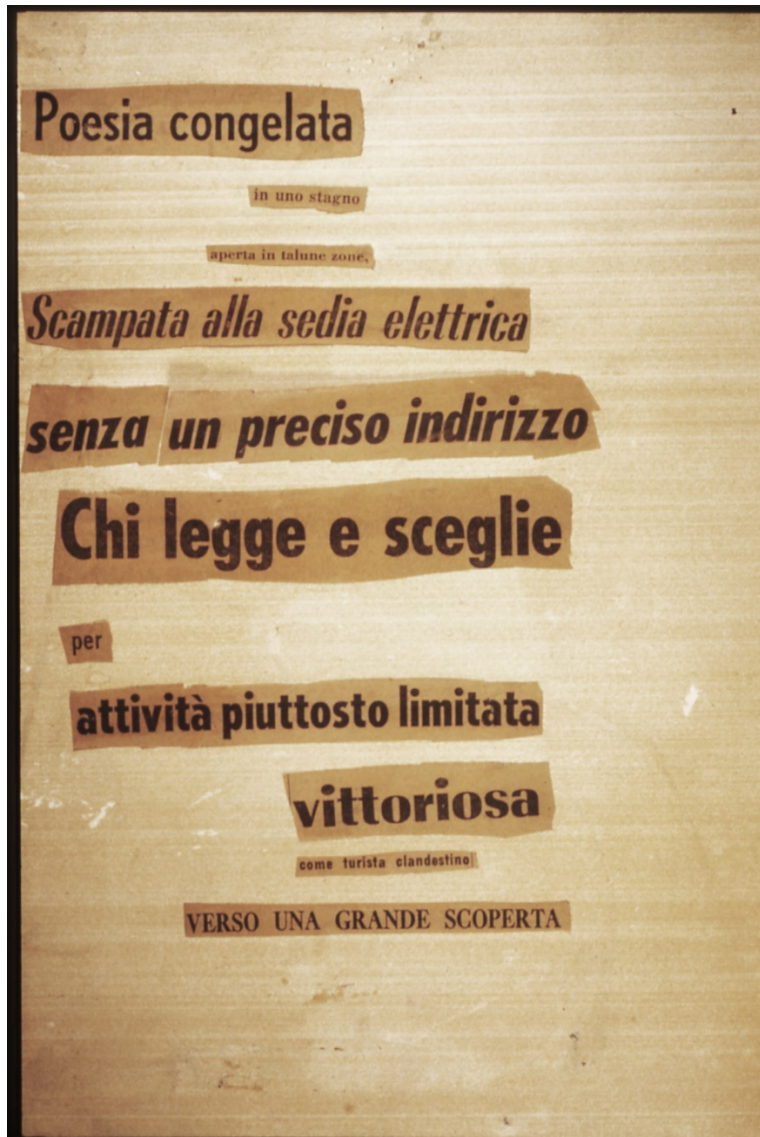
Fig. 4. *Cronaca 3*, 31.3.1963. Paper collage on wood, 31,5 cm x 21,3 cm. Porta, 2.

In the first number of *Malebolge* of 1966, Porta explained how the collages comprising his *Cronache* served as source material to compose the poems of *L'enigma naturale*. These poems were equally obtained through a choice ("scelta") that privileged unusual semantic relations, and thus deformed the information system to elicit an epiphanic revelation of truth:

Queste poesie sono nate come collages. Sollecitando, cioè, l'informazione quotidiana nel senso giusto, nella direzione del grande caos e dell'enigma, dell'ambiguità del presente e del significato degli atti di cui ci giunge notizia attraverso la stampa. Di fatto ho ritagliato dal linguaggio dei quotidiani ciò che era veramente significativo, ciò che era implicito e vergognoso; o anche, nel gran mare dell'informazione, ho cercato di sorprendere gli accostamenti necessari, i nessi tenuti nascosti e le analogie sostanziali. Di qui i veri e propri collages, sui quali ho ripetuto, seppure in diverse proporzioni, *l'operazione della scelta e della sorpresa*, ricavando le poesie dell'*Enigma naturale*. Si tratta, in certo modo, di nuovi epigrammi, intendendo, naturalmente, con questa definizione, quel genere di poesia che interviene più direttamente nel confronto con la realtà, con una più violenta carica di ironia e grottesca deformazione. *Deformazione dell'informazione, appunto, necessaria per arrivare a quella autentica:* l'epigramma ha sempre assolto a questo compito, ed ora, con rinnovata violenza, attacca frontalmente l'immagine della società.[369]

The collage technique at the base of these poems also inspired the *Zero* collection, which somehow can be placed in between Porta's visual poetry and written poetry (the *Zero* poems were in fact included in Porta's *Quanto ho da dirvi,* whereas all other visual poems were not). The experience of concrete poetry was thus a way to rethink the very space and forms of written poetry. For Porta, the decontextualisation granted by the collage technique was a method to conceive a new spatiality for the poem, centred on the idea of "the unfinished": "L'idea dello spazio in cui le parole dovevano muoversi, mi si è presentata come quella del 'non finito' che, appunto, a quella di spazio è più vicina".[370] Similarly to what Porta had suggested in *Cronaca 3*, the "unfinished" infused the poems with a great "tension" towards multiple possible meanings:

Ecco: le parole si disponevano in modo da formare come delle fasce, delimitate o meglio "ritagliate" casualmente dalla misura del foglio. (...) Questo tipo di metrica "sui generis" generò subito un certo tipo di poesia in cui le parole venivano disposte senza collegamento apparente tra verso e verso, ma con una grande tensione. Ad esprimere che? Il grado zero della poesia, della situazione umana, disponibile a tutte le soluzioni, senza significato preciso all'infuori di un'ipotetica direzione d'attesa.[371]

The openness and ambiguity of Porta's poems, which equally characterise his written and visual production, represented a challenge to the meanings proposed through mass communication, and, it has been mentioned, gave the reader an active role in the construction of their own meaning. Throughout his writing career, Porta maintained a close relationship with the news system, as some archival evidence further suggests: for instance, a handwritten poem published in the newspaper

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[369] Porta, "Con riferimento a 'L'enigma naturale,'" 61.
[370] Porta, "Il grado Zero della poesia," 42.
[371] Porta, 42.

L'Unità, 1984 (Fig. 5), and an underlined news article detailing the abuse suffered by Petra Krause while in prison (Fig. 6).

Fig. 5. Handwritten poem on newspaper. Held at the Antonio Porta archives at Centro Apice, University of Milan.

Fig. 6. Underlined newspaper clipping. Held at the Antonio Porta archives at Centro Apice, University of Milan.

However, Porta did not solely focus on the verbal aspect of the information system. As the editor of illustrated magazines, he was extensively immersed in the Italian visual culture of the 1950s and 1960s and nurtured a sharp interest in the world of images, including photographs. In Porta's twenty-four visual poems, the visuality promoted by mass media took centre stage: in the panels, the images drawn from the advertising industry often clashed with the photographic reproductions of controversial politicians, smiling women, animal carcasses, intermedial references to artworks (such as those of Raffaello, Heartfield, Oldenburg, and Warhol).[372] While the pictures he included in his works were directly taken from popular magazines and often pictured alluring women, Porta also showed he was an attentive observer of contemporary documentary photography. Among the photographs chosen for his visual poems, for instance, there are at least two photos by well-known

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[372] Note that, although Porta included direct references to pop art (Oldenburg and Warhol), his work greatly differs from that of pop artists: rather than hedonistically celebrating the rise of mass culture, Porta's visual poetry aligns with his poetics of demystifying the evil and corruption of society in order to reach what is true.

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international photojournalists of the time. The first is a photo taken in 1963 by Walter Sanders (a photographer for *Life* magazine), which portrays Erich Mende doing calisthenics in his home garden (Fig. 7): the vitalist image of the leader of the German Free Democratic Party on a swing is paired with a photograph of a coffin covered in flower garlands at its bottom: here the stark reminder of the oxymoron of life and death possibly hints at a critique of the political values that Mende represented. The second photograph, taken by photographer Peter Beard, portrays a dead zebra, and belongs to the photographic project *The End of the Game* (1965).[373] In his photo-book, Beard presented a visual documentary of the problem of man-driven wildlife destruction in Africa, a theme that also vastly resonated in Porta's poetry.[374] In Porta's visual poem (Fig. 8 and Fig. 9), Beard's zebra is paired with two other images, following a metonymic process that underpins most of Porta's visual poetry: the carcass of the animal echoes the corpse of a human being, pasted in the bottom left corner, whereas

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[373] Beard, *The End of the Game. Last Word from Paradise*.

[374] Consider, for instance, *La pelliccia del castoro*: "La zebra scatta e s'avvicina, / la coscia allunga le strisce / lucide e accorcia, fa esplodere / lo zoccolo cartucce di sabbia", in a direct reference to the image of the zebra; but also: "La caccia alla balena ha inizio (…) incalziamo con gli arpioni (…) «Issiamola / a bordo, divoriamo!»", Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 96, 97. For Terreni, the "parossismo visivo" of verses like these denounce "l'assassinio e lo sfruttamento dell'animale a scopo commerciale, esiziale costrizione della libera vitalità biologica entro le leggi meccaniche del profitto", Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 78.

the black and white stripes of the animal are visually linked to a pattern in the dress of the English judge Lord Denning, who reported for the Profumo affair in 1963.

Fig. 7. Untitled, paper collage on wood, 21,5 cm x 15,5 cm. Porta, 18.

Fig. 8. Untitled, paper collage on wood, 30,8 cm x 21 cm. Porta, 32.

Fig. 9. Untitled, paper collage on wood, 15,5 cm x 21,5 cm. Porta, 33.

By simultaneously referring to the images of advertising and popular culture and to those of photojournalism, Porta's visual poems seemed to particularly denounce the mischievous compresence of death and sensual beauty, politics and advertising, as well as crime and glamour, which defined the information system of his contemporary society.[375] The constant overlaying of these different levels of perception seemed to unveil a sadistic and sexualised attraction towards death, which also infused Porta's literature of cruelty. As a matter of fact, Porta's works reflected a visual culture driven by the erotic and the macabre that still broadly characterises visual culture today, as Sontag reminds us in *Regarding the Pain of Others*: "It seems that the appetite for pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show bodies naked".[376] Longanesi had already denounced this conflicted desire, along with the emergence of a visual culture feeding on death and beauty, in 1949:

> Questo continuo osservar cadaveri ci ha reso non insensibili all'idea della morte, ma ci ha abituati a meno rispetto per la vita altrui. E il passare, sfogliando una rivista, da un morto assassinato a una bella attrice in costume da bagno, è divenuto qualcosa di consueto, direi d'indispensabile: se non accompagniamo alla bellezza di un corpo femminile la macabra visione di un uomo ucciso, non ci divertiamo più. (…) un bilancio della fotografia documentaria ai suoi primi decenni di vita, e del suo inesorabile inserimento nel sistema delle comunicazioni di massa, un bilancio lugubre, di una realtà in cui la fotografia, con la sua assurda verità, ci ha tolto ogni illusione.[377]

The clashing of sensual and grotesque is at the core of several Porta's visual poems. The fifth visual poem of the series (Fig. 10), for instance, juxtaposes a smiling woman – eating cheese spread on a slice of bread – with a photograph of Hitler. This odd combination of images is also an intermedial reference to Heartfield's "Goebbels' recipe against the food shortage in Germany" (Fig. 11): a photomontage directed against Joseph Goebbels published in the magazine *AIZ*, in 1935. Porta proposed a variation to Heartfield's image and chose to stress the contrast between a woman, embodying the uprising culture of consumerism, and Hitler, as a reminder of the crimes against

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[375] The sensual and erotic quality emerges in particular in the fifth, eighth, tenth, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, twenty-third, and twenty-fourth images of the series. The clash between erotism and violence thus becomes more evident by looking at the collection of visual poems as a interconnected whole.

[376] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 41.

[377] Longanesi, *Il mondo cambia: storia di cinquant'anni*. Quoted in D'Autilia, *Storia della fotografia in Italia dal 1839 a oggi*, 246.

humanity that occurred during the world conflict. The unsettling implication of this visual poem is that the woman, due to her ignorant forgetfulness, is complicit with the faults and crimes of the authorities in power; by intermedially referring to Heartfield's photomontage, the bread the woman is eating is also symbolic of the bodies turned into food satirically portrayed in Heartfield's artwork. Furthermore, the viewer and consumer are lured into identifying with the woman, and therefore equally complicit with the evil of society. Although Porta's visual poems can be interpreted individually, the twenty-four panels best function as a macro text sketching the image of a society disrupted by dichotomic excesses. The references to public figures of past and present times, such as to Mussolini and Hitler on the one hand, and to Lord Denning and Erich Mende on the other, show how Porta's gaze, far from being limited to the Italian national borders, rather implied a broader look onto society, one that had also informed the writing of *Europa* in 1958.

Fig. 10. Untitled, paper collage on wood, 21,5 cm x 15,5 cm. Porta, 20.
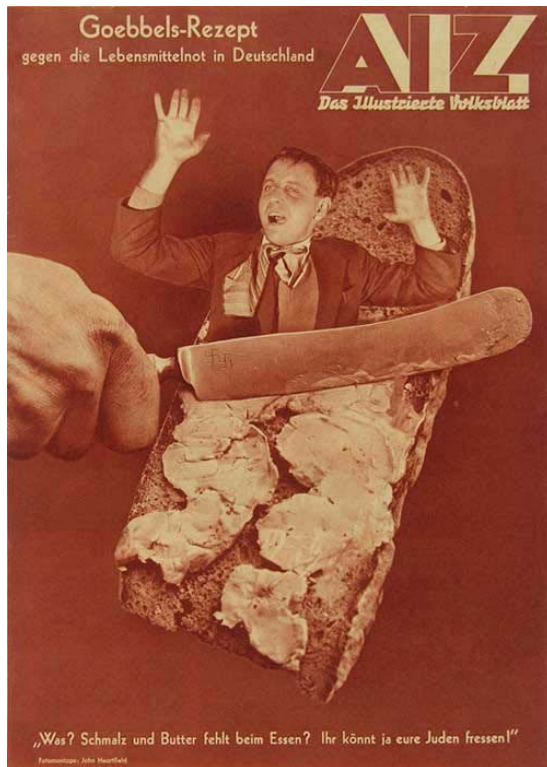
Fig. 11. John Heartfield, *Goebbels-Rezept gegen die Lebensmittelnot in Deutschland (Goebbels'
recipe against the food shortage in Germany)*, from *AIZ* 14, no. 43 (October 24, 1935): 688.

Image source: https://akronartmuseum.org/collection/Obj1556?sid=1&x=494365&port=203

This brief analysis of Porta's visual work sheds new light on his written production: Porta's early poetry, and especially *Europa* – as I will discuss in the following section – can in fact be read as a written equivalent of his visual poems for the direct references to the information system, for the themes discussed, and for the forms there prefigured. However, although *Europa* and Porta's visual poems can be effectively read in parallel, it is important to note that *Europa* was written in 1958, a few years before the visual poems were potentially created.[378] Thus, *Europa* in a sense prefigured the engagement with the visuality of crime news as well as with the technique of collage; the latter, in particular, was adapted into verbal montage to fit the temporality of the poetry sequence. Porta's

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[378] The twenty-four panels containing the visual poems do not include a date of production. However, both Sanders and Beard's photographs were published around 1963, while Lord Denning's report for the Profumo affair also dates to the same year. It is therefore possible to hypothesise that at least some of the panels were created around 1963.

visual practice, nonetheless, serves as evidence to reinforce the notion of the predominance of visuality in his early writing, and to elucidate the systems of references that we can now clearly detect and retrace in his poetry.

Truth and Crime News. Crime Photos in Absentia in *Europa cavalca un toro nero*

Porta's engagement with the information system clearly underlies *Europa cavalca un toro nero*, one of Porta's earliest poems. As the analysis of his visual work has uncovered, Porta was equally concerned with the verbal and visual aspect of mass communication and addressed both in his poetry. In a 1988 speech at a conference on the relationship between literature and images, conserved in Porta's archival fund at Centro Apice in Pavia, Porta went so far as to indicate a compatible language for the discourse of poetry and that of images: "il discorso per immagini e il discorso della poesia procedono paralleli" since "il linguaggio della poesia, [è] linguaggio anche delle immagini".[379] Poetry and visuality, in other words, could produce similar effects and could thus potentially be employed together to create artistic products. In this section, therefore, *Europa* will be considered as a poem that performs a form of photographic visuality through its writing, and therefore exemplifies "literature's constitutive, rather than derivative, role in visual culture"[380] in line with the tenets of literary visuality. It is possible to hypothesise the employment of a photographic mode of writing in Porta's early poetry on two levels. On the level of content, these poems offer eidetic descriptions of events drawn from crime news, and thus also intermedially refer to photographic images taken by photojournalists. These intermedial references, in turn, provide the pretext around which Porta then developed the poem's imagery. On the level of form, Porta's photographic mode of writing was

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[379] And more clearly: "il discorso per immagini e con le immagini, e quindi il discorso della poesia, ma non solo della poesia, del cinema, della video-art, ecc., fanno alternativa. È infondato pensare che letteratura cinema TV siano in opposizione tra di loro; lavorano invece in un medesimo territorio", Porta, "Conferenza sui rapporti tra letteratura e immagine," 1.

[380] Isekenmeier, "The Order(s) of Literary Visuality: Textual Visibilities – Readerly Visualisations – Visual Modes of Writing," 325.

particularly suspended between stillness and motion, thanks to its intermedial references to the technique of montage.

Porta's civic commitment of the 1950s and 1960s was expressed by the poetics of the "external event" ("l'importanza dell'evento esterno"), which was directly linked to "il problema del *vero* e della *verità*, in simbiosi con la ricerca delle immagini e il bisogno di penetrazione".[381] The Oedipian drive towards truth, and the poet's responsibility "not to blind himself", fostered Porta's tragic-estranged gaze, which focused on the images of violence of his contemporary society. Porta reiterated the importance of the visual aspect underpinning his research in a comment on *Europa cavalca un toro nero*, where he called attention to the visuality behind the events drawn from crime news that comprised the ten sections of the long poem:

> Direi che urgeva una passione civile e politica quando ho cominciato a stendere i primi materiali di *Europa*: la volontà di denuncia di quello che si manifestava come un nuovo autoritariarismo quasi senza soluzione di continuità con i passati regimi. Il vuoto sostituiva il vuoto. La menzogna politica era tornata prassi dominante. (…) Conseguenza di questa tensione era, per la mia opera, *la necessità di cogliere le immagini* prodotte dal vuoto maligno del nuovo autoritariarismo. *Incidenti di lavoro, delitti commessi da idioti, incidenti stradali...* Lavoravo alle diverse sezioni del poemetto *raccogliendo materiali e pian piano rielaborandoli*, *cercando di trasformare la pura notizia di cronaca, reale ma anche immaginaria, in linguaggio adeguato, strutturalmente conseguente*.[382]

Similar to the processes employed for the creation of his visual and concrete poems, Porta gathered materials from newspapers, and more generally from the mass media, and reassembled them to sketch a critical picture of society. In this case, however, the materials drawn from the crime news had to be transformed into language, and language itself had to be innovated accordingly ("trasformare la pura notizia di cronaca (…) in linguaggio adeguato, strutturalmente conseguente").

Like in *Poesie in forma di cosa*, the reference to the information system served the function of denouncing a corrupted society. Italy, and Europe more broadly, had recently come out of political regimes, including Fascism and Nazism, only to be newly ruled by systems of "authoritarism", in which "political falsehood" was the prevailing form of communication. Indeed, if the language of mass communication did nothing but entice "falsehood", poetry, on the contrary, had the

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[381] Porta also added: "Qualcosa si vuol trovare, alla fine", Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 194.
[382] *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985*, 9. My italics.

responsibility to use the same language with the objective of transmitting a truer kind of information, as Porta clarified:

> Dietro le poesie c'è il mondo che si muove, la cronaca, la storia, tutti i fatti. (…) È questa una delle ragioni perché poi [chi scrive poesie] vuole comunicare ciò che ha sentito, al di fuori di quella che è chiamata l'informazione di massa, cioè un'informazione che ci viene attraverso la televisione, i giornali. Uno dei grandissimi problemi del mondo contemporaneo è appunto l'informazione. (…) La poesia prende la lingua così come la trova e cerca di utilizzarla innanzitutto a fini di informazione. C'è chi sostiene che la poesia non informa, io invece penso che la poesia abbia un alto grado di informazione, che abbia lo scopo di dire col suo linguaggio più di quanto non si dica normalmente con il linguaggio comune, che pure prende come base.[383]

Written in 1958, at the peak of the Cold War, *Europa cavalca un toro nero* openly exemplifies this declaration of poetics. In the ten sections of the poem, Porta eidetically described a hammering repertoire of crude "events", shifting between the public and the private, between unexpected accidents and premeditated murder. The reader is particularly called to witness a clash between factions in a public square (Section 2), a car accident (Section 4), a train accident and a workplace accident (Section 5), abuse and murder (Section 6), a family homicide (Section 7), an explosion and an arson (Section 9), a suicide (Section 9) and finally a gas leak in a mine (Section 10).[384] The list of atrocities is coldly relayed on the page and composes a grammar of violence of modern society at that time. By displaying fragments of tragic "events" drawn from crime news, Porta hoped to alert readers as to the unreliability of the information system and shake them out of their state of collusion with society. The very notion of society was for Porta negatively connoted: in *Di fronte alla luna* (1959), Porta defined contemporary society as a muffling force that swallowed and absorbed the ink spots "snapped" by the poet, thus attempting to silence his denunciation: "Avvertimento utile: la società / materasso, gommapiuma, carta / assorbente. Pedate con rabbia e macchie / d'inchiostro: il poeta

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[383] Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 120–21.
[384] Porta provided a somewhat detailed descrpition in the *Novissimi* anthology: "Emblematica *suite* di episodi di cronaca. La strofa 1 è ispirata alle conferenze al vertice e alle prevaricazioni del potere politico. Nella 2 è isolata una visione ingenuamente manichea, l'angelo che si leva nella piazza dove avviene uno scontro di fazioni. La 3 presenta le autorità in pallone sopra la foresta del traffico che esse guardano compiaciute. La 4 e la 5 evocano incidenti tipici della nostra organizzazione; nella 5 tra l'incidente ferroviario e l'infortunio sul lavoro s'incastra un'immagine di prostituzione. Nella 6: persecuzione razziale, abuso della polizia, violazione della dignità e assassinio insensato. Il protagonista dela strofa 7 è un pazzo che fa saltare un paese dopo aver ucciso la sorella. Nella 8 un uomo è investito da un'esplosione nucleare. La 9 racconta di un suicidio. Ultima strofa: una folla raccolta su un prato attende la fine, la parte virgolettata e un passo dei Salmi, alle immagini di terrore risponde una voce 'Sì' (è la vita che vuole continuare)", Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 165–69.

scatta".[385] Within this context, therefore, the disclosing of images acquired a crucial role, since it corresponded with an act of resistance and a civic responsibility that the poet needed to express and enforce: "Ma scoprire, almeno, è il fine dell'arte, / l'immagine di / uomo / noi".[386]

A similar warning can be found in the opening lines of *Europa*, where Porta directly cautioned his readers against the mendacity put forward by "[i] Grandi" (i.e. the institutions in power): "Attento abitante del pianeta, / guardati! dalle parole dei Grandi / frana di menzogne, lassù / balbettano, insegnano il vuoto".[387] Placed in a marked position at the beginning of the second verse, and syntactically isolated by the use of an exclamation mark, the polysemic imperative "guardati!" ("look out", but in Italian also literally "look at yourself") is a reminder of the privileged role of the sense of sight in this poem, and sets a double layer for its reading. On the one hand, the reader is invited to "watch out" for the "landslide of lies" generated by the people in power, and to do so by *looking at* the evidence presented in the poem. On the other hand, the same reader who *visualises* the images provided by the poet, is also liable to be "looked at", and thus to become part of the colluded mass kept under surveillance and scrutinized from the air by the ironically decent authorities of Section 3: "buone autorità, viaggiano in pallone, / strade e case osservano dall'alto, / gli uomini sono utili formiche, / la folla ingarbugliata".[388]

The double fold of the act of looking – evocative of Merleau-Ponty's intuition that all subjects are simultaneously *looking at* and *being looked at* – is also embedded in the very title of the poem. If on one hand the whole continent of Europe, along with its inhabitants, is being looked at and placed under the visual surveillance of an unsparing eye, taking another perspective, the etymology of

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[385] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 83. The same silencing instance can be found in the first section of *Europa*: "La privata, unica, voce/ metti in salvo: domani sottratta / ti sarà, come a molti", Porta, 77.

[386] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 85.

[387] Porta, 77. Porta, in fact, identified "nel sistema dei poteri politici che dominavano l'Europa un vuoto, cioè una mancanza di vero rinnovamento rispetto alla tragica storia dell'Europa della guerra", Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 123.

[388] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 77–78.

Europa – "She who has big eyes" as Picchione reminds us[389] – suggests that Europe itself is performing an act of looking. Europe would then be at once the wide-eyed witnessing of "the void" of society, and society itself, spread bare and being looked at. The title also explicitly alludes to the Greek myth of the rape of Europa, according to which Zeus, infatuated with the girl, took on the form of a tame white bull and lured the young woman to mount on his back, eventually abducting her and seducing her. Porta, however, changed the colour of the bull from white to black, a tint which, in Western culture, is frequently associated with mourning, death, evil, and tragic events.[390] The colour black, most importantly, functions as a bridge to connect the content of the poem to crime news, since "crime news" translates to "cronaca nera" (literally "black chronicle") in Italian, thus reinforcing the idea that what the readers are *looking at* are events drawn from crime news.

While it is not possible to link the accidents and crimes described in *Europa* to specific episodes from crime news, the photographs below, taken from the Italian newspaper *La Nuova Stampa*, can give us an idea of the type of images a reader would be exposed to between 1956 and 1958. The photographs display a car accident (Fig. 12), a train accident (Fig. 13), and an accident in a mine (Fig. 14). Fig 14, in particular, refers to the 1956 Marcinelle disaster in Belgium, where 136 Italian miners died of asphyxia after a fire had accidentally started in the mine. Porta possibly referred to it in the last section of the poem, where he wrote: "Quattromila metri di terriccio / premono le schiene, e un minatore / in salvo ha mormorato: / 'Là è tutto pieno di gas.'",[391] directly echoing the newspaper piece: "gli uomini delle squadre di soccorso hanno riferito che lí sotto l'aria è satura di gas".[392] The visual aspect of the news thus goes hand in hand with the verbal representation of the

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[389] See, Picchione, *Introduzione a Antonio Porta*, 32. On the Online Etymology Dictionary, the origin of the word is also linked back to its Greek roots, as Europe would derive "from ευρυς (eurys) 'wide' + ωψ (ops) 'face', literally 'eye'", (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=Europe, accessed April 21, 2017).

[390] Porta commented on the title as follows: "Europa non viene rapita da un toro bianco, come dice il mito (il toro bianco era Giove che seduceva Europa), ma da un toro nero che è il simbolo del male. II nero è un colore funebre, mentre il bianco, somma di tutti i colori, è il colore della vita", Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 123.

[391] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 81.

[392] "Centottanta cadaveri in fondo al pozzo di Marcinelle. Anche le gallerie dei piani inferiori devastate dall'incendio e dal gas," 7.

facts, making the intermedial references to the photographs a variable in a more complex writing system.[393]

Although the ekphrastic drive remains implicit in his early poetry, Porta will in later poems refer to specific photographs, especially in *Brevi lettere '78*, contained in *Passi passaggi* (1976–1979). In this poetry collection Porta once again addressed crime news, with the difference that, compared to his earlier poems, at this time he had already shifted towards a more communicative approach, presupposed by the very format of the "letter". In this later cycle, photography is clearly called into question, for instance: "mi sembra stamattina che ho visto il giornalino / la *foto* in prima pagina di quello che gli avevano scavato / il petto coi coltelli per cavargli il muscolo cuore con le lame";[394] "il suo nome di battesimo è Joachim e Kroll il cognome (...) È quasi calvo e nelle *foto* appare goffo";[395] "mi dici che hanno pubblicato la *foto* della ragazza / sprangata soffocata annegata e prima violentata";[396] and "*su una foto del maresciallo pilota Agello / ripescato nel lago di Garda, 1932 //* il corpo trattiene il lago / i compagni sulla barca lo tengono sollevato a metà / la testa resta girata dalla parte opposta".[397] While the source of the events recalled in Porta's poems seems now clear, it is necessary to describe with greater precision the way in which Porta, in his early poetry, presented the images drawn from the crime news on the page. In the next section, therefore, I will further explore how Porta's engagement with photography also reshaped poetic forms. *Europa cavalca un toro nero* and *Aprire* both refer to the visuality of crime news; in them, I argue, Porta's

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[393] Another example of Porta's references to the verbal aspect of the news is documented by Milone in an exchange of letters between Giuliani and Porta for the publication of *I novissmi*. Giuliani had asked Porta to modify a detail in *Europa* that Porta had taken from the news: "Caro Leo, sei sicuro di non dover correggere il manovale 'gonfio di vino' in Europa? Tu l'avrai preso dalla cronaca, ma nel tuo contesto i fatti diventano *paradigmatici*: ora se un infortunio che accade perché il 'manovale' è ubriaco altri mille ne accadono perché il manovale magari è stanco e lavora in condizioni realmente pericolose", to which Porta eventually replied "Caro Alfredo, ho cambiato infine il manovale gonfio di vino in gonfio di sonno". Both extracts are from Milone, *"Queste e non altre": lettere e carte inedite*, 50,51.

[394] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 371.

[395] Porta, 373. Joachim Kroll was a German serial killer who murdered fourteen people between 1955 and 1976.

[396] And in the same poem: "se lo hai voluto dire che c'è questa foto vuoi chiedere / e (io) dico che è come ripeterla questa violenza / moltiplicata in quattrocentomila copie e in due / milioni di occhi e in più ogni volta che si prende in mano / il giornale per riguardarla...", Porta, 374. The poem refers to a brutally violent piece of crime news, "il massacro del Circeo" (the Circeo massacre), perpetrated in September 1975 and still remembered today. The photo was captured by Antonio Monteforte, a photojournalist in service.

[397] Porta, *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985*, 107.

visuality directly reshaped writing, and syntax more specifically, leading to the design of a photographic mode of writing suspended between stillness and motion.

Fig. 12. Car accident, *La nuova Stampa*, May 8, 1958.
Fig. 13. Train accident, *La nuova Stampa*, March 20–21, 1958.
Fig. 14. Accident in a mine, *La nuova Stampa*, August 9, 1956.

Photographic Writing: Montage Across Stillness and Motion

In order to illustrate what I call Porta's photographic mode of writing, I will chiefly look at *Europa cavalca un toro nero*, together with *Aprire*, and *Come se fosse un ritmo.* As I have argued in the previous section, it is possible to imagine that *Europa* and *Aprire* loosely refer to photographs taken by a photojournalist at the scene of a crime, or an accident. In fact, readers of Porta's work often have the impression of mentally visualising a series of photographic snapshots while reading the poem, as it was observed on the occasion of one of Porta's readings in Parma, in 1979: "La sua poesia è molto attenta ai particolari percepiti dai sensi, a volte dà l'impressione di una serie di immagini fotografiche".[398] However, while references to photographs are undoubtedly present in Porta's poetry, photographic images are mostly used as pretexts or sources of inspiration in the process of "transforming" the crime news into language, as Porta himself clarified in a comment to his later collection *Brevi lettere*: "È forte la presenza di un'ispiratrice, come è stato notato, ma vi sono altre occasioni, una semplice fotografia".[399] Rather than being merely shown, the events are "transformed". Re-enacted through the gaze of the lyrical I, they are condemned to exist in an ever-incessant present tense, expressing what Colangelo has called "L'ossessione di Porta per l'indicativo presente e per il *present continuous* – il tempo della cronaca percussiva".[400]

It is in this transformative process that the poem acquires both a photographic and a cinematic quality. The eidetic descriptions in Porta's poems have been largely associated with both photographic and cinematic styles of writing by literary critics, and the reference to the technique of montage has equally been addressed, although mostly briefly. Sasso, for instance, wrote that objects and events, in Porta's poetry, "si fanno tutti ugualmente disponibili allo sguardo del poeta, che li organizza, li presenta, li fa ritornare, li fissa con accanito lavoro di montaggio in un insieme

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[398] Part of a question for Porta formulated by a student, Bertolucci et al., *Sulla poesia*, 150.
[399] Porta, *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985*, 103–4.
[400] Colangelo, "Il capitale immateriale di Antonio Porta," 167.

disarticolato ed abnorme".[401] Nevertheless, the inherent ambiguity of Porta's poetic montage, which simultaneously integrates sequences perceived as either photographic or cinematic, has been so far overlooked.

In order to unpack the static and yet dynamic unravelling of Porta's writing, it is necessary to draw a preliminary distinction between poetic sections that appear photographic in nature, and sequences that retain a cinematic quality instead. With this aim in mind, the notions of description and narrative suggested by Guido Isekenmeier can serve as an ideal starting point to address such difference. Isekenmeier, quoting Mieke Bal, defined descriptions as "verbal images of perceptual images";[402] furthermore, while description traditionally presents the "world (actants and topoi)", narrative's role is to rather portray "events (actions)".[403] However, for Isekenmeier, a dynamic relationship connects these two modes of writing, which are in fact interdependent, and not necessarily distinguishable. In analysing Porta's *Europa* and *Aprire*, Isekenmeier's distinction and interconnection can elucidate some of the mechanisms behind Porta's photographic mode of writing. In Porta's poems, the visual quality of the description and narrative is enhanced by the particular use of punctuation and by the intentional fragmentation of linear syntax, which aim to present "[p]assaggi rapidi tra un'immagine e l'altra, tra un luogo e un altro",[404] as Porta claimed. *Europa* and *Aprire*, for instance, are comprised of a series of syntagms isolated by the use of punctuation or by the enjambments, as in: "Brucia cartucce in piazza, furente / l'auto del partito: sollevata la mano",[405] or "Dietro la porta nulla, dietro la tenda, / l'impronta impressa sulla parete, sotto,".[406] Yet, as Terreni

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[401] Sasso, *Antonio Porta*, 24.

[402] Bal, *The Mottled Screen*, 4. In Isekenmeier, "The Order(s) of Literary Visuality: Textual Visibilities – Readerly Visualisations – Visual Modes of Writing," 330.

[403] Isekenmeier, "The Order(s) of Literary Visuality: Textual Visibilities – Readerly Visualisations – Visual Modes of Writing," 330.

[404] Porta, *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985*, 10.

[405] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 77.

[406] Porta, 123.

pointed out, if Porta's asyntactism fails to connect the syntagms in a linear syntactical and semantic structure, it nevertheless maintains the meaning at the level of the single syntagm.[407]

This syntactical fragmentation organised around a series of elementary clauses is, for Terreni and Lorenzini, inextricably linked to Porta's disjointed visuality: "l'ossessiva visualità del soggetto lirico si connette, con rigore davvero crudele, alle specifiche strutture linguistiche, sia sintattiche che retoriche, sia più schiettamente metriche".[408] The isolation of the syntagms through a non-normative use of punctuation is instrumental to the constitution of Porta's photographic writing; by looking at the single and disjointed units comprising the verses, one finds that they alternatively lean towards a descriptive or a narrative mode of writing, and thus towards a more photographic or cinematic quality of the fragment. The illusion of being constantly suspended between stillness and motion is therefore created by the linguistic composition of the syntagms.

For instance, the following syntagms from *Europa* lean towards a descriptive mode of writing, for they present "actants" and "places" in nominal syntagms, where the verb is absent: "Il treno, il lago, gli annegati, / i fili arruffati. Il ponte nella notte: / di là quella donna. Il viola";[409] "le sentinelle, i poliziotti. / *I due voltarono le spalle*. / Rete, sacco: *volati / in basso come pompieri*";[410] "i capelli bagnati d'etere / luminoso";[411] "abitanti immobili, / il capo basso";[412] "*Con un colpo di uncino mette a nudo /* l'escavatrice venose tubature, */* e radici cariche di schiuma".[413] In *Aprire*, the disjointing mechanism is brought to the extreme: the poem opens with a descriptive section informed by a photographic visuality, in which the syntagms sketch basic visual cues: "Dietro la porta nulla, dietro la tenda / l'impronta impressa sulla parte, sotto, / l'auto, la finestra (…) sul soffitto nero / una macchia più oscura, impronta della mano",[414] and ends similarly, "Il corpo sullo scoglio, l'occhio cieco, il

[407] "[S]ul piano elocutivo, il Porta della stagione più sperimentale mantiene l'integrità sintattica dei singoli sintagmi, ma disarticola i giunti frastici, demolendo l'unità discorsiva", Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 83.
[408] Terreni, 73.
[409] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 78.
[410] Porta, 79, my italics.
[411] Porta, 79.
[412] Porta, 79.
[413] Porta, 81, my italics.
[414] Porta, 123.

sole, / il muro, dormiva, il capo sul libro, la notte sul mare, / dietro la finestra gli uccelli, il sole nella tenda, / l'occhio più oscuro, il taglio nel ventre, (...) che apre, muro, notte, porta".[415] Throughout the poem, the syntagms are systematically dismembered of their phrastic links, in a process of verbal spoliation that culminates in the epigrammatic single-word tryptic "muro, notte, porta" that tellingly closes – or rather circularly "opens" – *Aprire*.

The photographic stillness performed by these descriptive fragments is then alternated with the motion of narrative syntagms that stage actions. In fact, sequences containing verbs of movement infuse the narrative with a cinematic progression. In *Europa*, for instance: "Cani azzannano i passanti, uomini / raccomandabili guidano l'assassino (…) Negri annusano il vento";[416] "Con le mani la sorella egli / spinge sotto il letto. Un piede / slogato dondola di fuori (...) Guarda, / strofina un fiammifero, incendia (...) Afferra la doppietta e spara".[417] And in *Aprire*: "Le calze infila, nere, e sfila";[418] "le tende sollevano i lembi (...) la tenda si riempie di sabbia".[419]

When these different segments come together the impression is that of visualising an alternation of photographs (or still frames) and film micro-sequences that have been mounted together in a whole, as in Section 5 of *Aprire*, where the cinematic sections are marked in italics:

> Ruota delle gambe, *la tela sbatte nel vento*,
> quell'uomo, *le gambe aderiscono alla corsa*,
> *la corda si flette*, verso il molo, sulla sabbia,
> sopra le reti, *asciugano*, le scarpe di tela,
> il molo di cemento, *battono la corsa*,
> non c'è che mare, sempre più oscuro, il cemento,
> nella tenda, *sfilava le calze con i denti*,
> la punta, *ha premuto un istante*, a lungo,
> le calze distese sull'acqua, sul ventre.[420]

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[415] Porta, 125.
[416] Porta, 78.
[417] Porta, 79.
[418] Porta, 123.
[419] Porta, 124.
[420] Porta, 125, my italics.

In these poems, the punctuation and enjambments signal the cut between images, or scenes.[421] In this sense, it is possible to conceive of punctuation as alternatively mimicking the photographic shutter of a camera, or the recording button of a film camera, through which images and sequences are isolated from one another. Yet, if on the one hand punctuation generates the evident asyntactism of these poems, on the other hand it also functions as a glue holding the fragments together, thus signalling an act of montage of the single segments into a bigger whole and the presence of a semantic relationship linking the clauses together. As we've seen, the overall narrative obtained by juxtaposing the syntactical fragments functions in a way similar to Buñuel's montage, where the logical and visual gaps have to be filled by the reader's hermeneutical response. The ambiguity of the meaning and the asyntactism, which Sanguineti had identified as the main feature of Porta's writing, are therefore essential to the construction of Porta's photographic writing, which intermedially refers to montage. As a matter of fact, Porta was aware of the crucial role of syntax for his writing and for the montage-like structure of his poems. He wrote: "Lo strumento necessario è, naturalmente, la sintassi, e insieme lo spazio stesso dove battersi, la zona dove la tradizione va cancellata con lo scopo di progettare strutture dilatabili fino al limite dei significati possibili".[422] Like for Sanguineti, and in line with the neo-avant-garde poets of Gruppo 63, syntax was simultaneously a tool to innovate writing and a symbol of socio-political dissent.

While this textual analysis was essential to illustrate the implications of Porta's particular use of montage as one based on the alternation between stillness and motion, Porta's ideas on montage, seldom discussed by critics, are equally central to understand the construction of his peculiar photographic mode of writing. First of all, Porta conceived of montage as a technique that could be used to write poetry. In a comment on the poetic work of Giovanni Raboni, he linked montage with writing, and posed that: "Punto di vista e montaggio sono due momenti essenziali per la costruzione

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[421] Zanzotto, for instance spoke of Porta's verses as comprised of "'parti' (difficilmente definibili dal punto di vista prosodico), le quali *trovano* nella virgola, enfatizzata, i1 loro luogo di distinzione e insieme di aggancio", Zanzotto, "Antonio Porta: Week-End."

[422] This extract is taken from the first issue of the neo-avant-garde journal *Quindici* (1967), quoted in Picchione, *Introduzione a Antonio Porta*, 20.

di un romanzo", adding shortly after that "il montaggio *fa il racconto*, e solo un racconto cinematografico può avvicinarsi a quello costruito dalle sequenze della poesia".[423] In turn, for Porta, montage would assume a particular quality within the space of poetry, different from that of a novel: "Dove il romanzo di poesia si distanzia dal romanzo di prosa, è negli spostamenti più netti del senso, più netti e più rapidi, come quelli di un film, appunto. Sono infatti gli spostamenti fulminei di senso che reggono la poesia di Raboni e a questi spostamenti il verso si adegua, su di essi si modella".[424] These sudden shifts of meaning were then responsible for the development of a narrative structure. It is easy to see how Porta's reading of Raboni's poetry reveals much about his own poetic practice: like Raboni, Porta also based his poetic writing on montage and stretched the visual and logical jump cuts, a la Buñuel, to a series of "spostamenti fulminei", echoed by equivalent gaps in the syntactical structure of the verses.[425]

Porta also explicitly spoke of montage in relation to poetry writing, including his own, during a conference on the relationship between literature and the image, in 1988. In his conference paper, he described contemporary poetry as being based on visual montage ("una poesia che vive con il montaggio delle immagini e non seguendo strutture logiche precostituite"[426]), following the trend already established in modern literature according to which the image had taken up a predominant

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[423] Porta, *Il progetto infinito*, 131, italics of the author.

[424] It might be illuminating to share a longer excerpt from the comment, since it unveils Porta's ideas on narrative poetry, on the montage of images and on how the ultimate goal of poetry is that of reaching truth. "Ci si mette su una buona strada interpretativa individuando due passaggi fondamentali che segnalano il *punto di vista* che ha ispirato la nuova opera ('il mio ultimo e il mio unico libro') e la dichiarazione di un 'montaggio' tutto inedito del lavoro che si è andato accumulando dal 1953 al 1987. Punto di vista e montaggio sono due momenti essenziali per la costruzione di un romanzo, anche solo da un lato semplicemente tecnico; dunque non sarà illecito parlare di *romanzo* a proposito di un libro di poesie, e di 'romanzo poeticamente essenziale' parla anche il risvolto editoriale. Aggiungerei una seconda definizione possibile e plausibile: *romanzo familiare costruito con immagini* che è la definizione di un film. Il montaggio è il film, come è noto, dunque il montaggio *fa il racconto*, e solo un racconto cinematografico può avvicinarsi a quello costruito dalle sequenze della poesia. 2. Insisto su montaggio e costruzione. Leggendo qui e là e poi tutto di un fiato *A tanto caro sangue*, ci si rende conto che per montare e rimontare con tanta decisione il proprio lavoro poetico Giovanni Raboni ha cambiato timbro di voce; ha lasciato da parte sfumature e teneri indugi che caratterizzavano alcune sue poesie e ha scelto un piglio forte, perfino crudele e violento, per costringere l'intera sua esistenza *a dirci la verità* con le buone o con le cattive" (Porta, 130–31, italics of the author.).

[425] In an important reflection on montage, Sanguineti explained Buñuel's montage as follows: "Buñuel e Dalí si proposero innanzitutto di passare da un'immagine all'altra attraverso libere associazioni. (...) Bisognava che non significasse niente, che ci fossero dei salti totalmente irrazionali tra un'inquadratura e l'altra al fine di rovesciare completamente la logica della sintassi cinematografica", Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 39. Similarly, Porta's intention was that of revisiting the very notion of syntax by experimenting with the structures of language.

[426] Porta, "Conferenza sui rapporti tra letteratura e immagine," 2.

role within the genre of poetry.[427] Porta further explained how poetic language was comprised of images and words brought together through montage. Interestingly, the logic behind this poetic montage would pose an inherent challenge to language normativity: "La poesia è attraversamento della lingua (…) avventura e reperimento di immagini e parole che vengono poi *rimontate* secondo una logica completamente diversa da quella che la lingua impone nella sua normatività".[428] While for Porta poetic montage shaped the formal organisation of poetic language and meter, he considered it as an intrinsic feature of modern poetry.

Building on McLuhan's thought, and referring to Eisenstein's essay on montage,[429] Porta reclaimed the anticipatory and primary role of poetry, as opposed to cinema, in developing the technique of montage:

> McLuhan ci segnala che comincia con una nuova visione della natura quel sistema di montaggio – chiamiamolo così – del linguaggio poetico, montaggio per analogie e per accostamenti non logici ma visivi che diventerà il fondamento del linguaggio cinematografico. McLuhan rovescia questa prospettiva, non è la poesia che "dipende" dal cinema, ma è il linguaggio cinematografico – e, appunto, come diceva Eisenstein, il cinema è il montaggio – è debitore del linguaggio della poesia proprio perché il linguaggio della poesia ha introdotto questi accostamenti velocissimi tra punti distanti e i passaggi improvvisi da un luogo all'altro.[430]

In this sense, Porta asserted the active role of literature in visual culture: by anticipating the language of cinema, poetry would literally "(pre-)configure visualities".[431] Despite Porta's argument, however, his poetic practice rather testifies to a recursive relationship between written and visual media. In discussing the problem of the space of poetry, for instance, Porta recognised the crucial role played by photography and cinema in re-designing the experience of space and time, and thus transforming

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[427] "[I]l cammino della poesia moderna nella quale l'immagine diventa predominante", Porta, 1.

[428] Porta, 4–5, my italics.

[429] Eisenstein, "Word and Image." Joseph Luzzi also referred to Eisenstein's essay to theorise the presence of verbal montage in Zanzotto's poetry: "With its capacity to create metaphor through the frame-by-frame juxtaposition of images, montage is commonly viewed as a principal means by which film distinguishes itself from other media and discovers its unique expressive capacities. Yet, a landmark essay on the subject, Sergei Eisenstein's "Word and Image" (originally published as "Montage in 1938"), introduces its theories on montage by focusing on poetry and not film, to suggest that montage existed as a fundamental element of artistic exposition prior to its cinematic apotheosis", Luzzi, "Verbal Montage and Visual Apostrophe: Zanzotto's 'Filò' and Fellini's 'Voce Della Luna,'" 181.

[430] Porta, "Conferenza sui rapporti tra letteratura e immagine," 2.

[431] Isekenmeier and Bodola, "Introduction: Literary Visuality Studies," 11.

ways of perceiving and writing about the world. More particularly, the space of poetry had to be rethought following the crisis of spatio-temporal relations:

> Occorre (...) fissarsi sul momento della crisi dei tradizionali rapporti spazio-temporali. Apparve chiaro, a un certo punto di incontro di sollecitazioni tra le più eterogenee, che la staticità, di un dipinto o di una fotografia, era il più ingombrante cadavere che la "tradizione" avesse lasciato tra i viventi. Era indispensabile sbarazzarsene al più presto. Non era già nato il cinema? Non erano stati fotografati i primi "movimenti," la sequenza del saltatore di ostacoli, per esempio? Balla, Boccioni, Bragaglia ecc. lo capiscono immediatamente e cominciano a operare con un impeto solo apparentemente ingenuo. Si tratta, in definitiva, dei primi passi della rivoluzione.[432]

The crisis Porta addressed unravelled in the interstice between stillness ("la staticità") and motion ("movimenti"), here exemplified in the divide between photography and cinema. Yet, avant-garde visual artists such as Balla, Boccioni, and Bragaglia – who significantly tried to achieve a combination of stillness and motion in their artworks – were for Porta moving the right steps for the rethinking of the space of art.

It followed that, for Porta, poetry had to similarly address "la dialettica: spazio-tempo-*staticità-movimento*-assolutezza-accadimento" in order to pierce the space of the page and perform a "fuga da uno spazio ideologicamente precostituito".[433] Porta's reflection had initially stemmed from a discussion on collage poetry, yet its conclusion describes a poetic practice assimilable to that of poetic montage, since in both cases a new syntactical space based on the combination of elements had to be created. Poetry, in fact, had to seek "un *nuovo spazio sintattico*"[434] along with the "integrazione della nuova sintassi con un *sistema di combinatorietà intrusiva*",[435] which could equally be applied to visual and verbal practices.

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[432] Porta, "Poche osservazioni intorno allo spazio della poesia," 82.
[433] Porta, 83, my italics.
[434] Porta, 83, italics of the author.
[435] The section continues as follow: "È chiaro che il nuovo spazio sintattico può essere costruito e contemporaneamente consumato, sia all'interno di una metrica rigorosamente accentuativa, sia allargando la pagina in tutti i modi pensabili. In egual misura la combinatorietà può essere utilizzata sia a livello 'visuale' che all'interno della pagina, sempre integrandosi con una sintassi mobile", Porta, 83, italics of the author.

In *Nel fare poesia,* Porta further confirmed the inner tension between stillness and motion in his poetry by making an intermedial reference to *La passeggera*, a 1963 unfinished film directed by Andrzej Munk and assembled by Witold Lesiewicz after Munk's sudden death in a car accident:

> Nel 1966 vidi un film incompiuto, *La passeggera* e ne rimasi profondamente colpito. Mauthausen tornava di prepotenza nella mia vita. La passeggera ero io. Spinto da questi sentimenti ho scritto *Come se fosse un ritmo* (1966–1967). La struttura di questo poemetto, la sua forma, è la mia stessa ossessione divenuta linguaggio. La ripetitività dei gesti mortali diventò ritmo percussivo, film del ricordo e del futuro, rapida sequenza di immagini dove compaiono, come in *Europa*, delitti pubblici e privati, con una radicalità di scelte prima non raggiunta.[436]

Despite the fact that Porta only saw *La passeggera* in 1966, he linked the film to his own writing, not only to the concurrent *Come se fosse un ritmo* (1966–1967), but also to the previously written *Europa,* pointing out how these two poems shared a similar formal structure. *Come se fosse un ritmo* displays a "rapida sequenza di immagini" through a series of independent clauses arranged around two main stresses (hence the title "As if it were a rhythm"). The segments of similar length are piled in columns, visually recalling the format of a newspaper, and refer to actions performed by a generic and implicit "they":

si servono di uncini	si alzano dalle sedie
chiedono dei fagioli	azzannano i bambini
amano la musica	si tolgono le scarpe
ballano in cerchio	seguono lo spartito
escono dalle finestre	vanno a fare il bagno
aprono la botola	rientrano dalla finestra
cambiano posizione	si chinano sul water
controllano l'orario	escono di chiesa
pieni di medicine	cadono dalle sedie
si appendono al soffitto	cadono dalle sedie
si servono di forbici	colano con lentezza
calcano sul coperchio	li prendono a pedate
(...)[437]	

Yet, throughout the nine sections the narrative is halted and blocked by the lack of connectors, and the actions, rigorously told in the present tense, remain as a repertoire of timeless violence, which occurred in the past, happens in the present, and is bound to be re-enacted in the future. Porta's definition of the poem as a "film del ricordo e del futuro" precisely refers to the inescapable

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[436] Porta, *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985*, 43.
[437] Porta, *Tutte le poesie (1956–1989)*, 173.

reoccurrence of these acts of violence; at the same time, it also implies the intrinsic presence of the montage technique for the construction of the poem.

Porta's reference to *La passeggera* and the fact that he was particularly struck by this film provide new clues to understand how *Europa* and *Come se fosse un ritmo* were conceptually designed. As a matter of fact, *La passeggera* is a film decidedly unusual in its structure: the opening sequence of the movie, in which an ex SS officer in a Nazi concentration camp recognises a former prisoner on the ship she is travelling on, unravels through a number of still images mounted one after the other, similar to a viewing of diapositives on a screen. This technique, which delegates to a series of juxtaposed still frames the recounting of part of the story, is reiterated several times throughout the movie and it differentiates the narrative present – told through still frames – from the time of memory in the concentration camp – told trough video sequences. The overall structure of the film, consequently, alternates photographic sections to cinematographic sequences. While the reason behind this peculiar arrangement is circumstantial – Lesiewicz arranged together the incomplete footage with the production stills available after Munk's sudden death in a car accident – the effect is captivating: on the one hand, by overtly making use of "found materials" left from the filming process, *La passeggera* stages a meta-reflection on its own materiality and structure; on the other hand, through the neat alternation of the production stills and the filmic sequences, it revisits the temporal possibilities of the narrative, suspended, like Porta's poetry, between stillness and motion.

Come se fosse un ritmo similarly offers a meta-reflection on the structure of poetry by continually interrupting the normative flow of language: for Porta, the structure and the form of this poem corresponded to his own "ossessione divenuta linguaggio", in which "[l]a ripetitività dei gesti mortali diventò ritmo percussivo, film del ricordo e del futuro, ripida sequenza di immagini".[438] In the poem, the actions were thus considered as materials from an imaginary archive of violence,

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[438] "La struttura di questo poemetto, la sua forma, è la mia stessa ossessione divenuta linguaggio. La ripetitività dei gesti mortali diventò ritmo percussivo, film del ricordo e del futuro, ripida sequenza di immagini dove compaiono, come in *Europa,* delitti pubblici e privati, con una radicalità di scelte prima non raggiunta", Porta, *Nel fare poesia: 1958–1985*, 43.

mounted together in an overtly visual filmic structure. The profound link between images and language, therefore, was the propeller for the re-imagining of the structures of poetry, not only at the level of syntax, through the technique of poetic montage, but also at that of meter, which Porta arranged around stresses and percussive rhythm. The role of rhythm, and therefore of meter, became complementary to that of syntax: both served to stage the structural modulation of the images that Porta chose to offer to his readers.

Porta's Cinematographic Versification: A Meter for the Eye and for the Ear

In *Poesia e Poetica*, Porta wrote that "la metrica accentuativa" was "soprattutto un metodo di penetrazione"[439] employed to pierce through objects, images, and events and to near truth.[440] The choice of allegedly adopting accentual meter, rather than aligning to the more traditional syllabic verse of Italian poetry, was in line with Porta's project, and that of the Italian neo-avant-garde, to break with the unsatisfying poetic production of the time ("la banalità degli epigoni novecenteschi"[441]), and to generate new forms. Despite Porta's assertion that the metrical system underpinning his poetry was accentual in nature, Jacopo Grosser argued for the impossibility to consider Porta's poetry as accentual.[442] In fact, while syllabic meter relies on syllable count, in accentual forms the consistency of the poetic diction is given by the presence of a regular number of stresses. For Grosser, Porta's poetry lacks such regularity, because the attribution of the actual number

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[439] The passage continues as follow: "Il variare del numero degli accenti è il variare dello spessore e della profondità di lavoro di una trivella, il variare del ritmo è il variare della lunghezza d'onda che si sente idonea. Per questo, dunque, si è scelta la metrica accentuativa. Essa lascia, inoltre, un certo margine di libertà, ormai necessario, e funziona come uno strumento di espressione, mobile e penetrante (...) Dà anche vigore al verso, necessario ad uno strumento di penetrazione, perdutosi con la banalità degli epigoni novecenteschi. Scegliendo per una poesia i tre o i quattro o i cinque, si potranno usare mezzi ritmici diversi, funzionanti a strati diversi". Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 195.

[440] As Porta stated: "Direttamente alla *poetica* degli oggetti si riallaccia il problema del *vero* e della *verità,* in simbiosi con la ricerca delle immagini e il bisogno di penetrazione", Giuliani, 194.

[441] Giuliani, 195.

[442] Grosser, "'Nel fare poesia': varianti e metrica della Palpebra rovesciata."

of stresses in each verse is determined by "esigenze 'd'orecchio' del tutto individuali e instabili",[443]

and therefore largely depends on the arbitrary choices of the reader.

According to Terreni, it is still possible to define Porta's meter as accentual by re-contextualising the role of the stresses within his poetry. Terreni addressed the seeming incongruence between Porta's declaration of poetics and the broader theoretical discourse around the *Novissimi*. Thus, while in the *Novissimi* anthology Porta described his verse as accentual, Giuliani rather spoke of "una ossessiva tessitura *atonale*"[444] for Porta, and of a dynamic, open, and *atonal* verse for the members of the *Novissimi* group:

> [U]n verso "dinamico" o "aperto" dominato dalla spinta semantico-strutturale, non legato né dal numero delle sillabe né dall'isocronismo degli accenti: un verso che possiamo chiamare "atonale", dove, cioè, l'accento è *servo* dei moduli che di volta in volta formiamo con la frase; dove le sillabe "deboli" (o *atone)* non vivono ritmicamente a ricasco delle "forti", giacché le une e le altre non sono che giunture, snodi, maglie del discorso.[445]

For Terreni, Porta's versification perfectly aligns with Giuliani's description, since the distribution of the stresses is dictated by the syntactical and semantic structure of the poem, rather than by a pre-existing and fixed rule. Porta himself suggested that the "percussive rhythm" he employed had to serve the narrative of the poem: "A definire la metrica valgono le ragioni narrative: i tre accenti (che talvolta si riducono a due) scandiscono con incisiva rapidità la cinematica dei fatti", and linked the function of the stresses to the visuality performed by the poem, "quattro accenti che danno stabilità alle immagini".[446] The dense and rapid sequence of images, Porta admitted, percussively shaped the verse, determining a rhythm recalling that of a photographic shutter snapping image after image, especially in poems like *Aprire*.

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[443] Grosser points out that there is a lack of "una qualche forma di regola, di norma identificabile e applicabile allo stesso modo ad altri testi" and agrees with Giovannetti, for whom Porta's accentual meter delineates "una situazione abbastanza incerta, in cui le scelte soggettive del lettore più che dello scrittore incidono in modo decisivo. 'Sentire' quegli accenti non è cosa facile", Giovannetti, *Modi della poesia italiana contemporanea. Forme e tecniche dal 1950 ad oggi*, 121. Quoted in Grosser, "'Nel fare poesia': varianti e metrica della Palpebra rovesciata," 338.

[444] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 30, my italics.

[445] Giuliani, 214–15, italics of the author.

[446] The first comment refers to *Europa*, the second to *La pelliccia del castoro,* for which Porta wrote: "La metrica è leggermenre variata nelle tre parti. Nella 1: tre accenti che strutturano il racconto emblematico scivolando attraverso gli enjambements con effetto ossessivo e penetrante (...) quattro accenti che danno stabilità alle immagini e ampliano le risonanze fantastiche del racconto"; and for *Di fronte alla luna*: "I tre accenti regolano il ritmo epico-narrativo e i rapidi tratti dialogici; le spezzature sono sollecitate dal racconto stesso nei momenti di sospensione", Giuliani, 169, 172,177.

As Terreni argued, the aporia of an accentual versification characterised by the servant role of the stresses and by the absence of accentual isochrony can only be solved "riandando all'*intonazione* dell'enunciato",[447] where for intonation Terreni refers to Voghera's definition,[448] according to which the prosody of the clause depends on the semantic and syntatic intentions of the speaker. As a consequence, the predominant role of the intonation in determining the distribution of the stresses engendered, in Porta's poetry, "una metricità strettamente connessa *all'interpretazione comunicativa* del testo",[449] and therefore implies its performance out loud, and more generally an aural aspect inherent to the versification. The performative dimension of Porta's metrical system becomes more explicit in the second phase of his poetic journey, after the passage from a poetics of the gaze to that of the voice, or in Terreni's words "dall'occhio all'orecchio".[450] Porta's early textuality, instead, is for Terreni visual, and thus stresses the textual visibility of the poem: "una poesia per l'occhio, più che per l'orecchio, nella quale la voce, pur continuamente evocata e presagita, allusa e richiesta, subisce una coercizione testuale che la forza entro complesse geometrie tipografiche".[451] Terreni alludes to poems like *Quadro Sinottico* – where the spacing reconfigures the spatial organisation of the text –, or collections that are decidedly organised around a typographic and visual rule, such as the *Zero* poems in their rectangular format, and *Come se fosse un ritmo* – where the verses are similar in length and piled in columns.

While Terreni separates the two phases in a progression that moves from a meter for the eye, to one for the ear, it is perhaps more accurate to recognise Porta's peculiar versification as one in which both strategies co-exist. As a matter of fact, the very notion of an accentual meter based on intonation would not hold without the virtual presence of the voice in Porta's first and more visual versification. Giovannetti and Lavezzi, who commented on the metrical transformations that were

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[447] Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 156.
[448] For Voghera, intonation is "l'insieme delle caratteristiche prosodiche che svolgono un ruolo funzionale all'interno del sistema linguistico a livello di enunciato", Voghera, *Sintassi e intonazione nell'italiano parlato*, 87. Quoted in Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 156.
[449] Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 158, italics of the author.
[450] Terreni, 191.
[451] Terreni, 221.

taking place between the 1950s and the 1960s in Italy, identified in the compresence of a "metrica per l'occhio" and a "metrica per l'orecchio" an interesting trait of the experimental research of the time: "proprio alle soglie del secondo Novecento, lo scontro epocale dei due opposti sembra per un attimo dar luogo a una loro magica *fusione,* se non a un vero e proprio superamento".[452] As example of this 'fusion', Giovannetti and Lavezzi brought the case of Amelia Rosselli since her versification, partly inspired by Charles Olson's essay (*Projective Verse*, 1950), precisely relied on both visual and aural aspects of language. Like Rosselli would do in her *Spazi Metrici*, Olson, in his manifesto, advocated for a verse that gave voice to the rhythm of the breath, and that found its poetic and visual space through the typographical order imposed by the typewriter.

The resonance of Olson's essay was particularly discernible within the Italian experimental poetry scene. Giuliani, in fact, quoted Olson in the *Novissimi* anthology to account for the versification of the whole group, including Porta's meter:

> *Cosí* non abbiamo alcuna difficoltà a comprendere, *in questo momento,* e inserire tra i nostri arnesi anche il tipo americano (di cui ci parla Charles Olson) di quel verso 'dinamico' o 'aperto' o 'atonale' che abbiamo già sperimentato negli ultimi anni (...) È importante, più che non sembri, l'osservazione semplificatrice di Olson che il verso nuovo va scritto nella misura del respiro, e non per l'occhio ma secondo l'orecchio. Nonostante tutto noi rischiamo ancora di scrivere per l'occhio.[453]

Inspired by Olson's manifesto, the atonal verse of the *Novissimi* aimed to acquire a predominant aural quality, yet – despite Giuliani's wish to abandon a meter for the eye – it was at that time most clearly exploring the textual visibility of poetic language. Terreni, for instance, spoke of a "metrica tipografica"[454] for Porta, and Sanguineti equally structured his poems responding to a visual arrangement of the poetic text, as the chapter dedicated to him will further illustrate. Like for Rosselli's, it was a type of metrical research that simultaneously addressed the visuality and aurality of poetic language and that, for Giovannetti and Lavezzi, could be overall defined as cinematographic: "Essa deve appunto molto alle intuizioni di Olson; vi agisce infatti la tensione

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[452] Giovannetti, *Modi della poesia italiana contemporanea. Forme e tecniche dal 1950 ad oggi*, 30, italics of the author.

[453] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 221, italics of the author.

[454] Terreni uses this definition in discussing the *Zero* poems: Terreni, *La scelta della voce*, 87.

frammentante e visualizzante che (...) è di origine cinematografica ed era stata illustrata negli anni cinquanta da Gillo Dorfles con l'ausilio della nozione di *asintattismo* (cinematograficamente, *asincronismo*)".[455] Porta's meter can be fittingly assimilated within this cinematographic quality: the insistent reoccurrence of the stresses, along with the nervous and spasmodic use of punctuation, pin down and separate one image from the next, and in turn create a cinematic sequence – "le virgole e gli *ictus* si dispongono al servizio di una sequenza visuale",[456] as Colangelo would pose it. The syntactical and metrical structures of the poem are therefore profoundly interdependent; both, furthermore, concur to create poems that, like in Munk's *La passeggera*, unravel through the montage of photographic and cinematographic poetic sequences.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, Porta's gaze, driven by an epistemological and Oedipian quest for truth, dialectically conversed with the photographic and cinematographic culture of his time. It did so by ekphrastically referring to the images of the crime news and mass communication on the one hand, and on the other by integrating techniques derived from photography and cinema in his writing. The technique of poetic montage, partly derived by Porta's collagist experiments in concrete and visual poetry, proved particularly central to his poetry. Porta's interest in the relationship between the images of the world and poetic writing, pushed him to innovate language at the level of both syntax and meter: the alternation of photographic and cinematographic sequences expressed verbally, determined the rearrangement of the syntactical organisation of the text, and called for a cinematographic meter, based on percussive rhythm and designed to simultaneously address the eye and the ear of the reader.

As Giovannetti and Lavezzi suggested, furthermore, Porta's cinematographic meter can be placed within a much broader trend in twentieth-century poetry that places metrical research side by

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[455] Giovannetti and Lavezzi, *La metrica italiana contemporanea*, 263, italics of the author.
[456] Colangelo, "'Usus Videndi': commento ad Antonio Porta," 64.

side with the technological advancements of cinema. Giovannetti and Lavezzi hypothesise an interconnection between the development of free verse, in particular, and the diffusion of cinema, thus implying a profound – and to this day unexplored – relationship between the developments of Italian meter and cine-photographic media: "La tentazione – ma è un'ipotesi di lavoro che abbisognerebbe di studi attualmente inesistenti – è quella di cogliere la notevole *omologia* che in qualche modo esiste tra il verso libero e la nascente *cinematografia*".[457] In such view, meter and syntax would be concomitantly innovated to reproduce forms of visuality and orality in dialogue with photography and cinema. For these scholars, in fact, "la nuova metrica" inaugurated by the historical avant-gardes, including futurism, would be able to "fotografare una realtà psichica in movimento" and "filmare, utilizzando i versi come il cinema fa con i fotogrammi".[458] These definitions are particularly fitting for Rosselli, who precisely attempts to photograph and record a 'psychic reality' in her poetry, as well as for Porta and Sanguineti, who largely use poetic montage to construct their writing. Once again, the compresence of references to photography and cinema holds the artistic research of these diverse poets together, signalling that the discourse around visuality, and around photographic and cinematographic culture, was particularly crucial for the poetry of the 1950s and 1960s. Following this claim, in the next chapter I shall further explore how photography and cinematography also play an important role in the work of Amelia Rosselli, including in the conception of her metrical system, *Spazi metrici*.

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[457] Giovannetti and Lavezzi, *La metrica italiana contemporanea*, 30.

[458] Giovannetti and Lavezzi, 29–30. Giovannetti and Lavezzi in these pages sketch the link between futurist, as well as neo-avant-garde, meter and cine-photographic media, posing that precisely in the "esistenza eminentemente grafica" and in the "frequente mescolanza di visione e sonorizzazione" lies the possible interconnectedness between free verse and the technology of the cinematographer. While these scholars broadly ascribe the neo-avant-garde meter to the 'verso libero', this is a debated question which, as we have seen, becomes rather complex in the case of Porta. Giovannetti and Lavezzi present the debate as follows: "Sul verso in senso stretto neoavanguardistico, quello insomma che viene reso noto soprattutto a partire dall'antologia *I Novissimi* del 1961, sono possibili almeno due interpretazioni metriche, nettamente contrapposte. La prima, (...) esalta di questo verso la sostanziale *atonalità* e *informalità,* che sarebbe interna a una tradizione in ultima analisi "novecentesca", e cioè versoliberista. La seconda, implicita in uno scritto di Antonio Porta (...) lungi dall'essere davvero informale, il metro dei *Novissimi* mirerebbe a costituire una *nuova forma di metricità,* in polemica di fatto con la tradizione del verso libero", Giovannetti and Lavezzi, 262. It is worth noting that, in any case, the apparent relationship of the neo-avant-garde meter with cinema and photography generated within a profound innovation of forms, and thus remains valid beyond the debate on the 'verso libero'.

Chapter Four

Amelia Rosselli's Photographic Writing

> Mi tenevo questi quadernetti a quadretti in uno scaffale per la classificazione comprato a Trastevere per duemila lire. Avevo tutte le date di questo vagare nello spazio e nel tempo.[459]

Writing across three different languages, Amelia Rosselli (1930–1996) occupied a liminal space within the neo-avant-garde movement, yet her poetry soon acquired centre stage in the broader experimental writing scene.[460] An analysis of Rosselli's work allows the investigation of the exchanges between poetry and photography beyond the experience of the Italian neo-avant-garde, thus offering another perspective on the way photographic culture interacted with the literary research of the 1950s and 1960s. Educated as a musician, Rosselli infused her poetic research with references not only to music theory, but also to mathematics.[461] She also nurtured a heightened interest in visuality: in fact, before choosing poetry as her main means of artistic expression, her connection to the Roman artistic scene led her to experiment with the visual arts, and in the 1950s she made a series of drawings and watercolours.[462] Rosselli thus followed the same inclination towards disciplinary border crossing that characterised the Italian and international artistic scene of the 1950s and 1960s. In the early years of her literary research, she also directly engaged with photography, yet very little has been said on how her fascination with technologies of vision, and with the camera and film camera specifically, deeply interacted with her early writing practice.

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[459] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 236.

[460] For a view on Rosselli's relationship with the Gruppo 63 see Annovi, "Un'avanguardia eccentrica."

[461] Two scholars who addressed Rosselli's references to music theory are: Cairoli, "Spazio metrico e serialismo musicale. L'azione dell'avanguardia postweberniana sulle concezioni poetiche di Amelia Rosselli"; Re, "Amelia Rosselli and the Esthetics of Experimental Music."

[462] The drawings and watercolours with a note by Stefano Giovannuzzi can now be found in Giovannuzzi, "15 disegni e acquerelli di Amelia Rosselli."

The poetry of Rosselli has been vastly explored through linguistic, historical, psychoanalytical, and gender approaches.[463] However, its interaction with visual and photographic culture has been rarely considered. Building on literary visuality studies, for which visuality[464] forms integral part of literary writing,[465] this chapter aims to uncover Rosselli's relationship with visuality, and with photographic media in particular. Although scholars such as Francesco Carbognin and Antonio Loreto have mentioned photography in relation to Rosselli's work, a detailed discussion of the interaction between photography and writing in her oeuvre is still missing.[466] This topic has called for additional attention following the publication, in 2012, of four photographs taken by Rosselli during the 1950s and 1960s.[467] In her interviews, Rosselli also mentioned the use of a film camera in the same years, however no footage is known to have survived to this day. Building on these premises, in this chapter I intend to explore the intermedial exchanges occurring between Rosselli's visual and writing practice and argue that she adopted the still camera and film camera as conceptual and phenomenological models to frame the time and space of specific personal experiences. Following Giovannetti and Lavezzi's intuition that poetry can function as a tool to "fotografare una realtà psichica in movimento" and "filmare, utilizzando i versi come il cinema fa con i fotogrammi",[468] I will try to map out the ways in which Rosselli's photographic model shaped her poetry at the level of content, language, and meter. I will do so through textual analysis of Rosselli's early work (1952–

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[463] See for example, just to name a few, Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, on language. T. Peterson, "Il manierismo e l'estetica dell'irregolare nella poesia di Amelia Rosselli", on Rosselli's poetic style. De March, *Amelia Rosselli tra poesia e storia*, for a historical approach. Chiara Carpita, "Amelia Rosselli e il processo di individuazione: alcuni inediti", for psychoanalysis. Annovi, *Altri corpi*, for gender and psychoanalysis. Other useful perspsectives on gender in *La libellula* can be found in Cortellessa, *La furia dei venti contrari*.

[464] The definition of visuality is provided as: "the dynamic, contextualizing interplay of discourses, practices, and artefacts connected to vision, sight and seeing," Tripp, *Mirroring the Lamp: Literary Visuality, Strategies of Visualization, and Scenes of Observation in Interwar Narrative*, 29. Cited in Bodola and Isekenmeier, *Literary Visualities: Visual Descriptions, Readerly Visualisations, Textual Visibilities*, 10.

[465] For Bodola and Isekenmeier, "literary visuality is the active participation of literature in visual culture, for literature is involved in the production of discourses as well as practices and artefacts that negotiate and (pre-)configure visualities," Bodola and Isekenmeier, *Literary Visualities: Visual Descriptions, Readerly Visualisations, Textual Visibilities*, 11.

[466] I will discuss Carbognin and Loreto's views in more detail later. For their mention of photography in Rosselli's work, see Carbognin, *Le armoniose dissonanze*; Loreto, *I santi padri di Amelia Rosselli: "Variazioni belliche" e l'avanguardia*.

[467] Rosselli, *Locomotrix*.

[468] Giovannetti and Lavezzi, *La metrica italiana contemporanea*, 29–30.

1964), focusing particularly on her metrical manifesto *Spazi metrici* (1964) and on the poetic prose *A Birth* (1962), while also making reference to other relevant poems.[469] At the same time, I will retrace her relationship with photography and filming through her interviews and declarations of poetics; in this sense, a particular valuable resource has been the volume edited by Monica Venturini and Silvia De March *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, which collects Rosselli's interviews.[470]

As this chapter will discuss in detail, the photographic conceptual model taken up by Rosselli is at play in different stages of her writing process and rests on the assumption that photographing and filming, through the sense of sight, can grant us an encounter with the outer world and a subsequent appropriation of it. Rosselli's understanding of technologies of vision is thus in line with that offered by Emilio Servadio, according to whom the camera can be considered as a prothesis, and an extension of the very psychic apparatus of the photographer, "in quanto serve – *specialmente attraverso l'organo della vista* – ad effettuare un collegamento col mondo esterno, a *fissare* un oggetto o un rapporto con l'oggetto, e a trattenerlo mediante un meccanismo d'introiezione, o incorporazione".[471] Like Porta, Rosselli phenomenologically considered the sense of sight as a cognitive and epistemological tool, and thus as the channel through which it was possible to understand and process the outer world. However, while Porta was mostly driven by a denunciatory urge and directed his gaze to coldly scrutinise society, Rosselli utilised her gaze to assess and record a perceptual and rather subjective reality that she could sense and perceive either in the present or in the past through the aid of memory. Photographic technologies of vision allowed Rosselli to record and pin down a lived experience as it was unravelling in the present. At the same time, they prompted a desire of travelling back in time to re-enact, and thus see and experience again, past events. For Rosselli, both writing and photography were media that used spatial and temporal coordinates to first gain knowledge of reality, and to then "appropriate" it. Like a photographer writing with light, she

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[469] Rosselli's poems are either quoted from Rosselli, *Le poesie* or from; Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*. Rosselli's work has been translated in a few volumes, including: Rosselli, Vangelisti, and Re, *Amelia Rosselli. War Variations*; Rosselli, *Locomotrix*.

[470] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*.

[471] Servadio, "Psicologia e psicopatologia del fotografare," 52; italics of the author.

captured, recorded, and re-lived past memories to overcome personal trauma – especially the murder of her father – and to assert her own identity, both as a woman and as a writer.

This chapter moves from the claim that Rosselli used the camera as a conceptual model to record her lived experiences and life story in her poetry; the first section will thus sketch her biography as a necessary backdrop to further visual analyses. Subsequently, in order to better understand Rosselli's conception of visuality, I will introduce her photographic practice. Through a visual analysis of her four photographs, I will suggest how her use of photography aimed to pin down a phenomenological and subjective lived experience of the outer world. I will then link her photographic practice to her poetry to argue that Rosselli's metrical system, presented in her poetic manifesto *Spazi metrici* (1964), drew inspiration from the functioning of a photographic camera, and a film camera. As such, the structure of the poem attempted to record and expose a lived experience by framing it within a system that measured both time and space. I argue that Rosselli pursued this appropriation and exposure of reality, common to both photographic media and writing, with the intention to assert her own identity as a woman and as a writer, emancipating herself at once from her biographical traumatic past and from the legacy of a patriarchal canon. Building on Rosselli's scholarship, this chapter will further show how in her long poem *La libellula* (1952) Rosselli deformed the language of her "literary fathers", such as Dante, Rimbaud, Campana, Scipione, and Montale, to create a new poetic language tailored around the figure of the woman writer.[472] A similar quest for emancipation also underpinned her poetic prose *A Birth* (1962). Using Freud's concepts of "latent memories" and of the mind as a photographic apparatus, I shall show how writing is in this poetic prose transformed into a tool to "develop" Rosselli's memories from a traumatic childhood. The development of forgotten memories allowed Rosselli to reappropriate her past, overcome trauma, and reach new maturity in writing. Overall, this chapter aims to contribute to canonical criticism on

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[472] See the section of this thesis titled *"Il Chiarore che Deforma". Deforming Language and Experience.*

Rosselli with new and original insights on her poetic work by adopting an intermedial approach to understand her writing.

Layers of Time and List of Places

> if I lay back layers of time I might be ready to open the list of places, addresses of all our lives![473]

As I briefly mentioned, Rosselli's distressing personal life cannot be disentangled from her poetic production: her childhood and adolescence prove indeed poignant for the definition of her poetic identity. Rosselli's biography has been the object of several and often conflicting studies, including Silvia De March's *Amelia Rosselli tra poesia e storia* and Stefano Giovannuzzi's *Amelia Rosselli, biografia e poesia*.[474] While some critics warn of the risk of falling into a confessional reading in discussing Rosselli's biography – La Penna, for instance, cautions against "[t]he danger of identifying Rosselli's poems with a confessional expressivity"[475] – others recognise the major role that crucial life events had in Rosselli's poetry writing. I align with these latter scholars, and furthermore recognise that Rosselli's references to biographical experiences in her writing do not necessarily entail a reading of her poetry as confessional. As I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, Rosselli's lived experiences provided the source material for her poetry, yet in entering the space of poetry, they were systematically deformed in the attempt to transform them from a personal experience to one that could be considered universal. Furthermore, Rosselli's biographical references also played a crucial role in the process of emancipation from the symbolic order of the fathers, and therefore were essential to assert her gendered poetic voice.

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[473] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 125.
[474] See also Giovannuzzi, "Cronologia"; Tandello, "La poesia e la purezza: Amelia Rosselli."
[475] La Penna, "'Cercatemi e fuoriuscite,'" 282.

Born in Paris in 1930, Rosselli was from an early age called to confront the burden of history. The daughter of Carlo Rosselli and Marion Cave, Amelia was still in Paris, and only seven years old, when she learned about the gruesome assassination of her father Carlo and her uncle Nello by the Fascists in 1937.[476] Their murder will be a constant theme in Rosselli's poetry and a source of unappeasable mourning and psychological unrest throughout her life. Due to the sudden loss of Carlo and Nello, and in view of the upcoming world war, the remaining members of the Rosselli family spent the following decade peregrinating from one country to another, moving from France and Great Britain (1937–1940) to the United States (1940–1946, to Larchmont, a suburb of New York), and eventually returning to Europe in 1946. Rosselli permanently settled in Italy at the age of eighteen (in 1948), one year before her mother's death. A few years later, in 1954, she was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and since then was often admitted to private and public mental institutions both in Italy and abroad.[477] Despite her frequent hospitalisations, she would spend most of her life in Rome until the day she committed suicide, on the 11th of February 1996.

Death, both as an unalterable fact and as a looming threat, was a constant companion to Rosselli's life, and thus to her poetry. Not only did Rosselli lose her father and mother before she was twenty, her *Cantilena (poesie per Rocco Scotellaro)* (1953) expressed her mourning for the premature death of Scotellaro – an Italian poet and politician – whom Rosselli had considered as an older brother. In a poem from *Cantilena* she denounced: "Mondo pollame divenuto malaticcio / duna di morti",[478]

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[476] De March and Giovannuzzi offer a reconstruction of the murder as follows: "Dal 27 maggio [Carlo] si trova in convalescenza a Bagnoles de l'Orne, in Normandia, dove lo raggiungono Marion e poi Nello, che risiede in Inghilterra con la propria famiglia. Il 9 giugno Marion rientra a Parigi in treno per festeggiare il compleanno di John. Poche ore dopo la sua partenza, mentre tornano in albergo, Carlo e Nello cadono vittime di un'imboscata e vengono trucidati dai sicari della Cagoule – un'organizzazione sovversiva parafascista francese finanziata anche dal governo italiano – con la complicità del Servizio di Informazioni Militari italiano, di cui è responsabile il generale Roatta. È un assassinio di regime, come il delitto Matteotti. Anche se il mandate del duplice omicidio non è stato mai individuato con certezza, tutta l'operazione è seguita da Filippo Anfuso, capo di gabinetto di Galeazzo Ciano, il potente ministro degli Esteri fascista", Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, L.

[477] In 1954, Rosselli spent more than a year in a private institution in Swizerland. This would be the first of numerous similar episodes throughout her life. De March retraced the events as follows: "Dall'estate del 1954 al novembre 1955, Melina è ricoverata presso il Sanatorium Bellevue di Kreuzlingen, affacciato sul lago di Costanza e diretto dall'illustre dottor Binswanger. La diagnosi: schizofrenia paranoide. Prima di allora, un 'esaurimento nervoso', 'Sbalzi d'umore repentini', 'Scenate'", De March, *Amelia Rosselli tra poesia e storia*, 62.

[478] Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 518.

and thus expressed her perception of the world as one largely populated by death. The following year,

in 1954, Rosselli's closest family member in Italy, her grandmother Amelia Pincherle, also died,

leaving a 24-year-old Amelia to provide for herself. In a widely-quoted poem from *Variazioni*

belliche (1960–1961), Rosselli abruptly opens the first line with a strong remark – "Contiamo infiniti

morti!" – and proceeds to epigrammatically sketch her youth, marked by recurrent loss and trauma:

> Contiamo infiniti morti! la danza è quasi finita! la morte
> lo scoppio, la rondinella[479] che giace ferita al suolo, la malattia
> e il disagio, la povertà e il demonio sono le mie cassette
> dinamitarde.
> (…)
> Nata a Parigi travagliata nell'epopea della nostra generazione
> fallace. Giaciuta in America fra i ricchi campi dei possidenti
> e dello Stato statale. Vissuta in Italia, paese barbaro.
> Scappata dall'Inghilterra paese di sofisticati. Speranzosa
> nell'Ovest ove niente per ora cresce.
> (…)[480]

As the very title of *Variazioni belliche* implies,[481] war and conflict influenced Rosselli's life

from a very young age and were meticulously transposed in her poetry. The recurring references to

the jargon of warfare[482] throughout the collection served to connotate a subject cast across countries

and languages, and thus continually undergoing the stigma of mourning, shock, and displacement.

The clear correlation between the shredded nature of Rosselli's early poetic language and her

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[479] The swallow, another alter ego for the poet, symbolises migration, and in Christian symbology it also stands for the Incarnation of Christ: "In the Renaissance the swallow was a symbol of the Incarnation of Christ. For this reason, it appears in scenes of the Annunciation and of the Nativity, nestling under the eaves or in the holes in the wall. It was thought that the swallow hibernated in the mud during the winter, and its advent in the spring was looked upon as a rebirth from the death-like state of winter. For this reason it also became a symbol of resurrection", Ferguson and Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art*, 25–26. Furthermore, the swallow can be read as a reference to Pascoli's poem *San Lorenzo*, where it stands for a father murdered.

[480] The poem is taken from the subsection *Variazioni (1960–1961)*, and reads as follow: Contiamo infiniti morti! la danza è quasi finita! la morte / lo scoppio, la rondinella che giace ferita al suolo, la malattia / e il disagio, la povertà e il demonio sono le mie cassette / dinamitarde. Tarda arrivavo alla pietà – tarda giacevo fra / dei conti in tasca disturbati dalla pace che non si offriva. / Vicino alla morte il suolo rendeva ai collezionisti il prezzo / della gloria. Tardi giaceva al suolo che rendeva il suo sangue / imbevuto di lacrime la pace. Cristo seduto al suolo su delle / gambe inclinate giaceva anche nel sangue quando Maria lo / travagliò. // Nata a Parigi travagliata nell'epopea della nostra generazione / fallace. Giaciuta in America fra i ricchi campi dei possidenti / e dello Stato statale. Vissuta in Italia, paese barbaro. / Scappata dall'Inghilterra paese di sofisticati. Speranzosa / nell'Ovest ove niente per ora cresce. // Il caffè-bambù era la notte. // La congenitale tendenza al bene si risvegliava", Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 202.

[481] A title that, in Scappettone's words, "bespeaks the ruthless fusion of beauty, music, and corporeality with war", Rosselli, *Locomotrix*, 8.

[482] From the previous poem, for instance: "Contiamo infiniti morti! (…) la morte / lo scoppio, (…) giace ferita al suolo (…) le mie cassette / dinamitarde. (…) [la] pace che non si offriva. / Vicino alla morte (…) il suo sangue", Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 202.

biography has been aptly noted by Francesco Carbognin, who in analysing a fragment from *Diario in tre lingue* recognised how the dismemberment of language, visually performed on the page, evoked the dismemberment of her uncle's assassinated body. To account for Rosselli's linguistic mirroring of a traumatic biographical fact, Carbognin spoke of an overlaying of the "metalinguistico e dell'autobiografico-traumatico": [483]

> exceptionel
> sensationel (...)
> sationel
> rationel
> sens st sa son Zio Nello (petite notion autobiografique nécessaire
> auto-bi-proport
>
> sionel
> Zio Nel
> -zijons-y
> haché (accentué) (fourché) (tronché
> tronqué
> tranche
> (...) [484]

The word "sensationel" is in this extract progressively transformed into a reference to Rosselli's uncle's assassination – "sens st sa son Zio Nello (petite notion autobiografique nécessaire". The sense of dissociation Rosselli experienced in her life thus engendered a similar condition in language. As a matter of fact, the indomitable plurilinguism (French, Italian, and English) that traverses Rosselli's early writing precisely reflects this rupture and transfers the prevailing sense of trauma, and corporeal fragmentation, to language itself: Rosselli's words are deformed, wounded, chopped, or morphologically dismembered, often forced to shift from one language to the other.

The constant shifting through languages in *Diario in tre lingue* – literally "Diary in three languages" – epitomised what Rosselli defined in the first poem of *Variazioni belliche* "un babelare commosso". [485] The portmanteau obtained by fusing "Babele" (Babel) and "belare" (bleating) pointed towards the painful burden of not being able to inhabit, or even fluently speak, any language.

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[483] Carbognin, *Le armoniose dissonanze*, 79–80.
[484] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 86.
[485] Rosselli, 163.

Rosselli's search for a mother language aimed to compensate her private diaspora, and thus her deprivation of a motherland. In fact, Rosselli spoke of herself and her family as "refugees": "La definizione di cosmopolita risale a un saggio di Pasolini (…) ma io lo rifiuto per noi quest'appellativo: siamo figli della Seconda Guerra mondiale. Cosmopolita è chi sceglie di esserlo. Noi non eravamo dei cosmopoliti; eravamo dei rifugiati".[486] Even after overcoming plurilinguism and using predominantly the Italian language for her poetic practice, trauma remained profoundly embedded in her verse. As a matter of fact, despite her choice, Italian could never achieve the status of native tongue. As Emmanuela Tandello pointed out, Rosselli's frequent migrations at an early age were the very reason for her lack of an incontrovertible native language: for Tandello, Rosselli felt "straniera in qualunque lingua" and consequently no aspect of her poetry would exhibit "la disappartenenza quanto il suo linguaggio, descritto come deviante e percorso da interferenze multilingui".[487]

Language thus maintained its inherent trauma, as Rosselli claimed in a poem from *Serie ospedaliera*: "Morta ingaggio il traumatologico verso".[488] The word "traumatologico" – yet another portmanteau[489] – points to the intimate union of "trauma" and *logos*, thus signalling their manifest and unending coexistence within Rosselli's poetry. In an interview with Cetti Addamo, Rosselli herself claimed the interconnectedness of her biography – the death of her father and the migratory journeys – with the language used for her poetic writing:

> [I]n verità tra la mia biografia e la mia poesia ci sono strettissimi rapporti anche se ciascuna di esse obbedisce a leggi proprie. Certo è che la morte di mio padre (e il modo in cui avvenne) e tutte le conseguenti migrazioni cui sono stata costretta hanno prodotto una sorta di dissociazione linguistica ed una condizione di permanente inconsistenza. La lingua riflette tale condizione.[490]

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[486] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 117.

[487] The extract is taken from Tandello's preface to Rosselli's *Meridiano*: Tandello, "La poesia e la purezza: Amelia Rosselli," XIX. In her book *Amelia Rosselli tra poesia e storia*, De March includes a testimony by Rosselli's cousin, Silvia, supporting the idea that Rosselli did not have a predominant or native language: "Ricordo che Melina [Amelia Rosselli] ha sempre avuto difficoltà con le lingue, con gli accenti e così via. Si può dire che in qualche modo non ha mai avuto una lingua madre", De March, *Amelia Rosselli tra poesia e storia*, 23.

[488] Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 254. On Rosselli, language, and trauma, also see Aiello, "Postscript."

[489] On the use of portmenteau in Rosselli's writing see Tandello, "Alle fonti del lapsus: pun, portmanteau, wordscape. Appunti sull'inglese letterario di Amelia Rosselli."

[490] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*.

This "condizione di permanente inconsistenza", reflected through linguistic dissociation, encapsulates Rosselli's displacement and incessant mourning, while at the same time providing the primary force informing the poet's early literary practice, at least from the 1950s to the 1960s.

The fact that Rosselli eventually chose Italy as her adoptive country and Italian as her poetic language – that is to say the country and the language of her father – was not an arbitrary choice.[491] It rather aligned with her will to reassemble the pieces of her scattered selves and to reunite, in the territory of the word, the broken link between father and daughter, man and woman, past and present. Rosselli patently voiced this need in one of her English poems from the early plurilingual phase:

> O were I one in Three! Just like the Holy Ghost,
> the Father and the Son, I'd reunite my scattered souls
> and string them in from all the seas abroad;
> no longer climb upon perdition's mast
> and wave a banner crying God, at last![492]

The figure of Christ – the Son in this poem – was chosen as a poetic alter ego to indicate Rosselli's filial link to an unattainable father: her wish to be "one in Three" thus clearly expressed her desire to be reunited with her father, or at any rate to overcome the sense of inner disassociation that his death engendered. As I have discussed elsewhere, the archetype of Christ, for Jung, also represents the androgynous unity of genders and therefore offers another symbol for wholesomeness and reunification.[493] The spectral presence of the figure of the father, the perception of being a woman in a world vastly controlled by men, along with the seemingly irreconcilable list of places of her life stringed "from all the seas abroad", thus functioned as the underlying driving forces for Rosselli's poetic writing.

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[491] De March disputably contests this claim and argues that such choice was not consciously taken but rather occasioned by circumstance. Even though there is an undeniable experiential component that brought Rosselli to live in Italy, it is also true that the paternal and patriarchal connotations linked to the choice of using Italian for her writing cannot be overlooked. De March in any case wrote: "Sulla base dei dati inediti emersi dall'epistolario, vorremmo qui demistificare alcuni giudizi espressi sull'italianità di Amelia, seppur corroborati dalle sue medesime affermazioni. Generalmente si scorge un legame indiscusso tra la scelta dell'Italia come patria e dell'italiano come lingua d'espressione da una parte e la figura paterna dall'altra. In realtà, la 'scelta' non fu mai tale". For a more detailed discussion see De March, *Amelia Rosselli tra poesia e storia*, 50.

[492] Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 571.

[493] Carletti, "Il chiarore che deforma. Processi deformanti nella poetica di Amelia Rosselli," 16–17. For an interesting discussion of androgyny in Rosselli's poetics, see Annovi, *Altri corpi*.

Officially started in 1963 on the pages of *Il Menabò*,[494] Rosselli's career as a poet in Italy unravelled as a journey to define her identity in a largely patriarchal society. As I will discuss in more detail later in the chapter, the figure of her biological father was prismatically multiplied in the fathers of the literary tradition. Rosselli, therefore, had to emancipate herself from the overbearing influence of patriarchy both as a woman and as a woman poet. Her first concern, as it follows, was to establish an authentic relationship – one that was "gendered" and unmediated by patriarchal literary language – with the world. Photography was one of the tools to establish such a relationship.

Framing Perception. Four Photographs by Amelia Rosselli

Rosselli's first attempts at reconstructing her fragmented identity took place in Rome. As a matter of fact, photography played a crucial role in Rosselli's quest – in an extract from an interview collected in *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, Rosselli recounted that throughout the 1950s and 1960s she would spend days walking around the Roman neighbourhood of Trastevere taking photos and filming what she saw around her.[495] Subsequently, she would compare her embodied experience of the surrounding landscape with what she recorded on camera, as well as with her writing:

> Cercavo di capire fino a che punto i miei occhi restituivano se non un'immagine fotografica, una sintesi di quello che vedevo e che capivo della realtà semiconscia; poi, fotografando, comparavo. Prendevo appunti camminando per Trastevere con quadernetti che poi trascrivevo su carta. Così ho scritto *Primi scritti* e *Diario in tre lingue*. Di notte, di giorno, camminando, stando ferma, proprio per osservare questo mutamento della mia osservazione e dell'incontro delle cose con me o delle persone o degli spazi e del movimento e del tempo.[496]

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[494] In 1963, Rosselli published twenty-four poems on *Il Menabò*, followed by a famous commentary by Pier Paolo Pasolini: Rosselli, "Ventiquattro poesie"; Pasolini, "Notizia su Amelia Rosselli." The twenty-four poems would form part of Rosselli's first book, *Variazioni belliche*, published the following year, Rosselli, *Variazioni belliche*.

[495] The reference to Rosselli's use of a film camera is made explicit in another passage from the interviews and will be quoted later in the chapter.

[496] The extended paragraph quotes: "Cercavo di capire fino a che punto i miei occhi restituivano se non un'immagine fotografica, una sintesi di quello che vedevo e che capivo della realtà semiconscia; poi, fotografando, comparavo. Prendevo appunti camminando per Trastevere con quadernetti che poi trascrivevo su carta. Così ho scritto Primi scritti e Diario in tre lingue. Di notte, di giorno, camminando, stando ferma, proprio per osservare questo mutamento della mia osservazione e dell'incontro delle cose con me o delle persone o degli spazi e del movimento e del tempo. Poi riportavo su macchina da scrivere perché la carta a quadretti può dare risultati come la macchina da scrivere. Potevo trasporre gli spazi che io alla svelta dovevo un pochino carpire dallo spazio circostante. Era negli anni Cinquanta. Ero a Trastevere dai miei ventiquattro ai miei quarant'anni. Mi tenevo questi quadernetti a quadretti in uno scaffale per la

Her visual and writing promenades, which provided the material for her early writings, were carried out with the aim of observing the encounter "delle cose con me o delle persone o degli spazi e del movimento e del tempo".[497] Julia Straub has elaborated on the interconnectedness of literary and photographic practices and claimed that "photography set the bar for literature in an all-encompassing sense". Shortly after, quoting Jennifer Green-Lewis, she added that "'[t]he camera was a shaping force, and its images served as a site of contest regarding the nature of the real'".[498] Rosselli's interactions with photography clearly enacted this "site of contest"; at the very beginning of her writing journey, writing and photography were thus bound together in the quest to phenomenologically explore the divide between the objective world and the world perceived.

While no visual footage from the Trastevere years has ever been retrieved, in 2012, Jennifer Scappettone published – in the anthology *Locomotrix: Selected Poetry and Prose of Amelia Rosselli* – four photographs taken by Rosselli between 1962 and 1965.[499] Scappettone did not provide any commentary around these images; nonetheless, they are, up to this day, the only photographs shot by Rosselli made available to the public, and they thus offer an inestimably precious glimpse into Rosselli's otherwise undocumented way of looking. Rosselli's photographs retain a spectral quality. As viewers, in other words, we are presented with what Barthes defined as the "spectrum" of photography, "the person or thing photographed (…) the target, the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any *eidolon* emitted by the object".[500] What we witness in these photographs is the clash between what "has been" in the past – the *noeme* of photography[501] – and what returns and "is"

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classificazione comprato a Trastevere per duemila lire. Avevo tutte le date di questo vagare nello spazio e nel tempo. A un certo punto, mi sono trovata a darmi della matta io stessa. 'Io sto perdendo tempo', pensavo, e ho preso tutto e buttato via lasciando otto quadernetti, riportandoli con molta precisione a macchina e venne fuori Diario in Tre Lingue e Primi Scritti che pubblicò Guanda nell'80". Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 236.

[497] Rosselli, 236.

[498] (Green-Lewis 2008, 33). Julia Straub, "Nineteenth-Century Literature and Photography," in *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature–Image–Sound–Music* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 232.

[499] Rosselli, *Locomotrix*.

[500] For Barthes, the photographer is the "Operator", whereas the viewer of the photograph is the "Spectator" words, whereas the thing or person photographed is the "Spectrum". Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 9.

[501] The term is thus explained: "in photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past (…) The name of Photography's *noeme* will therefore be: 'That-has-been'". *Camera Lucida*, in Barthes, 76–77.

presently re-enacted in front of the viewer's eye, embodying a "return of the dead".[502] Rosselli's photographs stand as a present record of "that which has been" in her past experience: their very subject matter is Rosselli's gaze onto the world. The ensuing visual analysis of Rosselli's photograph is informed by her declaration, which stated her intention to phenomenologically observe reality, and specifically the encounter of her subjectivity with objects, space, time, and movement, through the lens of a camera.[503] It will thus provide a point of entry to discuss Rosselli's relationship with photography, and with visuality more broadly.

Rosselli's four black and white photographs represent sections of a landscape. On the backside of two of the prints, Rosselli handwrote "mia foto".[504] The authorship conferred to these pictures suggests that Rosselli had a particular interest in them, not only for their subject matter, but also for her active role as photographer. The relationship of Rosselli, as a photographer, to the landscape photographed is, in fact, complex: first of all, the use of black and white film imposed a filter on reality;[505] Rosselli also shot all the pictures with a portrait orientation, rather than a more conventional landscape one. The resulting framing is unusual, and it invites the viewer to align with the photographer's vantage point. The peculiarity of Rosselli's photographic gaze is further reinforced by the fact that, although these photographs were most probably taken during her holidays,[506] they go clearly against the clichés of either tourist or landscape photography. As we shall see, instead of capturing recognisable places, wide panoramic views, or points of interest, they rather present alternative and often mundane views, which nonetheless speak of a personal connection with the landscape.

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[502] Barthes, 9.

[503] Or again, in Rosselli's words "per osservare questo mutamento della mia osservazione e dell'incontro delle cose con me o delle persone o degli spazi e del movimento e del tempo", Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 236.

[504] Rosselli, *Locomotrix*, 49.

[505] Colour photography was available both in the 1950s and 1960s, though it was more expensive. Rosselli's choice, therefore, could be either caused by financial hardship or it could be a deliberate choice.

[506] Three of them belong to an album of photographs of Ronchi, in Tuscany, and one depicts the Abruzzo landscape, as indicated in the captions provided by Scappettone, Rosselli, *Locomotrix*.

The first photograph (Fig. 15) is a view of Ronchi in Tuscany, taken in 1962. It shows a field with trees: in the background, a number of tree trunks can be seen in the shade, while the tops are cropped off the frame; the centre of the photo, and its focal point, displays a bright clearing of wild grass striped by the shadow of other tree trunks, which cut the field diagonally. The presence of the trees is evoked within the frame by the trace of their shadow, yet the trees physically lie outside the frame, creating a tension between what is visible and what remains non-visible in the photograph. There is a tangible abstract quality to the composition of this photograph, one that seems to capture what Rosselli would call "the very quality of trees and light effects"[507] beyond their mere appearance. Even though Rosselli's body is outside the frame – just like the trees – the projection of her gaze casts an invisible shadow on the scene, and spectrally permeates the photograph.

The other three photographs retain the same flowing essence and seem to capture a precise and yet fleeting glance on the world. Possibly taken in 1965, the "view of Abruzzi" (Fig. 16) is another photograph of a landscape: this time a few mountain peaks and the overhead sky constitute the subject of the photo. The framing and composition are again unconventional, since the mountain tops are relegated to the very bottom third of the photo. The other two-thirds of the photograph show a white, void, and cloudless sky that seems to offer nothing for the eye to catch on. The only referential elements in the photo are equally as hard to visually grasp: the mountain peak in the foreground appears blurry; behind it, the other mountain slopes are hardly identifiable. For the viewer, the sensation is that of being at the very edge of the mountain with barely anything to hold on to.

In the "view of a flower" (Fig. 17), Rosselli counteracted the wide and void nothingness of the "view of Abruzzi" by strictly focusing her gaze on a small detail. The picture shows a close-up of a strongly blurred flower in the left part of the photograph, its margins abruptly cropped off the frame; in the background a hedge is in sharp focus. While it is not possible to know whether the shot was intentional or whether it was the result of a genuine focusing error, the framing of the flower in such

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[507] From *My Clothes to the Wind*, in Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 6.

close proximity forces the viewer to align with Rosselli's peculiar gaze, and so to partake in what Rosselli was viewing and experiencing in that particular place and at that particular time.

The "view of the sky" (Fig. 18) equally offers a fleeting glimpse on reality: in this photograph, Rosselli captured part of a storm cloud against the sky. Like in the other photographs, the viewer sees only a fragment of a bigger whole, and the image is thus traversed by the tension between what resides within the frame and what is left outside of it. This image, furthermore, foregrounds the flowing of time – here impossibly caught in its stillness – by pinning down the ever-shifting movement of the clouds in the sky. It is possible to imagine that by photographing a fragment of the sky Rosselli was trying to capture what she felt in response to that particular sight: that is to say what she sensed, perceived, thought, and remembered at that given minute, under that unremittingly transient sky.

Fig. 15. *View of Ronchi, Tuscany.* Marked "mia foto / 1962" on reverse. Rosselli, *Locomotrix*, 48.
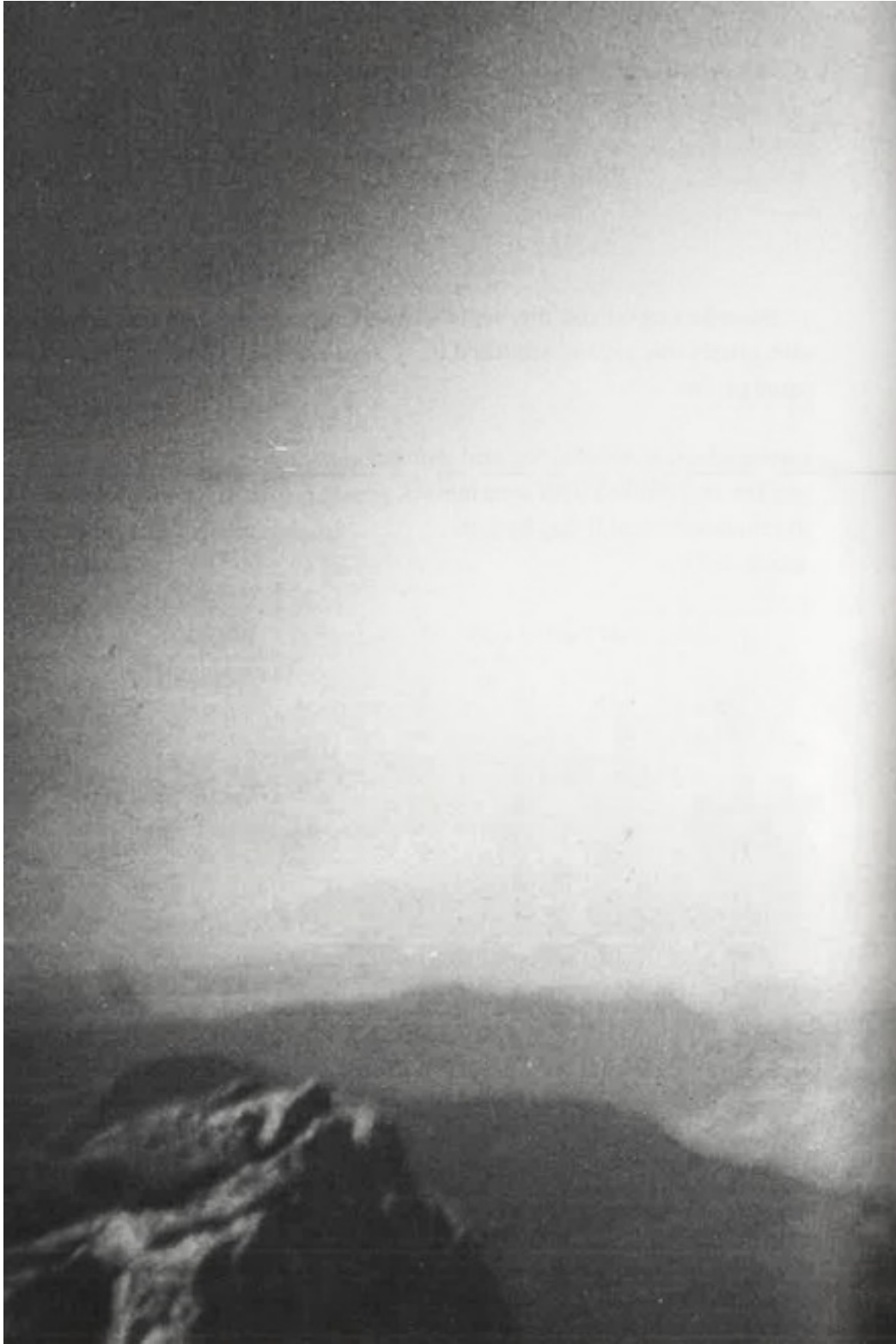
Fig. 16. *View of Abruzzi*. Marked "mia foto / 1965?" on reverse. Rosselli, 214.
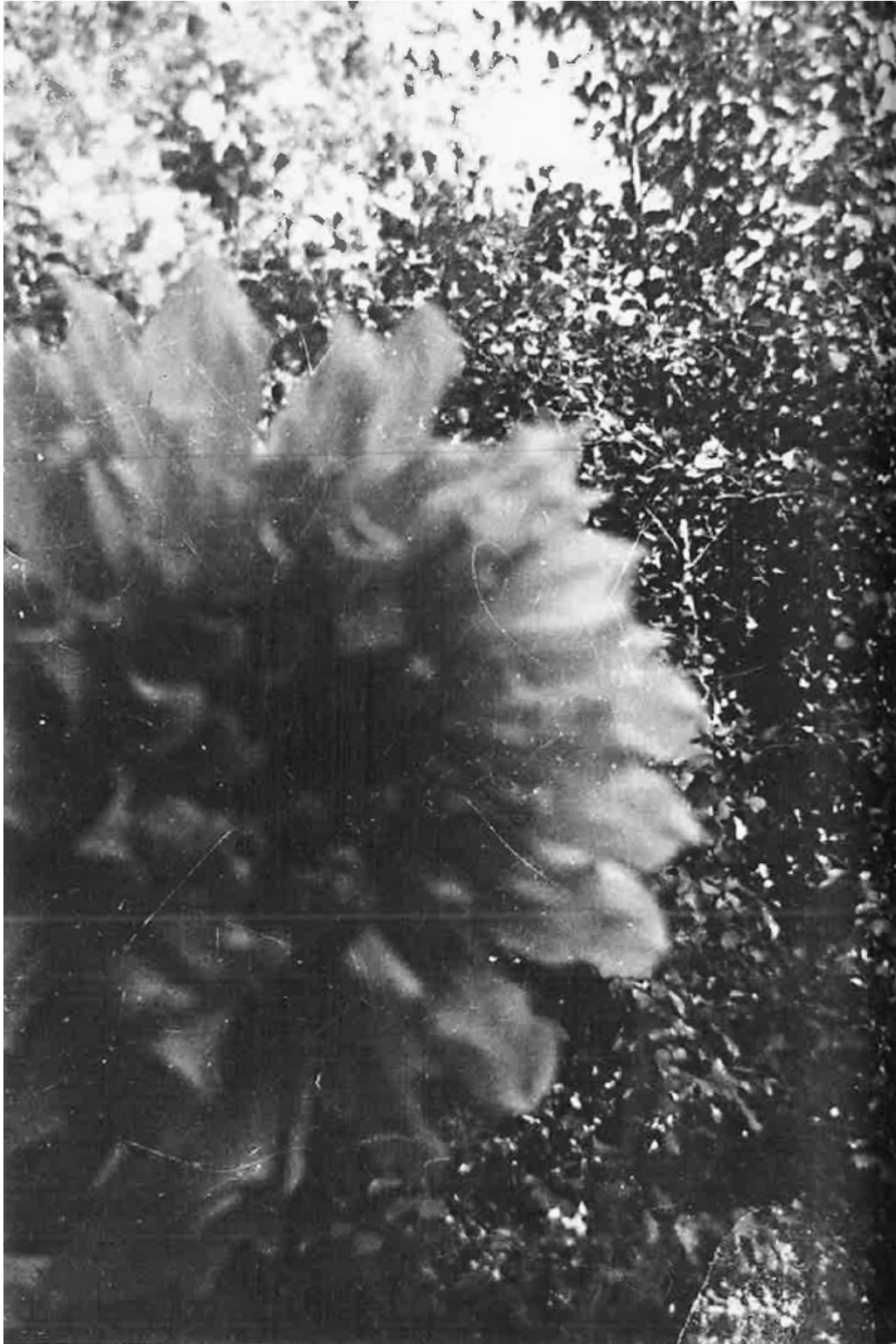
Fig. 17. *View of a Flower*. Contained in Rosselli's album of photographs of Ronchi (1962). Rosselli, 242.

Fig. 18. *View of the Sky*. Contained in Rosselli's album of photographs of Ronchi (1962). Rosselli, 278.

While the recording of time and space is intrinsic to all photography, Rosselli's photographs seem to particularly reflect on the exchanges between the subject, evoked through the gaze, and a world continually moving in time and space. The freezing of a lived moment seemed to respond to the need to capture and revisit flickers of perception. Rosselli's photos can in fact also be defined as representations of the landscape that enclose the subjective experience of the photographer, in a process similar to the one described by Philippe Dubois: "legata per sua genesi all'unicità di una situazione referenziale, attestandola e designandola, l'immagine indiziale avrà come effetto generale d'*implicare pienamente il soggetto stesso nell'esperienza*, nel provato del processo fotografico".[508] It is thus possible to argue that Rosselli's photographs are not mere captions of a landscape; rather, they are records of the subject being immersed and feeling the totality of the landscape.

Although the phenomenological implications of Rosselli's photographic practice stemmed from a personal need to explore her relationship with reality, they also reflected a common concern that characterised much of the coeval artistic and literary research of the time. As outlined in Chapter Two, the spread of a wave of phenomenological thought in Italy between the 1950s and 1960s fuelled the exploration of the relationship between subject and object and led to what Lorenzini defined as a crisis of representation.[509] In the same period, Italo Calvino spoke of "il mare dell'oggettività" to describe the shift in the encounter between subject and object.[510] The relationships between perceiving subject and reality were systematically discussed and reassessed: photography could thus be ideally employed as a powerful tool to investigate one's relationship with the outer world.[511] Rosselli's photographic practice can undoubtedly be ascribed to this phenomenological and epistemological interest. At the same time, this interest was reinforced by her need to find a role in the world and assert her identity; taking photographs of the landscape was a way for Rosselli to

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[508] Dubois and Marra, "L'atto fotografico," 321; italics of the author.
[509] "[A]lle soglie degli anni Sessanta il soggetto si trova di fronte alla crisi della rappresentazione", Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*, 61.
[510] Calvino, "Il mare dell'oggettività."
[511] See, for instance, Calvino, "La follia del mirino"; Calvino, "L'avventura di un fotografo."

interrogate the world and to assert herself as a full subject. What's more, photography and poetry found a common ground of investigation right in this phenomenological approach to reality.

Perceiving the World: A Negotiation of Vision and Visions

In the context of the phenomenology-induced crisis of representation, Amelia Rosselli developed her own stance towards the newly-posed question of reality. As Rosselli posited, and as her photographs seem to confirm, perceiving reality coincided with being immersed in a space that was not strictly divided between internal and external, but which was rather the result of an "incontro" and an exchange between the subject and the object. Rosselli's phenomenological approach to reality thus aptly encapsulates Lorenzini's description of "il *complicarsi* della nozione di reale e della distinzione reale-apparente".[512] In particular, Rosselli's conception of space – like that of several other writers of the time – was "insieme, al contempo, interiore ed esteriore, in grado dunque di consentire combinazioni nuove tra 'visibile' e 'invisibile', nello slittamento verso la cosa".[513] This tension also permeated Rosselli's writing: reality was not simplistically defined as a negotiation between the subject and the object; on the contrary, subject and object could hardly be disentangled, and the representation of reality was therefore made more complex by the subject's perception of both outer and inner domains. A passage from *Diario in tre lingue* (1955–1956) clearly exemplifies this osmotic way of relating to the world: "non esiste 'divago' / esiste cercare materiale fuori, materiale dentro".[514] Interestingly, Rosselli identified the synthesis between internal and external world in the "point of vision" of a self in flux, a definition evoking the fleeting and transient quality detectable in her photos. She wrote*:*

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[512] Lorenzini, *Il presente della poesia 1960–1990*, 61.

[513] Lorenzini, 61. Lorenzini's words do not specifically refer to Rosselli, but rather describe the crisis of representation in broader terms. However, her definition particularly applies to Rosselli's phenomenological approach towards reality.

[514] The quote continues as follows: "fuori necessario? / lo punto scatto", where the pointing and snapping could potentially allude to photography. Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 95.

Il punto di visione –

il punto di sintesi tra mondo estrov. e
mondo introv. sono io, il fluire.[515]

The choice of using "punto di visione" instead of the normative "punto di vista" ("point of vision" vs. "point of view") is particularly telling and calls attention to the word itself and to its polysemy. The word "visione", in Italian as well as in English,[516] is used to designate both the territories of what is visible and of what is invisible.[517] While the first entry in the Merriam-Webster dictionary refers to the act of seeing and the sense of sight (our ability to perceive and process light stimuli),[518] the following entries refer to the immaterial apparitions proceeding from imagination, dreams, states of trance or ecstasy, supernatural manifestations, and hallucinations. These latter types of images can be conceived of as "invisible" in a broader sense: rather than being collectively accessible through the sense of sight, they can only be directly envisioned by the person experiencing them. Thus, on the one hand the use of the word "vision" refers to the act of seeing, yet on the other hand, it simultaneously calls into question the wider realm of visions, remarking the partiality and subjectivity embedded in the very notion of vision – a sight experienced by the perceiving subject. Not surprisingly, visions constitute the pillar of Rosselli's poetry and they are strictly intertwined with the sense of sight, both physical and imaginary. Commenting on visions – "le visioni" – in her work, Rosselli also defined them as "visual impressions":

V'è un po' la realtà attorno, v'è un po' l'arte della metafora e v'è un po' addirittura la visione in senso psicologico, quella che si chiama "impressione visiva". Tu qualche volta hai un'immagine mentre scrivi davanti agli occhi, anche mentre non scrivi, e questo è nato anche un pochino da una dimestichezza con la psicanalisi, sia junghiana che freudiana. (...) nello scrivere mi capita qualche volta (...) di vedere in mezzo a un verso ancora da scrivere un'immagine che non c'entra niente davanti agli occhi, così, piazzata non so dove.[519]

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[515] Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 646.
[516] I have consulted the online dictionaries *Il corriere* – for the word "vision" – (http://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario_italiano/V/visione.shtml, accessed September 26, 2017) and the *Merriam-Webster* – for the word "vision" – (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vision, accessed September 26, 2017).
[517] "Invisible" here in the sense that any particular vision is not contemporarily visible to everyone, despite being envisioned or even visually experienced by a given perceiving subject.
[518] In the Merriam-Webster: "the special sense by which the qualities of an object (such as color, luminosity, shape, and size) constituting its appearance are perceived through a process in which light rays entering the eye are transformed by the retina into electrical signals that are transmitted to the brain via the optic nerve", (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vision, accessed September 26, 2017).
[519] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 339–40.

Like for Rosselli's Trastevere walks, that which is seen by the eye – "la realtà attorno" – overlays with a mental image – "la visione in senso psicologico" – often comprising what is perceived, felt, remembered, and even imagined around that sight. It has to be noted that the realm of Rosselli's visions was further complicated by her mental illness, partially documented in *Storia di una malattia*.[520] In the report published in *Nuovi Argomenti* in 1977, Rosselli described the alleged persecutions she was subjected to, also detailing her visual and aural hallucinations. Her relationship with reality was thus made even more complex by her personal circumstances, and by her schizophrenia.

As I have posited, visuality and writing were strictly connected in Rosselli's quest to explore the encounter between the objective world and the world perceived. By observing and photographing the world around her, and by noting down her impressions, Rosselli managed to reconstruct a flowing image of the real, at once subjective and objective. The mingling together of the objective and the subjective in both practices in fact re-enacted the interweaving of vision – what is seen – and visions – what is imagined, felt around, and projected onto what is seen. Visuality and writing were therefore combined to record, and to reflect on, the impressions of the poet's lived experience. In Rosselli's poetic work, this resulted in a type of highly visual poetry, populated by images and metaphors that attempted to capture a phenomenological experience of the world. Rosselli conceived the mechanism to pin down these images around the model of the still camera and film camera, through the theorisation of a metrical space that was able to measure both time and space. The photographic impressions performed by Rosselli's meter recorded her encounter with the complexity of the outer world. In the next section, therefore, I will further analyse Rosselli's declarations and her metrical manifesto, *Spazi metrici*, to clarify in what ways the intermedial references to the still camera and film camera underlie the very notion of her "metrical space".

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[520] Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia."

Spazi Metrici: A Photographic Approach to Reality

<div align="right">

gigantesche impressioni
le immagini tradendoti qua e là[521]

la sanità degli altri in questo mondo
cinematografico[522]

</div>

Rosselli's visual and linguistic explorations during the 1950s were conducted in parallel: her experiences with the still camera, and the film camera, thus directly permeated her poetic work. In particular, the idea of the visual and mental framing of reality underlies the metrical system presented in *Spazi metrici* (1962), according to which writing both echoes and originates from the process of photograph taking. Rosselli retraced the genesis of this work – which, in her words, even correlated with "la questione metrica a problemi di fotografia spaziale"[523] – as a response to Pier Paolo Pasolini.[524] This peculiar manifesto, written in 1962 and published as an afterword of *Variazioni belliche* in 1964, describes Rosselli's attempt at overcoming free verse in order to escape the "banalità del verso libero" that she then perceived to be "sgangherato, senza giustificazione storica, e soprattutto, esausto".[525] Rosselli's meter and her declaration of poetics have been explored by critics from several viewpoints, including typographical, musical, and conceptual perspectives.[526] Giovannetti and Lavezzi, for instance, posited that while Rosselli's meter can be considered as typographic and visual – since the verses are similar in length and thus create approximately square poems on the page – it also responds to a process of conceptualisation, in that the interpretation of

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[521] From *Appunti Sparsi e Persi*, in Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 787.

[522] From *Appunti Sparsi e Persi*, in Rosselli, 809.

[523] Tandello, Devoto, and Rosselli, *Trasparenze*, 17–19:12.

[524] Rosselli wrote: "Ebbi occasione di spiegare i miei intenti nelle realizzazioni poetiche, e quando portai il mio primo libro *Variazioni Belliche* (1959–1963), a Pier Paolo Pasolini, avendo già impegno di pubblicazioni di ventiquattro poesie presso 'Il Menabò' n. 6 di Vittorini e Calvino. Ricordo che mi riuscì impossibile chiarire i miei intenti, specie quelli che trattassero di metrica. Pasolini mi chiese di scrivere di ciò che tanto mi aveva impacciata nello spiegare. Tornata a casa, spaventata dal difficile impegno, descrissi in modo non troppo tecnico quello che in conversazione era impossibile precisare", Tandello, Devoto, and Rosselli, 17–19:12.

[525] Tandello, Devoto, and Rosselli, 17–19:11.

[526] See for instance: Carbognin, *Le armoniose dissonanze*; Gardini, "Amelia Rosselli e lo spazio della fuga"; Loreto, *I santi padri di Amelia Rosselli: "Variazioni belliche" e l'avanguardia*; Re, "Amelia Rosselli and the Esthetics of Experimental Music."

the metrical system relies on Rosselli's own declaration of poetics contained in *Spazi metrici*. In fact, it is thanks to the very conceptualisation of the metrical system that the poems can "photograph the mental states of the subject": "'fotografare' gli stati mentali del soggetto".[527]

According to Rosselli, *Spazi metrici* not only offered an explanation of her metrical system, but it also meant to "sensibilizzare il poeta ad altre discipline, *quali quella dell'operatore cinematografico*, la fisica moderna, l'aerodinamica".[528] By employing a mechanism simulating the still camera, or the film camera, the metrical system theorised in *Spazi metrici* would enable the recording and exposure of a lived experience, framed within a structure able to measure both time and space. Indeed, if photography allowed the capturing of a fragment in time and space, made dynamic by the projection of the photographer's perception (memories, feelings, thoughts), so did writing. In another interview, Rosselli reiterated this overlapping of her visual and writing interest: this time, the use of a film camera, rented to record the surrounding urban landscape of Trastevere, is linked to writing, in the attempt to create a complex and multi-layered vision:

> Trastevere offriva molto con le sue case per me allora bellissime: affittai una cinepresa, fissando il limite aeropoetico del visuale. Mi interessavano i problemi di spazio legati ai problemi di scrittura: l'inquadratura non fotografica ma mentale, spaziale, dinamica; una visione architettonico-geometrica.[529]

Rosselli's wanderings through Trastevere across the 1950s and into the 1960s – including her filming, photographing, and transcribing the reality around her – would result in the writing of *Primi scritti* (1952–1963);[530] *Variazioni belliche* (1959–1961); *Diario ottuso* (1954–1968) and *Spazi metrici* (1962). Photography and poetry were brought together in the "limite aeropoetico del visuale" that the poet delineated to investigate "i problemi di spazio legati ai problemi di scrittura".[531] Interestingly, in line with Rosselli's "point of vision", both writing and visual media tended to slip from a denotative representation of things to a connotative depiction of the real: Rosselli's photographic framing of the

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[527] Giovannetti and Lavezzi, *La metrica italiana contemporanea*, 265.
[528] The quotation is from *Introduzione a "Spazi metrici*," in Tandello, Devoto, and Rosselli, *Trasparenze*, 17–19:13.
[529] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 148.
[530] Including *Diario in Tre Lingue* (1955–1956).
[531] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 148.

external world superseded a mere process of image taking – "l'inquadratura non fotografica ma mentale"– and, rather than being an impartial snapshot, it resulted in a dynamic record of a lived experience, occasioning "una visione architettonico-geometrica".[532] The preference conferred to a "mental framing" over a "photographic" one is not to be understood in contrast with Rosselli's photographic approach to reality. On the very contrary, Rosselli's description encapsulates her own experience of photograph taking: in the reading of Rosselli's four photographs I proposed earlier, her visual practice consigned the image to the background, while perceptions, feelings, memories, and thoughts connected to the image cast a long and perceptible shadow within the frame. In this sense, her photographs adhere to a "visione architettonico-geometrica"[533] because they perform a "mental framing" aimed at processing her relationship with the outer world, which, as I argue, also animated her writing.

Rosselli directly commented on *Spazi metrici* and included an excerpt of the manifesto (isolated and marked in italics in the quote below). In this extract she provided precious suggestions on the way filming contributed to her definition of poetic form. Accordingly, "i problemi di architettura dinamica", which had originated from her filming experiments, tellingly became "i problemi di *Spazi metrici*":

> Mi interessavano i problemi di spazio legati ai problemi di scrittura: l'inquadratura non fotografica ma mentale, spaziale, dinamica; una visione architettonico-geometrica. Poi ho abbandonato la cinepresa e anche la fotografia e ho continuato con la poesia, e i problemi di architettura dinamica sono divenuti i problemi di *Spazi metrici:*
>
> *Nello stendere il primo rigo del poema fissavo definitivamente la larghezza del quadro insieme spaziale e temporale; i versi susseguenti dovevano adattarsi a egual misura, a identica formulazione. [...] Lo spazio vuoto tra parola e parola veniva considerato invece come non funzionale, e non era unità, e se per caso esso cadeva sul punto limite del quadro, veniva immediatamente seguito da altra parola, in modo da ricoprire del tutto lo spazio e chiudere il verso. Il quadro infatti era da ricoprirsi totalmente e la frase era da enunciarsi d'un fiato e senza silenzi ed interruzioni: rispecchiando la realtà parlata e pensata, dove nel sonoro noi leghiamo le nostre parole e nel pensare non abbiamo*

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[532] Rosselli, 148.

[533] Rosselli's use of adjectives such as "architectural" and "geometrical" to describe her vision can be deceiving, a passage from the same interview clarifies their non-linear nature: "(…) Trattavo un problema di spazio-energia, non un concentrarsi, ma un inglobare le cose attorno, ispirandomi a una specie di post-cubismo. Riuscii nel '64 a pubblicare questa tesi sulla metrica nella postfazione a *Variazioni Belliche*, che è il frutto di queste iniziali ricerche, Rosselli, 148. Rosselli's reference to "post-cubism" implied the curving of linearity typical of her poetics of deformation, which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

interruzioni salvo quelle esplicative e logiche della punteggiatura.

Trattavo un problema di spazio-energia, non un concentrarsi, ma un inglobare le cose attorno, ispirandomi a una specie di postcubismo. Riuscii nel '64 a pubblicare questa tesi sulla metrica nella postfazione a *Variazioni belliche*, che è il frutto di queste iniziali ricerche. Fu la metrica classica studiata in biblioteca e l'esperienza della ripresa a portarmi più tardi a una poesia apparentemente tridimensionale su carta, e tutt'altro sul piano dinamico.[534]

Rosselli linked her research on "dynamic spaces" to visuality and to poetry. If, initially, both filming and photographing covered a fundamental role in exploring time and space, in a later phase of her research Rosselli decided to abandon "la cinepresa e anche la fotografia" to focus on poetry writing, and on her metrical system exposed in *Spazi metrici* in particular. Rosselli's poetic meter, therefore, embodies a photographic approach to reality in that it tries to literally "measure" and "frame" time and space – "fissavo definitivamente la larghezza del quadro insieme spaziale e temporale" – to encapsulate and record a precise lived experience – "rispecchiando la realtà parlata e pensata". In a sense, her poems functioned as if they were written photographic records of an experience; or, at least, photography and filming exerted a direct influence on the definition of Rosselli's metrical system – "Fu la metrica classica studiata in biblioteca e l'esperienza della ripresa a portarmi più tardi a una poesia apparentemente tridimensionale su carta, e tutt'altro sul piano dinamico". It is fundamental to note that the experience of filming and also her photographic practice are deeply embedded in Rosselli's poietic process. In *Le armoniose dissonanze*, Francesco Carbognin mentions photography and filming in Rosselli's work and yet does not fully acknowledge their essential structuring value, nor does he consider them crucial to the design of Rosselli's *Spazi metrici*:

Ma in questo preciso caso, il riferimento ("fotografando") a quello che negli *Spazi* viene chiamato "quadro dell'esistenza circondantemi", inerisce a un meccanismo dichiaratamente connesso alla prima formulazione metrica rosselliana (al frammento citato, infatti, segue l'indicazione "Così ho scritto *Primi scritti* e *Diario in tre lingue*"); ed è essenziale insistere, allora, sul fatto di come la "fotografia" del dato reale non fosse una tecnica di per sé (se svincolata da una coerente teorizzazione dell'"unità base del verso") sufficiente a sostenere l'invenzione dello "spazio metrico."[535]

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[534] Rosselli, 148, my italics.
[535] Carbognin, *Le armoniose dissonanze*, 24–25.

I would rather argue that these practices perform an active and formative role in the formulation of *Spazi metrici* precisely because they offer the model for a medium able to record, measure, and preserve reality. Rosselli returned on and clarified this interconnection in her *Introduzione a "Spazi metrici"*, written in 1993, where she wrote:

> Tanto complesso mi pareva il problema che *avevo perfino correlazionato la questione metrica a problemi di fotografia spaziale, vivendo la poesia senza scriverla e "filmando" mentalmente ed emozionalmente, ogni realtà attorno.* Come se il versificatore potesse equivalere al sentire e pensare uno spazio visivo-emozionale attorno, quasi pensassi in forme approssimatamente cubiche, il sentire seguendo la vista in senso anche energetico.[536]

Photography, translated into "mental filming", is applied to poetry writing, the medium being now "il versificare".[537] Poetic meter is therefore molded on the dynamic and conceptual process through which the photographer actively selects a portion of reality to capture and store a section of the world emotionally and physically experienced. Gillo Dorfles drew an interesting point in this regard and described photography as a "mechanical transfer of our perceptual capability" able to convey "a precise, yet possibly unconscious, creative intention".[538]

According to Dorfles, photographers "transfer" a perceptual quality from reality into the photograph, thanks to their own selective organisation of form. In the same way, in *Spazi metrici*, Rosselli declared her success in conceiving a poetic form that allowed her to transfer her subjective experience to a universal and valid poetic construct. Language, through the medium of poetic meter, acted like a camera and recorded within a time-space frame "l'idea o l'esperienza o il ricordo o la fantasia che smuovevano il senso e lo spazio".[539] She wrote:

> Tentai osservare ogni materialità esterna con la più completa minuziosità possibile *entro un immediato lasso di tempo e di spazio sperimentale. Ad ogni spostamento del mio corpo aggiungevo tentando, un completo "quadro" dell'esistenza circondantemi*; la mente doveva assimilare l'intero significato del quadro entro il tempo in cui essa vi permaneva, e fondervi la sua propria dinamicità interiore. *Nello scrivere sino ad allora la mia complessità o completezza riguardo alla realtà era stata soggettivamente limitata: la realtà era mia, non anche degli altri: scrivevo versi liberi.* (...) Per caso volli rileggere poi i sonetti delle prime scuole italiane; affascinata dalla regolarità *volli ritentare l'impossibile. Ripresi in mano le mie cinque classificazioni: lettera, sillaba, parola, frase e periodo. Le inquadrai in uno spazio-tempo assoluto. I miei versi poetici non poterono più scampare*

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[536] Tandello, Devoto, and Rosselli, *Trasparenze*, 17–19:12, my italics.
[537] Tandello, Devoto, and Rosselli, 17–19:12.
[538] Dorfles, *Il divenire delle arti*, 278–79, my translation.
[539] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 341.

all'universalità dello spazio unico (...) questo spazio era del tutto ricoperto di esperienze, realtà, oggetti, e sensazioni.[540]

The shift from a "realtà mia," recorded through free verse, to the "universalità dello spazio unico" becomes possible thanks to the metrical system, which is not limited to a mere visual and typographic formulation, as Antonio Loreto maintains, but which is rather "agente nello scrivere e nel pensare",[541] thus informing the poet's way of thinking. In fact, there is a risk, appropriately pointed out by Carbognin, of underestimating the conceptual value of the "rhythmical unity" and thus reducing Rosselli's metrical system to a visual solution "come se la Rosselli, steso 'il primo rigo del poema', si fosse *limitata* a '*fissare* definitivamente la larghezza' del verso, in modo da ottenere una poesia di forma 'approssimativamente' quadrata, simile a una riproduzione fotografica dello spazio esterno".[542]

Antonio Loreto takes up this risk, since he links the influence of filming and photography to a typographical choice, and states that "È naturalmente in gioco un tipo diverso di metro, costruito graficamente e non acusticamente, però è innegabile che delle misure siano definite".[543] Nevertheless, Rosselli's meter is conceptually photographic in its intent to capture and record reality, rather than in its mere printed square format. Rosselli herself claimed: "*Non si tratta di 'sistematizzazioni' grafiche ma di sensibilizzare il poeta ad altre discipline, quali quella dell'operatore cinematografico, la fisica moderna, l'aerodinamica*".[544] The result is the creation of dynamic and multidimensional[545] poems able to record experience, expressed through a complex system. The ambitious system exposed in *Spazi metrici*, beyond Rosselli's metrical studies and her photographic practice, also includes her

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[540] Rosselli, 339, my italics.
[541] Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 341.
[542] Carbognin, *Le armoniose dissonanze*, 23–24.
[543] Loreto, *I santi padri di Amelia Rosselli: "Variazioni belliche" e l'avanguardia*, 115–16.
[544] The quotation is from *Introduzione a "Spazi metrici*," in Tandello, Devoto, and Rosselli, *Trasparenze*, 17–19:13.
[545] For an overview of Rosselli's concept of tetradimensional poetry, see Carletti, "Space-Time and Tetradimensionality in the Post-War Poetics of Lucio Fontana, Toti Scialoja and Amelia Rosselli."

research in ethnomusicology and composition, as well as concepts borrowed from science, Western and Eastern philosophy, psychoanalysis, and the arts.[546]

Again, each of these areas of research is traversed by Rosselli and brought into the metrical equation with the aim to give form to the flux of life: "non pensavo che lo scrivere potesse esistere fuori dall'esperienza: l'esperienza veniva prima e la forma si trovava nell'esperienza, nell'esperienza del vivere".[547] It is no wonder, then, that Rosselli titled one of her poetry collections *Documento* (1966–1973),[548] which linked the attempt to record and document experience to both her photographic and poetic practice: "Il titolo è lievemente ironico: voglio dire che si può documentare meglio tramite la poesia che non tramite carte bollate, o fotografie. La vita interiore qui balza fuori come documento anche se l'impostazione non è intimistica".[549] What Rosselli recorded and documented, therefore, was precisely "la vita interiore" in its encounter with the external world. Interestingly, poetry, as opposed to photography, could offer a "better" document of reality, since it could record both what is "seen" through vision and what is emotionally "felt" around that experience, thus conferring a dynamic and four-dimensional depth to writing, in line with Rosselli's attempt to infuse the "completo 'quadro' dell'esistenza circondantemi" with the mind's "dinamicità interiore".[550]

As a consequence, the experiences relayed on the page, far from reproducing realistic portions of external reality, focus on the inner perception of the subject and are often oneiric, deprived of a

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[546] A quick look at *Diario in tre lingue* will give an idea of how eclectic Rosselli's readings and studies were. It is easy to detect clear references, among others, to meter, psychoanalysis, mathematics, and geometry, the I Ching and music. Much attention has been devoted to the influence of music in Rosselli's work, for example Re, "Amelia Rosselli and the Esthetics of Experimental Music.", and Cairoli, "Spazio metrico e serialismo musicale. L'azione dell'avanguardia postweberniana sulle concezioni poetiche di Amelia Rosselli."; to music and meter, Colangelo, *Metrica come composizione*; to psychonalysis, see Chiara Carpita, "Amelia Rosselli e il processo di individuazione: alcuni inediti," and Annovi, *Altri corpi*; and to philosophy and the arts, see Loreto, *I Santi Padri di Amelia Rosselli: "Variazioni Belliche" e l'avanguardia*. I provide a brief contribution to mathematical and geometrical influences in "Space-Time and Tetradimensionality in the Post-War Poetics of Lucio Fontana, Toti Scialoja and Amelia Rosselli." Other interesting perspectives can be found in Tandello and Carpita, *Quadrati, cantoni, cantonate: topografie poetiche di Amelia Rosselli*.

[547] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 224.

[548] Along the same line, Rosselli chooses the title "Diario" – "diary" – for two of her literary works, *Diario in tre lingue* and *Diario ottuso*.

[549] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 52.

[550] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 339.

linear narration, or driven by the images of the subconscious, as extracts from *Variazioni belliche* exemplify: "Le fosse ardeatine combinavano credenze / e sogni–io ero partita, tu eri tornato",[551] "Fra le stanze che oscuravano la mia viltà ve n'era una che / rimbombava: era la notte. Io mi fingevo pazza e correvo a / sollevare i pazzi dal suolo, come fiori spetalati",[552] or "Nell'intendimento del tuo verso vi era il mio verso insonne. // Nell'intendimento della mia anima vi era lo scoraggiamento / la paura e la docilità. Per un paio di scarpe mi vendevo",[553] "Ma se / io volevo assolutamente fare a meno di me stessa / e di quel bisogno d'arrivare fra i primi alle / sette della sera, allora mi recapitava un tal / mal di testa da far morire le formiche, da far/ morire i prezzi della sera. E non seppi continuare".[554]

In these extracts, the lyrical subject intertwines emotional ("viltà," "scoraggiamento," "paura," "docilità") and physical perceptions ("mal di testa"), with images drawn from the subconscious ("correvo a / sollevare i pazzi dal suolo, come fiori spetalati"), and elements taken from historical reality ("le fosse Ardeatine"). The co-existence of these layers of expression denote what Carbognin has described as the precariousness of the lyrical subject, for which even "le numerose allusioni di carattere storico e ideologico disseminate tra le pagine delle *Variazioni*" are "puntualmente assimilate alle abnormi rappresentazioni emotive e percettive del protagonista lirico".[555] According to Carbognin, the subject in *Variazioni belliche* lives the "dramma pronominale" identified by Contini, not only in the ambiguity of the syntactical subjects and in the reduplication of the pronouns, but also in the interaction with the outer world:

> Tra le altre principali manifestazioni del "dramma pronominale" si registrano processi di identificazione diversamente orientati: nel senso di un'introiezione del mondo nell'io ("Ecco il / mondo risvegliarsi in me come una larga barca incosciente"), ma anche in quello della proiezione dell'io nel mondo ("Retta combinavo / preghiere assurde e tutto il mondo crollava").[556]

Like it had been with photography, writing also became a cognitive tool to investigate the permeable and flowing role of the subject in the world. As a matter of fact, the closing poem of

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[551] Rosselli, 208.
[552] Rosselli, 209.
[553] Rosselli, 236.
[554] Rosselli, 242.
[555] Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 1294.
[556] Rosselli, 1294.

Variazioni belliche centers on exactly such permeability between the writing I and the world, experienced in its full mournfulness:

> Tutto il mondo è vedovo se è vero che tu cammini ancora
> tutto il mondo è vedovo se è vero! Tutto il mondo
> è vero se è vero che tu cammini ancora, tutto il
> mondo è vedovo se tu non muori! Tutto il mondo
> è mio se è vero che tu non sei vivo ma solo
> una lanterna per i miei occhi obliqui. Cieca rimasi
> dalla tua nascita e l'importanza del nuovo giorno
> non è che notte per la tua distanza. Cieca sono
> ché tu cammini ancora! cieca sono che tu cammini
> e il mondo è vedovo e il mondo è cieco se tu cammini
> ancora aggrappato ai miei occhi celestiali.[557]

The feeling of widowhood and loss experienced by the subject is pervasively projected onto the whole world through a combined system of anaphoric repetition and variation which, as the title eloquently suggests, characterises all *Variazioni belliche*. "Tutto il mondo è vedovo" thus slips into "Tutto il mondo è vero", and into "Tutto il mondo è mio". Such transformation indicates a condition that is at once uniquely subjective and universal. Similarly, the blindness experienced by the subject – "Cieca rimasi dalla tua nascita" and "cieca sono" – is also transferred onto the world "e il mondo è vedovo e il mondo è cieco", to suggest the fluidity between the two.

The Poet as Hunter: Shooting Down Reality

> C'è un atto di amore in ogni fotografia, una sorta di complessa seduzione dell'oggetto, che però va catturato, fissato, congelato per sempre, consegnato all'archivio. È dunque un atto d'amore che non esclude, ma anzi implica un atto di rapina, una cattura.[558]

The act of documenting and recording reality strictly relates to that of appropriation and possession, which once more brings together photography and poetry. Rosselli's urge to document, record, possess, and ultimately appropriate reality responds to her need to assert herself as a full subject: to gain space and voice both as a woman and as a woman poet. Rosselli was writing in a country largely

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[557] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 333.
[558] Ferrarotti and Marra, "Dal documento alla testimonianza," 39.

dominated by patriarchal systems, in a language shaped by male poets before her, and in a social position challenging everything that a woman ought to be in the Rome of the 1950s – i.e. a wife and mother, as opposed to a single and independent female writer. What's more, her very surname, Rosselli, was always linked to that of her illustrious father, to the extent that her poetry, according to Emmanuela Tandello, would be unavoidably subjected to "the name of the father": "Il Soggetto della sua poesia è corpo politico che esiste ai margini di un ordine simbolico (quello sancito dal nome del padre – e in questo caso letteralmente) che lo vuole sottomesso e inerme".[559]

Photography and writing offer precious tools to claim agency, since both allow for an "appropriation" of outer reality. For Sontag, for instance, "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power".[560] Similarly, according to Sartre in *What is Literature?*, words function as tools to capture and reflect reality; the poet:

> considers *words as a trap to catch a fleeing reality* rather than as indicators which throw him out of himself into the midst of things. In short, a*ll language is for him the mirror of the world.* As a result, important changes take place in the internal economy of the word. Its sonority, its length, its masculine or feminine endings, its visual aspect, compose for him a face of flesh which *represents* rather than expresses meaning.[561]

Rosselli, who was familiar with Sartre's book,[562] shared the same idea of "trapping" reality through language in a sort of "word-mirroring".[563] In a poem from the collection *October Elizabethans* (1956), for instance, the world becomes a sort of prey that is hunted by the poetic subject:

> O Null is the World, & Null am I
> who do Skamper after It, as 't were

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[559] Tandello, "La poesia e la purezza: Amelia Rosselli," XXXIV.

[560] Sontag, *On Photography*, 2.

[561] Sartre, *What Is Literature?*, 30, my italics.

[562] See Annovi: "Nel suo celebre saggio intitolato *Che cos'è la letteratura?*, Jean-Paul Sartre rifletteva in questi termini sulle ragioni della scrittura: 'per qualcuno l'arte è fuga; per qualcun altro un mezzo di conquista. Ma si può fuggire in un eremo, nella pazzia, nella morte; si può conquistare con le armi'. Nella sua copia del volume di Sartre, Amelia Rosselli aveva segnato con un netto tratto di matita questo passaggio", in Annovi, "Un'avanguardia eccentrica," 56.

[563] This expression comes from the poetic prose *My Clothes to the Wind*, which provides some meta-literary comments on the act of writing: "Still this guiltless disconnection and the word-mirroring will not blanket a vision out, dallying with misplaced verbs shoves back any sort of rotation and narration since then instead the summer had stood fixed", Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 6.

a Furry Rabbit, or a Field-Mouse
to be Caught and Fryed. (…)[564]

In the case of photography, the "catching" and "trapping" are consubstantial to the practice itself, which often unravels through the metaphor of hunting:[565] the photographer *points* at a subject in the *viewfinder*, waits for the right moment and finally *shoots* a photograph to hunt down, catch, and in a sense kill, what is photographed or, with Barthes, to turn it into a spectrum.[566] The hunting metaphor is also taken up by Henri Cartier-Bresson, who interestingly describes the photographic act as follows: "occorre avvicinarsi al soggetto *à pas de loup* [in punta di piedi], anche se si tratta di una natura morta", adding shortly after, "qualcuno passa, si segue il suo camminare attraverso il perimetro del visore, si attende, attende (…) si tira e si va via con la sensazione di aver qualcosa nel proprio sacco".[567] Reality is observed, circled around, and finally captured in a precise and decisive moment to the point that the photographer walks away with the sensation of "having something in their bag". Rosselli's landscape photographs maintain some of the same hunting quality, aimed at capturing and preserving a moment in time and space. As I have already discussed, those pictures record not only what has been seen, but also what has been felt in that precise circumstance.

Rosselli transposed an analogous act of "catching" and "trapping" reality to her poetry writing. If the photographer is a hunter, the poet, too, adopts an equivalent mechanism of observation, wait, capture of a portion of reality, and subsequent exposure. In *A Birth*, for example, Rosselli resorted to the hunting metaphor: "hunting against an everest sky, I attacked the first vision of the pink city".[568] Tellingly, the pray hunted is an image – "a vision" – which is subsequently transposed into poetry. In the following poem from *Serie ospedaliera*, "hunting" is again taken up as the metaphor for poetry writing, this time explicitly performed by a female subject:

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[564] Rosselli, 65.

[565] For the relationship between photography and hunting, both linguistically and thematically, see for example Ceserani, *L'occhio della medusa*. Calvino famously explores this topic in Calvino, "L'avventura di un fotografo." The short story, published in 1970, was a reworking of his former 1955 essay: Calvino, "La follia del mirino."

[566] Bazin equally leads back photography to the idea of embalming the dead: "If the plastic arts were put under psychoanalysis, the practice of embalming the dead might turn out to be a fundamental factor in their creation"; Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 177.

[567] Cartier-Bresson, *Photographies.*, 2, 5.

[568] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 126.

Diana la cacciatrice soleva avvicinarsi
a questi boschi, irrimediabilmente
perduti per lei che nella caccia
giocava con le parole.

Se mi muovo c'è chi mette piede
innanzi a me e mi crea la trappola
delle elementari immagini. Se mi
sposto anche la linea del cielo
subisce mutazione. Le parole scendono
in basso nella vallata si ricordano
dei miei tre archi. Non si scosta
il parallelo della mia costanza
se urlo nel passo le rocce scavano
orbite. Diana cacciava: un cuore

scavò tre orbite, l'una nell'occhio
le altre intristiscono sulle mie
labbra. Animali perplessi sono le

parole, esse guastano il mercato
non feci in tempo a firmare l'assegno
che già mi volarono. Diana spinse

la freccia: caddero le parole, nella
vallata volano. Io mi muovo, le
riacchiappo, solendo metterle all'occhiello
dopo la caccia.[569]

Diana, alter ego of the author and model for an independent and powerful female of social standeing is hunting words – "animali perplessi sono le / parole" – that are exhibited, or *exposed*, after their capture. The act of hunting words is not only related to a matter of appropriation and representation of reality, but it also raises the question of social identity and work: if a hunter would not exist without their prey so a poet would not survive without financial gain for their writing: "esse [le parole] guastano il mercato / non feci in tempo a firmare l'assegno / che già mi volarono". The theme of social and financial recognition is very much felt by the young Rosselli, who also incorporated it in the subtitle of *La libellula*: "panegirico della libertà". The word "panegirico", in Rosselli's intention, stands as a pun for "giro del pane" and expresses a concern for finding freedom through the financial retribution for one's literary work.[570]

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[569] Rosselli, 423.

[570] "Io della libertà pensavo poco: pensavo che non ce n'era, che so cos'è la necessità e la urgrenza di potersi guadagnare da vivere, e la preoccupazione dei giovani di non riuscire ad emergere nel loro campo per ragioni anche

The female poet-hunter, furthermore, not only needs to financially provide for herself, she also has to escape the "trap of elementary images", possibly those placed in front of her by those who came earlier: "c'è chi mette piede innanzi a me e mi crea la trappola delle elementari immagini" – that is to say, the male authors of a patriarchal society. To escape such trap, Rosselli had to privilege complexity and needed to appropriate her own reality, "se mi / sposto anche la linea del cielo / subisce mutazione", responding to a cognitive process for which vision and movement are deeply intertwined.[571] She can do so through the three "orbits" (sockets but also trajectories) placed in one of the eyes and on the lips. The latter metonymically call into question words and poetry making. It is therefore possible to dominate movement and successfully hunt down the prey: "Io mi muovo, le / riacchiappo, solendo metterle all'occhiello / dopo la caccia", where the act of pinning words to her jacket after the hunt, is parallel to that of exhibiting a photograph, after it has been taken.

Photography and poetry, therefore, allow for a cautious approach to reality that resulted in its appropriation, and in its subsequent display. In turn, this unmediated appropriation of reality enabled the subject to affirm herself as a woman and as a woman writer.

"Il Chiarore che Deforma": Deforming Language and Experience

Nemmeno io so perché il vuoto si incurva.[572]

In her quest for emancipation, Rosselli constantly captured and appropriated reality. However, her poetry – far from offering an objective representation of the real – functioned as a filter: a medium through which Rosselli's lived experience was "deformed" and transformed into a language which

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sociali ed economiche (...) questa parentesi voleva essere un sottinteso assurdo perché nessuno lo poteva indovinare: il giro del pane. È un'allusione incomprensibile, lo raccontavo ai miei amici al massimo. Pane-girico della libertà, giro del pane", Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 297.

[571] A motif which returns in the Trastevere walks, as well as in *Spazi metrici*, and which can be reconnected to the thought of Merleau-Ponty. By connecting vision and movement, furthermore, the body becomes an active agent within the writing process, which is also shaped by Rosselli's walking and breathing, as she claims in *Spazi metrici*.

[572] Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 807.

was itself mobile and warped: a "babelare commosso".[573] Her writing thus systematically distorted all linearity, ranging from word formation to syntactical structures or meter, and from the representation of spaces to that of experience itself.[574] The process of deforming language and experience, as we shall see, was Rosselli's method to assert her identity as a full subject and to challenge patriarchy. As such, this deforming force is best exemplified in *La libellula* (1958), a long poem which Rosselli defined as feminist.[575] In *La libellula*, Rosselli clearly defied the literary fathers of tradition and advocated for a distancing from their auratic "holiness"; the poem in fact opens as follows: "La santità dei santi padri era un prodotto sí / cangiante ch'io decisi di allontanare ogni dubbio / dalla mia testa purtroppo troppo chiara e prendere / il salto per un addio più difficile".[576] Rosselli's deforming drive constitutes the core of this tirade ("inventata invettiva"[577]) and is overtly addressed in a fragment later in the poem:

> Fluisce tra me e te nel subacqueo un chiarore
> che deforma, un chiarore che deforma ogni passata
> esperienza e la distorce in un fraseggiare mobile,
> distorto, inesperto, espertissimo linguaggio
> dell'adolescenza! Difficilissima lingua del povero![578]

In the exchange between self and other, a diffraction of the light, trespassing a liquid surface, is responsible for the deforming process.

While the above passage has been considered as a meta-poetic statement on Rosselli's broader writing poetics, it also provides a textual example of how Rosselli deformed the language of the other, and in this case of Italian poet Eugenio Montale. As a matter of fact, Rosselli is in those verses echoing Montale's poem *Due nel crepuscolo*, published in *La bufera e altro* (1956): "Fluisce fra te e me sul belvedere / un chiarore subacqueo che deforma / col profilo dei colli anche il tuo viso".[579] The same

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[573] From *Variazioni belliche*, in Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 163.

[574] For a detailed analysis of Rosselli's linguistic formations and deformations, see Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*.

[575] For some valuable contributions on the analysis of *La libellula* as a poem challenging the patriarchal canon, see Cortellessa, *La furia dei venti contrari*; in particular the essays by Gian-Maria Annovi, Rosaria Lo Russo, and Monica Venturini. See also Carletti, "Il chiarore che deforma. Processi deformanti nella poetica di Amelia Rosselli."

[576] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 141.

[577] Rosselli, 143.

[578] Rosselli, 153.

[579] Montale, *Tutte le poesie*, 221.

mechanism is repeated throughout the poem through a process of mediation and hybridisation with the male counterpart: Rosselli enters, embodies, and alters the poetic voice of male writers – including for instance that of Dante Alighieri, "Nel mezzo d'un gracile cammino";[580] Dino Campana, "Io non so se tra le pallide rocce il tuo / sorriso m'apparve";[581] Eugenio Montale, "I miei vent'anni / mi minacciano Esterina, con il loro verde disastro";[582] Arthur Rimbaud, "Trovate Ortensia"[583] – and chooses androgyny as a strong metaphor for her own identity. Only by phagocytising and ingesting the male counterparts can the female author exorcise their threatening power and transform it into new creative matter. The literary canon is thus subverted and distorted to suit a new gendered voice: that of a woman poet who re-appropriates and moulds the language of the male poet.

Rosselli was aware of the fact that she inhabited the language of the other, and in one interview she stated: "La biologia della donna è diversa. Nell'esprimersi credo che adatti il linguaggio che usa; ha letto prevalentemente libri scritti da uomini, dunque starà attenta a non identificarsi completamente con la figura maschile".[584] By giving birth to a new "deformed" language – "io biascicavo tempeste e / preghiere", "il farneticare in malandati / versi"[585] – Rosselli created the figure of a mothering poet who left behind the "holy fathers" and forged her own poetic voice. Nevertheless, she also knew that the process of emancipation would result in her very confinement: the female writer mumbles ("biascica") "tempeste e preghiere". At the same time, the artists gathered at the "Holy See", described in the poem, also mumble childish songs: "La santa sede infatti biascicava canzoni / puerili anche lei e tutte le automobili dei più / ricchi artisti erano accolte tra le sue mura".[586] Yet, despite the fact that both the female author and the male writers "mumble", the latter are wealthy, own cars, and are all welcome within the walls of the "santa sede", whereas the female poet is poor, forced to take public transport – "nemmeno io so dove è che debbo / prendere il tram (...) Ma tu vedi allora che ho

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[580] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 142.
[581] Rosselli, 147.
[582] Rosselli, 156.
[583] Rosselli, 152.
[584] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 57.
[585] From *La libellula*, Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 141.
[586] Rosselli, 141.

perso / anche io le leggiadre risplendenti capacità di / chi sa fregarsense. Debbo mangiare",[587] –

confined in her domestic space, as for instance the kitchen, and forced to hide: "ma nessun / odio ho

in preparazione nella mia cucina solo / la stancata bestia nascosta".[588]

The importance and impact of such a literary maneuver, here only briefly sketched, has been

credited by several scholars. It contributed to make Rosselli a pivotal emblem of change and freedom

for Italian women writers. Nevertheless, Rosselli's process of emancipation, as I mentioned, was not

solely confined to the patriarchal canon: it also included her very own past of suffering, war, loss,

displacement, and family fragmentation. The poetics of deformation played a crucial role to

appropriate past memory and overcome trauma. Rosselli's reference to her past and private

experiences, however, should not be considered in mere confessional terms: forms of self-reference

rather responded to the need to assert her identity and voice as a woman writer, in line with what she

overtly pursued in *La libellula*.

According to Birkle, women poets who make use of biographical and personal experiences to

write poetry are not merely expressing their own emotions; rather, they are engaging with the active

construction of "a literature of their own".[589] The identity of being a woman poet, Birkle argues, is

indeed inseparable from that of being a woman:

> Because of women's particular life experiences, the ideas of "woman" and "woman poet" are
> integrated and become an inseparable entity in their texts. The woman poet inscribes this newly gained
> subjectivity and identity into the text by denying the postmodern idea of the "death of the author",
> publicized after Roland Barthes' essay on this issue. (…) This close connection between personal
> experience and writing/text, the inscription of female subjectivity into the text, and the profession of
> a woman writer necessarily lead to a form of autobiographical writing in which life and text become
> one and in which self-affirmation as a woman and as a woman poet is equally sought for.[590]

Rosselli's stance, in this respect, is made more complex by her intellectual engagement with

the contemporary poetry scene. While Rosselli acknowledged that her poetry was strictly informed

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[587] Rosselli, 142.
[588] Rosselli, 141.
[589] The term is borrowed from Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*.
[590] Birkle, *Women's Stories of the Looking Glass*, 6.

by her own life story,[591] she also equally stressed the need to take distance from it and transfer that "realtà mia"[592] to one that could be universally experienced. In doing so, she partially aligned to the "Reduction of the I" advocated by the neo-avant-garde poets. She affirmed: "Tendo all'eliminazione dell'io. L'io non è più al centro espressivo, va messo in ombra o da parte. Credo che solo così si raggiungano risposte poetiche e morali valide, valori utili anche alla società".[593] Emmanuela Tandello also recognised the gap between Rosselli's biography and its "deformed", or altered, narration: "Ma tutta la poesia di Amelia tende a cercare di costruire una storia altra rispetto a quella già scritta (cioè avvenuta), che con essa intrattiene uno stretto rapporto. (...) Alla dimensione biografica da cui si era partiti – e da cui la poesia è necessitata a partire – si ritorna; ma non all'autobiografia".[594]

Rosselli's desire was to construct a universal poetry useful to all readers: "ed è con queste preoccupazioni ch'io mi misi ad un certo punto della mia adolescenza a cercare le forme universali".[595] However, in order to achieve universality, the female poet had to undergo a process of catharsis and emancipation from trauma. According to Rosselli, in fact, failing to consciously assimilate one's past would result in the impossibility of writing poetry. She maintained:

> [S]ono del parere che non si è scrittori se non si è fatta una analisi personale, per levare di mezzo i problemi più urgenti che possono intralciare una visione del mondo un pochino obiettiva e utile agli altri. Se no, si scrive una poesia ad uso personale. Molti dicono che scrivono per risolvere le loro nevrosi. Scusi, ma tutti siamo nevrotici dice Freud, a che pro? Vai dall'analista otto mesi e poi scrivi il capolavoro. Almeno cerca di risolvere i problemi più brucianti che ti impediscono di scrivere, che ti impediscono di entrare nell'inconscio, di rompere la barriera tra conscio e inconscio. Almeno risolvi quelli brutalmente ovvi. Un mare di bella poesia qualche volta e dei bei romanzi, escono solo perché vogliamo risolvere i nostri personali problemi, o di famiglia, confessandoli. Meglio parlarne con uno psicologo per poter scrivere poi di cose più generali e più utilmente. *Il ritorno al privato ha quel difetto, che non prende in considerazione l'egoismo assoluto. Noi pretendiamo di dare qualcosa ad un pubblico che poi è di uso privato, un'autoanalisi confusa e impasticciata. Meglio un analista da giovane non soltanto per risolvere in parte la propria nevrosi – nessuno la risolve del tutto, ma per*

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[591] "[D]ocumento quello che mi accade, dunque nella vita e nella poesia (...) Registro quello che mi accade: la poesia non è, come qualcuno pensa, puro spirito, ma registra accadimenti inaspettati, le stanchezze della vita di tutti i giorni", Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 16. And also, "in verità tra la mia biografia e la mia poesia ci sono strettissimi rapporti anche se ciascuna di esse obbedisce a leggi proprie", Rosselli, 101.

[592] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 339.

[593] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 64.

[594] In Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, XXXVII.

[595] From *Spazi metrici*, the quote is immediately preceded da un'altra interessante claim: "la lingua in cui scrivo di volta in volta è una sola, mentre la mia esperienza sonora logica e associativa è certamente quella di tutti i popoli, e riflettibile in tutte le lingue", Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 338.

non dare in pasto ai leoni i fattacci nostri e farli passare per arte. L'arte supera la problematica del trauma o dovrebbe farlo almeno in parte.[596]

Aware of the dangers of drawing from her private life, Rosselli considered her early writing as a phase of preparation indispensable to acquire the status of conscious and mature author: "*Primi scritti* (1952–1963) fu comprato da Guanda nell'80 e son tutte cose scritte in prosa o poesia, preparatorie al pubblicare il primo libro nel '64, in italiano. […] Comunque questo è un libro preparatorio giovanile".[597] It is precisely due to its experimental and investigatory nature that some of the mechanisms characterising Rosselli's whole work can be here more clearly identified. In particular, in this first phase of Rosselli's poetic production the themes of memory and trauma surface quite overtly, before being assimilated and integrated in her surrealistic "traumatologico verso".[598] As I shall discuss in the following section, the re-appropriation of memory and the overcoming of trauma are processes achieved through a procedure recalling, once again, that of photography.

Reframing Memory and Overcoming Trauma: The Mind as a Photographic Apparatus

Fotos of places are better than places or memories, fotos in our brain, same way.[599]

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud compared the functioning of the mind – "the instrument which carries out our mental functions" – to that of a "photographic apparatus".[600] On such apparatus, traces, or "memory-traces", are then impressed and remain latent, as if they were photographic exposures in need to be developed. Not all memories transit from an unconscious state to a conscious one: "impressions which have had the greatest effect on us – those of our earliest youth – are precisely those which scarcely ever become conscious".[601] Freud returned to the photographic metaphor in

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[596] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 239, my italics.
[597] Rosselli, 325. And also, "Primi scritti è un lavoro preparatorio a *Variazioni belliche*", Rosselli, 114.
[598] Rosselli, *L'opera poetica*, 254. Some of the references to trauma in Rosselli's later poetic production are mentioned in Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, 186–96.
[599] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 125.
[600] Both quotations are from Freud and Strachey, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 538.
[601] Freud and Strachey, 541.

Moses and Monotheism (1939), where he compared such childhood impressions to photographs that "can be developed and made into a picture after a short or long interval".[602] Childhood experiences can thus be "developed" at some point later in life. This state of latency[603] is linked, by Freud, to that of neurosis: "The impressions we experienced at an early age and forgot later, to which I have ascribed such great importance for the aetiology of the neuroses, are called traumata".[604] These traumata, "either experiences or impressions", can be brought to consciousness through analysis, since for Freud only analytic work "is able to bring those forgotten experiences back to memory".[605]

Rosselli was familiar with Freud's theories and resorted to psychoanalysis in her attempt to overcome trauma.[606] In particular, she addressed the blanks in memory caused by the trauma of the loss of her parents: "leggevo per ricostruire la figura di mio padre, quasi totalmente dimenticata. La prima analisi dei primi otto mesi mi ha aiutata a ricostruire l'infanzia e a ricordare mio padre. Anche l'adolescenza, perché la morte di mia madre me l'aveva stroncata".[607] Rosselli's traumata, the forgotten – and in this case traumatic – impressions experienced during childhood, are thus "developed" and brought to consciousness thanks to her period of psychoanalysis.

Margaret Iversen, in her book *Photography, Trace and Trauma*, explores the idea of photography as "an analogue of trauma" at once "individual and collective", since both "involve an indelible impression of something generated outside".[608] These indelible impressions, in line with Freud's theory, are then liable to be developed and integrated into consciousness. Iversen also calls

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[602] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 199.

[603] Defined as "latency, the appearance of inexplicable manifestations which call for an explanation, and the strict condition of an early, and subsequently forgotten, experience", Freud, 117.

[604] These may or may not have a traumatic nature in themselves: "It may remain an open question whether the aetiology of the neuroses should in general be regarded as a traumatic one"; both quotations are from Freud, 117.

[605] The reference to the three points is thus explained: "These three points – early happenings within the first five years of life, the forgetting, and the characteristic of sexuality and aggressivity – belong closely together", Freud, 120.

[606] In a passage quoted earlier she indeed claimed: "tutti siamo nevrotici dice Freud, a che pro? Vai dall'analista otto mesi e poi scrivi il capolavoro. Almeno cerca di risolvere i problemi più brucianti che ti impediscono di scrivere, che ti impediscono di entrare nell'inconscio, di rompere la barriera tra conscio e inconscio", Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 239.

[607] Rosselli, 90. And also, "E con l'analisi sia junghiana, sia freudiana d'appoggio, mi son tornati i ricordi della gioventù, sennò io, non so se per lo shock della perdita della madre a diciannove anni, io proprio quasi non ricordavo la gioventù. Sono tornati i ricordi della prima gioventù anche", Rosselli, 202.

[608] Iversen, *Photography Trace and Trauma*, 1. On photography, trauma, and memory, also see Baer, *Spectral Evidence*.

attention to the specific phenomenon of creating "fictive elaborations of trauma, not as symptom, but as a means of assimilating traumatic impressions into experience and memory proper".[609] In my reading of Rosselli's early writing, the English poetic proses *My Clothes to the Wind* and *A Birth* constitute a clear example of such "fictive elaborations", since they fictionally revisit the past to finally re-appropriate it and to partially assimilate trauma. What's more, Rosselli's understanding of photography as a cognitive and epistemological tool is transposed in these proses as a model to develop latent memories. My analysis builds on Chiara Carpita's psychoanalytic readings of Rosselli's early writings, while at the same time offers a different interpretation of their outcome. I will also particularly focus on *A Birth* because in this poetic prose the connection between photography, memory and trauma is made more explicit. Furthermore, by being written in 1962, *A Birth* symbolically represents the passage from Rosselli's "preparatory phase" to that of maturity, in line with the passage from a "realtà mia" to a universally valid poetic production exemplified in the coeval metrical manifesto *Spazi metrici*, also written in 1962.

According to Carpita, *My Clothes to the Wind* and *A Birth* represent Rosselli's attempt to reconstruct the past and define her own identity. Carpita, nonetheless, deems this process to be a failure, since Rosselli's definition of her identity remained incomplete due to her incapability of being emancipated from a condition of perpetual mourning.[610] However, Rosselli believed that through her early writing she was able to achieve her mature identity as a woman and as a woman poet. In an auto-analysis written in 1953 for her psychoanalyst Ernst Bernhard, Rosselli announced her success: "In seguito ebbi l'impressione, e forse la conferma di questa nell'analisi dei sogni recenti, di essere passata da uno stato quasi del tutto egocentrico ad uno rivolto piuttosto all'inconscio collettivo che non a quello personale".[611] The movement from a personal to a collective unconscious was indeed

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[609] Iversen, *Photography Trace and Trauma*, 4.
[610] "Il tentativo di ricostruire la trama dei ricordi si rivela però fallimentare; la memoria involontaria emerge soltanto in modo frammentato e il percorso identitario resta incompiuto per l'impossibilità di uscire da una condizione di lutto perenne", Carpita, "Notizie sui testi: Primi scritti," 1397. Commenting on *A Birth*, Carpita added that Rosselli's identity was condemned to "rimanere irrisolta", Carpita, 1412.
[611] Cortellessa, *La furia dei venti contrari*, 131.

part of Rosselli's larger project to speak a universal language, valid for all people – "nelle alchimie di un linguaggio buono a ogni latitudine"[612] – which found literary fulfillment in *Spazi metrici*. The auto-analysis, along with a watercolour and two pieces of creative writing (titled *Phantasy, End of November* and *Phantasy, Beginning of December*), are presented in *Tre scritti e un acquerello per Ernst Bernhard.*[613] In it, Carpita argues that these documents – probably drafted in 1952 – closely relate to *My Clothes to the Wind*, also written in the same year. Moreover, for Carpita they are examples of the Jungian process of "active imagination", for which images and visions from the unconscious are therapeutically transposed into writing and "developed" into consciousness in order to achieve "individuation".[614]

My Clothes to the Wind* and *A Birth* can thus be considered as successful attempts at "developing" into consciousness the traumatic experiences of the loss of her mother (*My Clothes to the Wind*) and of her father (*A Birth*). Both poetic proses, in fact, end with the keyword "recognition", which symbolises Rosselli's freshly conquered awareness and her progress towards maturity, at once biographical and authorial. *A Birth*, in particular, describes a journey in time and space – "if I lay back layers of *time* I might be ready to open the list of *places*, addresses of all our lives!"[615] The journey back is undertaken to go back to the moment of birth and to "fictionally" live again the "blurred" memory of her father's death: "If I lay back on layers of time I could find Poppy laughing, softly, blurred against the round sky".[616] It furthermore aims to exorcise anger – "If I lay back layers of time I might still render the rage softened by undisturbed love"[617] – and to assimilate the shock caused by a violent death: "If I lay back on layers of time *fit for murder* with laughter collapsing

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[612] From *Diario in tre lingue*, Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 95.

[613] Followed by *Amelia Rosselli e il processo di individuazione, alcuni inediti*, both in Cortellessa, *La furia dei venti contrari*, 129–51.

[614] Jung briefly defined the process of individuation as follows: "In all cases of dissociation it is therefore necessary to integrate the unconscious into consciousness. This is a synthetic process which I have termed the 'individuation process'", Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 9:40.

[615] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 125.

[616] Rosselli, 125.

[617] Rosselli, 125.

marauding into a new dynasty".[618] The image of Rosselli's father – "the man dark simpering and sad with his cracked smile"[619] – opens the poetic prose and returns at the end altered and transformed into the figure of Don Quixote, lost in a pointless battle that cannot be won and that causes the sorrow of his family members,[620] forever deprived of him: "Crying daughter when don chichotte appeared flamboyant and the pity of the child was foresight, endless. Laughing at the lion roaring with menace, crying at the thin just cavalier".[621]

In the process of revisiting the past to acquire a "sample of recognition",[622] the latent memories of childhood are developed into conscious pictures and photographs. Photography is directly called into question: "Fotos of places are better than places or memories, *fotos in our brain*, same way. *Curve the triangle out of escape and the landscape into curved belonging*".[623] Photographs are thus not only conceived as tangible objects – they also stand as a metaphor for the cognitive process of remembering. For Rosselli, if photographs of places are more effective than memories – like her photographic practice confirmed – the same can be said for the photographs impressed in the brain, or in other words for the memory traces that need to be developed and brought to consciousness. Rosselli's metaphorical expression – "fotos in the brain" – therefore directly converses with Freud's understanding of the mind as a photographic apparatus. What's more, her fictional revisiting of the past implied the "curving" deformation of experience typical of her poetry, carried out to appropriate reality: "Curve the triangle out of escape and the landscape into curved belonging".[624] It is through a process of deformation that the past can be developed and thus regained: "*the child fakes remembrance* of the *curve* of the vault of the church straining on its cardinal position, *child who*

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[618] Rosselli, 125.
[619] Rosselli, 125.
[620] The death of Rosselli's father, on the one hand, forces the other family members to face his loss; at the same time, his death is responsible for altering the mother's behavior, now cold and distant, towards her own children: "the mother worried with pain and foresight (…) she unwillingly accompanied the crying children (…) Soft mother, cold mother, harsh father invisible", Rosselli, 128–29.
[621] Rosselli, 129.
[622] Rosselli, 129.
[623] Rosselli, 125, my italics.
[624] Rosselli, 125, my italics.

regains memory as a loaf of bread is turned, is child with no childhood".[625] And also, "As I place this dream of a vision alongside the first burden of heart, is to be regained the place and the position of the church".[626]

In the introduction to *Photography and the Optical Unconscious*, Shawn Michelle Smith links the idea of deformation to that of repression of traumatic impressions: "repression works like the refraction of light as it passes from one lens (psychic system) to another, thus distorting the image perceived in the mind's eye".[627] Similarly, Iversen posited that: "Traumatic impressions are liable to be dreamed or recollected in analysis in distorted ways (…) Freud's model of the unconscious, then, is of traces laid down that are indelible, although they may manifest themselves in displaced, distorted forms".[628] Rosselli knew she was fictionally recalling her own past from the "distorted" vantage point of an adult: "Perhaps the fray is better regarded here *from this viewpoint* and *the curved baked point of childhood is no other than we make it* as love wakes tender at a slap".[629] Nevertheless, it was precisely the distorted vision of her past that allowed her to re-appropriate it: the "fray" between child and adult had exactly this purpose and stood as a negotiations of "visions" to reconstruct a version of reality in the present. The negotiation between the adult's vantage point and that of the child – and therefore between present and past – is quite apparent in the following excerpt:

> Now *as I strain to preconceive a vision the child strains outdoors* against a dry window flowered with dry sails, their everblown clear curtains, willy nilly white against a white sky even drearier since it was still, the curtains snapped bored and the other house to which no curve of pantheon ever adjoined its gloom, *the other house recorded the memory recounted to the child*, fat against a flap of curls. The light skipped by the green street ever lower unperceivable, *to the child perhaps standing watching the church in its memory of adult*. The church flapped its wise and wrecked standard of *a full grown blaze smothered to fake poetry*, rose under the dew light which *I place* now against a rough surface crossing the corner of *the sidewalk as yet invisible, unrecorded, unremembered. The child fakes a turn* on the wide turning point of the circled Square, where that white light shone against no trees perhaps but stone light grey and heaving; *the child stares at its memory and swings uncertain of reality*. The child stares. The child is there. *The child is gone, marauding again the escape or the verity of recollections furnished by grandparents*, with their withered joy of separation, their joy of faultless life in a canyon! Look askance again: *the child lifts the veil and the turned point of vault and church is no other than a preparation for the death of mysterious seeders, wild guardians, gross politicians*. Look further at the

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[625] Rosselli, 125, my italics.
[626] Rosselli, 126.
[627] Smith and Sliwinski, *Photography and the Optical Unconscious*, 13.
[628] Iversen, *Photography Trace and Trauma*, 4.
[629] Rosselli, *Le poesie*, 125, my italics.

steeple which has bent to curve the dome unrusted since the grey dull of its matter (a white or grey chalk indifferently) shines askance, very rosy if you wish to pardon its death appeal to the young.[630]

The widely recurring image of the church stands as the emblem of Rosselli's struggle to dominate memory. The adult is straining to "preconceive a vision" of the child in the past, who is standing and "watching the church". Yet the child has been fed unreliable memories – "the memory" is "recounted to the child" – and the "recollections furnished by grandparents" cannot be trusted: "the child stares at its memory and swings uncertain of reality". The exhortations to "look again" and to "look further" respond to the need to regain and reappropriate the image of the past through vision, and in particular that of the church, which is systematically curved and deformed: "Look askance again: the child lifts the veil and the turned point of vault and church"; "Look further at the steeple which has bent to curve the dome unrusted since the grey dull of its matter (a white or grey chalk indifferently)".[631] The church itself is therefore a symbol; whether it existed as a reality in the past, or whether it stood as an imaginary reconstruction in the present – "And were there domes in the white air of Paris in the white hard shapes of light of child?"[632] – its role in this fictive re-elaboration is ultimately to prepare the remembering subject for the trauma of death: "the turned point of vault and church is no other than a preparation for the death of mysterious seeders, wild guardians, gross politicians".[633]

The struggle over past memory finally leads Rosselli to recover the moment and the image of her father's death: "No irony esquissed itself in that childhood vision but the uncertain death rolling majestic in petty places (…) in the feast of balloons snapping, the murder in the crowd suddenly begging down to daily smells of food".[634] The actual envisioning of the murder allows for the transit from a reaction of shock: "O I am a loose noose! O I am a scream in the valley! O my thirty years have slipped by crashing forcefully into a house of crashing banners"[635] to one of returning reason:

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[630] Rosselli, 126–27, my italics.
[631] Rosselli, 127.
[632] Rosselli, 127.
[633] Rosselli, 127.
[634] Rosselli, 128.
[635] Rosselli, 128.

"then slowly reason returned as a tram in the half light of neon pathways. Impossible layers of time at first flapped back to reveal a reason which had been neglected then denied, then ultimately explained away".[636] This moment of epiphany, pinpointed in the murder, reveals its own meta-literary and fictional essence: "O the blow of the revolver revealed a cracked white wall, poverty's demon, in the backstage door".[637] The figure of the author lies hidden somewhere behind the doors, "and the woman backstage crying into the fur false costumes of the evening's, the living's entire show".[638] Rosselli herself nodded towards this intepretation when she declared in one of her interviews: "nessuno ha voglia di scrivere di sé salvo trasfigurando l'esperienza e nascondendosi dietro le quinte".[639]

It is exactly this cathartic "transfiguration" and thus deformation that allows the author to migrate from an autobiographical level to that of universal validity. Through deformation, Rosselli was able to develop the negative image of her past into a positive image relevant to everyone. By adopting the model of photography, and by integrating the tools of "active imagination" and self-analysis, Rosselli revisited the past and emancipated herself from trauma. As Sarah Kofman posited in *Freud, The Photographic Apparatus*, the "photographic" process of development achieved through analysis is functional to the construction of new meaning: "The passage to light takes place through a procedure which is not theoretical but practical: the analytic cure. (…) To pass from darkness to light is not, then, to rediscover a meaning already there, it is to construct a meaning which has never existed as such".[640]

In the economy of Rosselli's poetic work, *A Birth* occupies a particularly important position. At the exact counterpoint from *My Clothes to the Wind*, the opening text of the *Primi scritti* cycle, *A*

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[636] Rosselli, 128.
[637] Rosselli, 128.
[638] Rosselli, 128. The image of the woman in the backstage is parallel to that – contained in *My Clothes to the Wind* – of the "woman with orange painted hair rackety with the keeping of men and the curing of a mother nearly dead" who "opened the emprisoning walls", thus leading the way to the final epiphany, "to the choosing and the mingling, and to the recognition". Rosselli, 9.
[639] Rosselli, *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 33.
[640] Smith and Sliwinski, *Photography and the Optical Unconscious*, 78.

Birth symbolically marks the closure of Rosselli's juvenile writing, which she considered as a prelude to her more established poetic writing. The birth is therefore also meta-literary and points to the coming into being of a woman poet. It symbolically inaugurates a new phase of poetic production, leading to *Variazioni belliche*, Rosselli's first published poetry book.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, Rosselli's writing owes much to the Trastevere walks in the 1950s, when photography had allowed for preliminary research into the surrounding phenomena, outlining the divide between an objective world and a world perceived. In Rosselli's case, photography became a tool to address the problematised role of the subject in reality. The subject-object crisis was not only lived as an embodied condition, during her promenades in Rome, but it was also reflected in her writing. The precariousness of the lyrical subject (along with the "dramma pronominale") suggested by Carbognin, epitomised exactly this new stance towards reality, according to which the relationship between subject and object was permeable, flowing, and inextricable. In her attempt to record her experience of reality, Rosselli referred to photography, and adopted the functioning of a still camera, or a film camera, as the cognitive model around which to design her metrical system. Like a camera, the "metrical space" recorded and exposed the lived experience by framing it into a spatial-temporal construct.

Rosselli's relationship to photography, and to the technologies of the still camera and the film camera, is therefore cognitive in nature: on the one hand, Rosselli considered the camera as a prosthesis of the human body, as it aided the subject to investigate its relationship with the outer world. On the other hand, photography offered the conceptual model for poetry making: not only did it inspire the theorisation of Rosselli's metrical space; it also provided a metaphor for Rosselli's understanding of the mind as a photographic apparatus – "fotos in our brain" – and thus it offered the tools to develop latent memories and process trauma. Rosselli's interactions with photography are

therefore different from those of the neo-avant-garde poets, who mostly focused on asyntactism and often adopted the technique of literary montage in their writing. While the influence of asyntactism can be retraced in Rosselli's poetry, her exchanges with photography are more evident in the adoption of conceptual models around which to structure poetry both in form – *Spazi metrici* – and in content – the development of latent memories in her prose *A Birth*. In such a context, the underlying influence of photography also fulfilled a feminist stance: the model of photography allowed for the hunt and capture of present and past experiences. It thus empowered the gendered subject to reach maturity and be emancipated from patriarchy at both personal and literary levels.

While scholars such as Loreto and Carbognin have confined the presence of photography to the background, this chapter has aimed to show how photography was rather embedded in Rosselli's writing, serving both as a cognitive tool to grasp reality and as a model to design her own poetry. At the same time, it attempted to demonstrate how reading Rosselli's work through the lens of visuality can uncover new aspects of her poetic practice. In the next chapter, I will futher explore how photography and cinema helped to innovate and restructure the forms of poetry by looking at the work of neo-avant-garde writer Edoardo Sanguineti.

Chapter Five

Edoardo Sanguineti: Photographic Eye, Cinematic Mind

The highly eclectic work of Edoardo Sanguineti (1930–2010) spanned over almost six decades (1951–2010), and comprised of poetry, anti-novels,[641] theatre, collaborations with musicians, visual artists, and cinema directors. An analysis of Sanguineti's poetry provides the ideal case for a more complex investigation on intermediality and specifically on the interactions between poetic writing and photographic media. By looking at Sanguineti's poetry collections *T.A.T.* (1966–1968), *Reisebilder* (1971), and *Postkarten* (1972–1977), later included in *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, as well as at other essays and interviews,[642] this chapter focuses on Sanguineti's understanding of cinema and photography. It argues that *i*) Sanguineti saw and perceived the world photographically; *ii*) his photographic way of seeing structured his form of writing; and *iii*) his photographic mode of writing inextricably linked language and ideology together, standing as an act of rebellion against bourgeoise culture.

Between the 1950s and 1960s, Sanguineti occupied a foreground position in the cultural panorama – not only because he advocated for a new, politically committed, literature, able to "fare dell'avanguardia un'arte da museo"[643] and challenge the condition of historical alienation peculiar of his time,[644] but also because he took up an active role in the shaping of the neo-avant-garde

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[641] For an analysis of Sanguineti's *Capriccio italiano* as an anti-novel, see Bouchard, "In the Palus Putredinis of Italy's Bourgeois Domesticity. Edoardo Sanguineti's 'Capriccio Italiano' from Textual Representation to Critical Practice."

[642] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*.

[643] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 204. The full implications of this slogan will become clear in the last section of this chapter.

[644] Sanguineti offered a definition of alienation in "Poesia informale?": "quando nel Laborintus si parla, con preciso rigore, di 'alienazione', si sommano insieme l'ovvio significato clinico (che è l''esaurimento' appunto, ad arte esasperato e provocatamente sottolineato), e quello, diversamente tecnico, di 'Verfremdung', comprendente a sua volta sia il valore sociologicamente diagnostico del concetto marxista ('Verässerung'), sia quello derivatamente estetico ('straniamento') di marca brechtiana", Giuliani, 202–3.

movement. Sanguineti's 1956 highly experimental *Laborintus* broke with other contemporary poetry

forms, such as Hermeticism or Neorealism, and concurrently anticipated the poetic experience of the

poets included in the 1961 groundbreaking anthology *I Novissimi*.[645] When a few years later, in 1963,

Sanguineti co-founded Gruppo 63, he was already partly overcoming the poetics of the neo-avant-

garde and moving towards a more communicative phase in his poetry.[646] At the same time, through

his collaborations and contacts with visual artists, musicians, and film directors, he contributed to the

spreading of ideas and artistic practices beyond literature.[647] Sanguineti's fascination and engagement

with other artistic media and with photographic culture is exemplary of a specific artistic era, open to

new stimuli and codes of expression after the stifling years of World War II, and yet already

processing the onsets of the Cold War and the spread of the mass media.[648]

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[645] Sanguineti described the experience of the *Novissimi* as follows: "[I]n un momento in cui si profilavano o già si sviluppavano, un po' su tutte le frontiere della letteratura, i più diversi e straordinari ritorni all'ordine, e finivano nazional-popolari, a non dire altri e peggiori, un Pascoli come un Lampedusa, i 'Novissimi' mossero, con il loro aspro stil novo, da un'ipotesi assolutamente opposta: dall'idea di un ritorno al disordine", Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 114.

[646] In 1963, Sanguineti's *Per una nuova figurazione* underscored his adhesion to the "desiderio di ricondurre la pittura a un aspetto figurativo" Sanguineti, "Per una nuova figurazione." It was a desire to overcome abstraction that Sanguineti also adopted for his own poetry writing, in the attempt to embrace a new communicative style. Sanguineti made explicit the parallel between "neo-figurazione" and "neo-contenutismo" in the preface to *Disegni e parole* (1963), an anthology of collaborations between writers and visual artists edited by Sanguineti, Carluccio, and Gribaudo: "Ma per i poeti più nuovi, per i Novissimi appunto, il discorso muta già di accento e di prospettiva, (...) E mentre ormai si scatena la querelle della nuova figurazione, presso le tavole dipinte, ecco che ci è possibile suggerire a chi legge una questione di simmetria espressiva ancora tutta inedita... E siamo al ragionamento, appena iniziato in qualche testo, di un aperto neo-contenutismo", Carluccio, Gribaudo, and Sanguineti, *Disegni e parole*. The extract from the preface is quoted from Lisa, *Pretesti ecfrastici: Edoardo Sanguineti e alcuni artisti italiani*, 27.

[647] For example in 1959, Sanguineti signed the Naples Manifesto, which brought together the Milanese Nuclearists and the avant-garde painters from Naples, see Chirumbolo, "Edoardo Sanguineti and the Visual Arts: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue," 182; Baccarani, *La poesia nel labirinto. Razionalismo e istanza "antiletteraria" nell'opera e nella cultura di Edoardo Sanguineti*, 107–8. Sanguineti's friendship and collaborations with Enrico Baj are also documented in Chirumbolo, "Signs and Designs: Sanguineti and Baj from *Laborintus* to *The Biggest Art-Book in the World*." Sanguineti also works with musician Luciano Berio on *Passaggio* (1961–2), *Laborintus II* (1965), and *A-Ronne* (1974–5), see Osmond-Smith, "Voicing the Labyrinth: The Collaborations of Edoardo Sanguineti and Luciano Berio." In 1971, Sanguineti was also co-screenwriter for Ansano Giannarelli's film *Non ho tempo* (104') and in 1995 he acted in *Niente stasera* (72') directed by Ennio De Dominicis. For a more exhaustive list of collaborations with film directors, including Ugo Nespolo, see Longo, "Ideologia del montaggio. Il secolo del cinematografo secondo Edoardo Sanguineti."

[648] In an interview with Fabio Gambaro, Sanguineti commented: "*Come ricorda il passaggio dall'euforia della liberazione agli anni della guerra fredda?* (...) Per uno della mia generazione, che nell'immediato dopoguerra aveva poco più di quindici anni, non ci furono tanto due tempi diversi di euforia e disillusione, quanto un unico tempo unitario, in cui si cercava subito di trovare strumenti alternativi all'ordine delle cose, in nome di una specie di volontà di disordine che ben spiega il fascino esercitato dalla cultura delle avanguardie. In Laborintus ho parlato di 'santi anarchici': in questo modo individuavo all'origine della cultura moderna – intendendo il moderno come una sorta di ideale unitario, cosa che oggi anche il postmoderno rende possibile – una sorta di grande pulsione anarchica, che poi poteva anche disciplinarsi in forme di partito o in ideologie ben definite, ma che in sostanza voleva significare una volontà di rivolta prima ancora che di rivoluzione, di rifiuto dell'ordine, qualunque esso fosse". In Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 9–10.

Sanguineti's experience represents yet another variation in the trajectory embraced by Porta and Rosselli, and it shows how references to photographic media and culture can be employed in a number of different ways in poetry writing. Porta's civic engagement, for instance, led him to denounce a corrupt and violent society in his poetry by centring some of his poetic research around the images drawn from crime news. Rosselli's references to photography, instead, were functional in uncovering her personal experience and its intersections with the trauma of history. Sanguineti also took up the inclination towards social and historical critique: starting from *Purgatorio de l'Inferno*, and more overtly so during the 1970s, his poetry marked a shift from an allegorical criticism of a condition of alienation, to the introduction of a fictional alter ego moving in the diary-like story of the everyday – "questa poesia molto quotidiana (e molto del quotidiano proprio)".[649] It was the same alienation that he had already allegorically registered during the 1950s in *Laborintus:* "il solo discorso giusto allora le portrait questo novum organon espressione / de l'artiste-horloger in questi termini espressione di alienazione / espressione del tempo il tuo tempo".[650] In *Purgatorio*, Sanguineti tried to explain this alienation as a lived experience in a dialogue with his son, who was conceived as the very "structure of hope":[651] "parlerò a mio figlio; dirò: (...) una spiegazione devo; della storica / impartecipazione (patita) alla storia: / della sofferta alienazione".[652] According to Sanguineti himself, *Purgatorio de l'Inferno* celebrated the overcoming of the "Palus putredinis" – the swamp of history at the center of *Laborintus*[653] – and made a move towards a new communicative attempt, with the

[649] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 222.

[650] Sanguineti, 33.

[651] "(spiegherò); (questo); come il figlio deve, / adesso; (di cui ha salvato); essere la figura; (la struttura); (...); / della speranza:" Sanguineti, 73. According to Lorenzini, *Purgatorio de l'Inferno*, offers "una sorta di breviario pedagogico in versi destinato ai figli, i quali costituiscono la vera e unica speranza di uscita dall'alienazione: nel finale della raccolta, ad esempio, dove la palude allegorica del Laborintus appare davvero superata: "ma vedi il fango che ci sta alle spalle, / e il sole in mezzo agli alberi, e i bambini che dormono: / i bambini / che sognano (che parlano, sognando); (ma i bambini, li vedi, cosi inquieti); / (dormendo, i bambini); (sognando, adesso)", Niva Lorenzini, Poesia Del Novecento Italiano (Roma: Carocci, 2002), 154.

[652] Sanguineti, 72–73.

[653] The expression comes from *Laborintus I*: "composte terre in strutturali complessioni sono Palus Putredinis" Sanguineti, 13. In the interview with Gambaro, Sanguineti admitted that the Palus Putredinis was an allegorical image for the theme of alienation: "Certo. Per me la valenza politica del testo stava tutta nell'immagine della 'Palus Putredinis', quella che poi sarà facile definire come tematica dell'alienazione" Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 29.

introduction of a paradoxical persona that was simultaneously closely autobiographical and yet a transfigured, fictional other. In an interview with Fabio Gambaro, Sanguineti said:

> Mi ero domandato appunto cosa si potesse fare dopo l'afasia di *Laborintus*. Certo avrei potuto continuare a "laborintizzare" tutta l'esistenza, ma non mi sembrava certo un esercizio significativo. Il problema anzi, per me, era quello di capire quale tipo di comunicazione fosse possibile, una volta raggiunta la soglia del silenzio: abbandonare la scrittura o esplorare altre strade? (...) *Purgatorio de l'Inferno* voleva uscire esplicitamente dalla "Palus Putredinis", pur mantenendo le tracce di questa esperienza: il che per me significava in pratica porsi il problema di come affrontare un discorso di tipo politico. (...) Prima c'erano delle risonanze private che però per il lettore dovevano perdere ogni carattere privato, dilatandosi in un significato allegorico. *In Purgatorio de l'Inferno*, invece, intendevo superare la poetica dei Novissimi tutta centrata sulla riduzione e la dissoluzione dell'io. Si trattava di utilizzare l'io, ma attraverso una strategia che permettesse una chiara presa di distanza: l'io era come una terza persona e, proprio per questo, aveva un effetto di seduzione nei confronti del lettore che veniva spinto a un certo livello di coinvolgimento, in quanto all'ascolto di una testimonianza.[654]

Sanguineti's poetry increasingly acquired an overtly political stance: by moving a critique against the alienation of the individual, its aim was to challenge the superstructure of society. Not surprisingly, one of the pillars of Sanguineti's thought lay in the concept of ideology, employed to contest the bourgeoisie through language; ideology and language were, indeed, closely intertwined for Sanguineti, who titled one of his collections of essays *Ideologia e linguaggio.*[655] In turn, language, which is always and irremediably ideologically marked – "la parola è concretamente, come dovremmo sapere sempre, una ideologia nella forma del linguaggio"[656] – was for Sanguineti intimately linked to collage and to montage, since both techniques set forth to defy the syntactical order that represented bourgeois rationalism,[657] and provided an anarchic response to its sclerotic structure. Montage, for Sanguineti, was also the most striking and prominent feature of the twentieth century. Within this context, therefore, Sanguineti's references to both cinema and photography take

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[654] Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 79–81.

[655] Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*.

[656] Sanguineti, 133.

[657] The bourgeoisie Sanguineti referred to, rather than being embodied in a specific time and place, was a fluctuant category that responded to Marxist theory. Sanguineti often proclaimed his sympathy for the proletariat, for which he took up the role of the "intellettuale organico" advocated by Gramsci, as he specified in *Come si diventa materialisti storici?*: "Ma quando mi domandano: "Che cosa pensi di fare come intellettuale? Che cosa pensi, in ogni caso, che debbano fare gli intellettuali?, la mia risposta è: Quello che hanno fatto sempre, se hanno svolto il loro ruolo. E cioè di collaborare a diffondere o consolidare, per quel tanto o pochissimo di cui sono capaci, la coscienza di classe. (...) Ma per chi voglia saperne di più vorrei rinviare alla lettura, e questo è già superfluo per quello che ho detto, di Gramsci. (...) che si tratta dunque, per un proletariato, di elaborare i propri intellettuali organici, di contrapporli a quelli tradizionali, e di convertire, al possibile, gli intellettuali tradizionali a diventare organici al proletariato – io preferisco dire al proletariato piuttosto che al partito, massime in un momento in cui il Partito non c'è", Sanguineti, *Cultura e realtà*, 30.

up new meaning and value: by being linked to questions of ideology, they act directly upon the very core of his poetics.

Interdisciplinary and Intermedial Sanguineti

Sanguineti's is possibly one of the most remarkable cases of a poet committed to intermediality. In recent years, not only have several scholars discussed Sanguineti's oeuvre in relation to other arts: Sanguineti's work has also been heralded as an exemplary case to advocate for the need of an interdisciplinary approach to Italian literary studies.[658] Brook, Mussgnung, and Pieri consider the analysis of Sanguineti's work, along with that of other contemporary artists, as a necessary step to write "a new history of the period, which relates the experiences of *neoavanguardia* and early postmodernism to contemporaneous developments in the areas of photography, architecture, fashion and design, and which pays greater attention to underexplored links between literature, music and the visual arts".[659] Similarly, in the introduction to *Neoavanguardia: Italian Experimental Literature and Arts in the 1960s*, Paolo Chirumbolo and Mario Moroni "investigate the *neoavanguardia* as an overall interdisciplinary cultural phenomenon",[660] recognising how the work of neo-avant-garde artists, and therefore of Sanguineti's, is intimately interdisciplinary – as well as intermedial – both in its practical and theoretical fabrication.

A number of essays have investigated Sanguineti's experimentation with other literary genres, such as theatre writing and anti-novel narratives, showing how, even when remaining within the boundaries of literature, Sanguineti chose to cross genres and integrate new techniques in his writing. Some of the most interesting theoretical aspects discussed in these studies are the concept of

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[658] Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, "Italian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Perspective."
[659] Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, 390.
[660] Chirumbolo, Moroni, and Somigli, *Neoavanguardia. Italian Experimental Literature and Arts in the 1960s*, 6.

"gesture", which links together writing, the performative, and the visual;[661] and the technique of

ekphrasis, a structural feature in both Sanguineti's novels (*Capriccio italiano*, 1963; *Il giuoco*

dell'oca, 1967) and in his poetry. From the very start of his poetic career Sanguineti indissolubly

linked literature to other disciplines and media; in his declaration of poetics titled *Poesia informale?*,

contained in the 1961 anthology *I Novissimi*, he acknowledged the importance of an interdisciplinary

approach to solve the linguistic crisis affecting 1950s poetry in Italy: [662]

> Dirò soltanto che se, componendo il *Laborintus*, si stabilivano da parte mia riferimenti intenzionali a talune situazioni tecnico-espressive di altre arti (della musica, intendo dire, non meno che della pittura), e segnatamente alla situazione rappresentata dall'espressionismo astratto, ciò era dovuto, se altre motivazioni non vi fossero state, anche semplicemente al fatto che, presso gli esemplari poetici contemporanei, in quegli anni 1951–1954, un riferimento era assai meno agevole da stabilirsi. Una crisi del linguaggio, quale io intendevo stabilire a partire dai miei versi, trovava conforto e analogia in affini esperimenti pittorici (e musicali), assai più che in esperimenti di ordine letterario: il privato richiamo ad altre situazioni artistiche era un modo di rompere, in solitudine, la solitudine stessa di poetica in cui mi trovavo praticamente gettato.[663]

Sanguineti mentioned both music and the visual arts; interestingly, his engagement with

contemporary music has received limited critical attention. In *Gruppo 63 and Music: A Complex*

Relationship,[664] Paolo Somigli (2010) draws on Eco's concept of "opera aperta", developed from a

reference to music,[665] to discuss the complex, and somehow sporadic, points of actual contact

between literary and musical experimentations throughout the 1960s. Yet, Somigli only briefly

lingers on Sanguineti and Berio's artistic collaborations. This prolific relationship has been later

further investigated by David Osmond-Smith (2012) in *Voicing the Labyrinth: The Collaborations of*

Edoardo Sanguineti and Luciano Berio.[666]

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[661] Moroni, "The Linguistic Gesture: Edoardo Sanguineti's Theatre." The idea of "gesture" is also implicit in Sanguineti's *Poesia informale*, since *Laborintus* is discussed in terms of "action poetry". See Sanguineti, "Poesia informale?"

[662] In *Poesia informale?*, in particular, Sanguineti underscored how after *Laborintus* he overcame the poetics of Art Informel and abstract expressionism in a shift referring to his upcoming sympathy for the *Nuova figurazione*.

[663] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 202. In this passage, Sanguineti already linked language and ideology, and the crisis of language as a symptom of alienation both on a historical (Marx) and aesthetical (Brecht) level.

[664] Somigli, "Gruppo 63 and Music: A Complex Relationship." For an overview on the relationship between music and neo-avant-garde writing, also see Mussgnug, "Writing Like Music."

[665] Eco starts his discussion on the "open work" by providing examples from experimental musicians: in particular, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI*; Luciano Berio's *Sequenza per flauto solo*; Henri Pousseur's *Scambi* and Pierre Boulez's *Terza sonata per pianoforte*. According to Eco, these works present a common "openness" to different interpretations and performances, which make the artwork open to change and to the active intervention of the performer/interpreter, Eco, *Opera aperta*, 31–34.

[666] Osmond-Smith, "Voicing the Labyrinth: The Collaborations of Edoardo Sanguineti and Luciano Berio."

Sanguineti's relationship with the visual has been explored more thoroughly: Tommaso Lisa, in his 2004 *Pretesti ecfrastici: Edoardo Sanguineti e alcuni artisti italiani*,[667] retraces Sanguineti's relationship with several contemporary visual artists, from Nuclearists to neo-figurative artists. Lisa brings together Sanguineti's writings on, or visual collaborations with, artists such as Enrico Baj, Antonio Bueno, and Marco Persico, among others. *Pretesti ecfrastici*, therefore, provides a crucial archive for any investigation into Sanguineti's work and the visual. Following a similar line of research, Paolo Chirumbolo (2010) in *Signs and Designs: Sanguineti and Baj from Laborintus to the Biggest Art-Book in the World*[668] explores Sanguineti's artistic interactions with Baj during the 1960s and argues that, at that time, literature and the visual arts established a recursive relationship, influencing and shaping one another. As Chirumbolo aptly points out, Sanguineti's avant-garde production "openly draws on artistic phenomena such as Art lnformel, *nuclearismo*, pop art, and *nuova figurazione*".[669] Chirumbolo further develops his research in his 2013 *Edoardo Sanguineti and the Visual Arts: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*,[670] where he argues that Sanguineti's work directly draws from, and converses with, the work of various 1950s and 60s experimental artists and painters. In 2013, Filomena Schettino also joined the scholarly conversation by dedicating a whole monograph to Sanguineti and Baj's artistic relationship, fittingly titled *Ut Pictura Poesis.*[671]

These interdisciplinary explorations lay the basis for additional research into Sanguineti's intermedial writing – for instance, his relationship to cinema and photography has been further underscored in recent scholarly works. Epifanio Ajello's *Edoardo Sanguineti. Cartoline postali* (2009)[672] develops the notion that Sanguineti's poems "oltre a potersi leggere paiono anche potersi *vedere*", as if they were "fotografie deposte in un album, come 'cartoline illustrate' appunto".[673] Ajello provides a generic reading in which the photographic element often slips into related categories

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[667] Lisa, *Pretesti ecfrastici: Edoardo Sanguineti e alcuni artisti italiani*.
[668] Chirumbolo, "Signs and Designs: Sanguineti and Baj from Laborintus to The Biggest Art-Book in the World."
[669] Chirumbolo, 248.
[670] Chirumbolo, "Edoardo Sanguineti and the Visual Arts: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue."
[671] Schettino, *Ut pictura poësis. Enrico Baj-Edoardo Sanguineti: una curiosa coincidenza*.
[672] Ajello, "Edoardo Sanguineti. Cartoline postali."
[673] Ajello, 137.

– such as the postcard, the snapshot, or the still frame – and Sanguineti's writing is described as either a comic strip or a film sequence. Ajello's contribution does not provide an exhaustive analysis on the topic. Nevertheless, is the only one, to this day, to bring to the foreground several fundamental aspects concerning photographic references in Sanguineti's work.

Other critics have instead offered interesting perspectives on cinematographic aspects in Sanguineti's work and on the category of the montage especially. For example, Marco Longo focuses on Sanguineti's *Ritratto del Novecento*,[674] a multimedia installation exhibited at Sala Borsa in Bologna in 2005, to explore the author's extensive use of the technique of montage.[675] Longo then surveys the influence directors such as Sergej Ejzenštejn, Luis Buñuel, Jean-Luc Godard, and Lars von Trier had on Sanguineti's thought. Although the essay posits some valid points on the relationship between montage and ideology, Longo's critical analysis is limited to Sanguineti's most recent intermedial works,[676] rather than discussing his poetry writing. John P. Welle (2013) partially fills in this gap by exploring both Sanguineti's viewing habits as a cinema-goer, and the references to film in his poetry.[677] For Welle, Sanguineti's "references to cinema over the course of his career reflect his loyalty to the modernist film canon he first encountered as a teenager in the cineclubs of post-war Italy".[678] More interestingly, Welle posits that "[m]ontage and textual fragmentation are one and the same".[679] Nonetheless, Welle only hints at the possible ways in which montage influences

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[674] Longo describes it as: "una raccolta di documenti organizzati in cento tessere dattiloscritte e cento autori di riferimento (tutti tenuti anonimi: Sanguineti si considera centounesimo autore) e orientata a una fruizione multimediale e interdisciplinare, in cui materiali filmici e sequenze di immagini fotografiche e iconografiche, pagine di poesia e di prosa, saggistica, filosofia, architettura, cinema, teatro, antropologia, etnografia, storia e quant'altro si accompagnino a una colonna sonora composta di frammenti della più varia provenienza, dalla musica classica al jazz, dal rock al pop, e siano sottoposti a libero montaggio, in successione frammentaria e casuale, mai tematicamente coerente", Longo, "Ideologia del montaggio. Il secolo del cinematografo secondo Edoardo Sanguineti," 45.

[675] Longo, "Ideologia del montaggio. Il secolo del cinematografo secondo Edoardo Sanguineti."

[676] Other than *Ritratto del Novecento*, Longo mentions Sanguineti's little known collaborations in the world of cinema; Sanguineti acted in Ennio De Domincis's *Niente stasera* (1995, 72') and in Mimmo Paladino's *Quijote* (2006, 75'). He was the co-screenwriter for Ansano Giannarelli's *Non ho tempo* (1971, 104'); he also wrote the captions for *Work in regress* (2006, 30') – a video-installation by Andrea Liberovici – and the texts for *Superglance* (2007, 7'), directed by Ugo Nespolo. In 2001, he was author of and actor in Ugo Nespolo's *Film/a/To* (2001, 12'). Longo, 50.

[677] Welle, "Edoardo Sanguineti: A Profile of the Poet as a Cinephile."

[678] Welle, 172.

[679] Welle, 174.

Sanguineti's writing, and confines his analysis to intermedial references to film in his poetry. For Welle:

> the montage technique is pervasive, particularly in his first collections. The most apparent ways it manifests itself are in the following: the juxtaposition of segments denoting dissimilar semantic contexts; the discontinuity of spatial and temporal sequences; the use of cut-ups of everyday events clashing with philosophical, aesthetic, or political references; the practice of building up the text with scattered fragments of quotations.[680]

It is the aim of this chapter to fill this particular gap and further develop Welle's intuition that "Sanguineti's interest in montage affects the formal organization of his poetry".

Gian Maria Annovi (2016) also builds on Welle's essay to argue that Sanguineti's poetics significantly shifted in 1972 towards a practice of "rivedere" ("to watch again"): "In questo mutato contesto culturale, fare il nuovo per un poeta è possibile solo rivedendo, rifrequentando, in una parola, citando il mondo (e il cinema) come se tutto fosse già stato visto e detto".[681] The multiple layers of intermedial references and quotations are organised, according to Annovi, through the technique of the montage, "secondo la modalità operativa di una mente cinematografica".[682] The link Annovi draws between montage and quotation is a particularly useful one, since it can shed light on how Sanguineti's writing can indeed be considered as "photographic". Writing is unravelled by a mind that "selects" images and "organises" them through montage, as the following quote from *Postkarten 13*, which Annovi also chooses for his title, clearly illustrates:

> ho riempito un terrificante vuoto d'ore, a Francoforte, con una sofisticata successione
> di bevande calde e fredde, di cibi insipidi e drogati, di giornali di vario formato,
> in varie lingue: e di poesie:
>   (e con immagini revisionate attentamente, nel cinematografo
> della mia mente (…)[683]

This quote can thus serve as the ideal starting point to investigate Sanguineti's relationship to cinema and photography. If the film camera is embedded in the mind, and the eye becomes a lens through which reality is viewed and registered, it follows that the camera, in line with McLuhan's thought,

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[680] Welle, 174.
[681] Annovi, "'Nel cinematografo della mia mente': Sanguineti e il cinema," 37.
[682] Annovi, 37–38.
[683] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 137.

becomes an extension of man, an embedded prosthetic device able to modify and amplify human beings' perceptual capabilities.[684]

It is in this view that Sanguineti speaks of photographic media: as something that is irremediably "embodied" and integrated in our very way of seeing, reshaping the way the artist perceives and approaches both the world and the process of art making. As we shall see, for Sanguineti, this is equally valid for cinema as well as photography; Sanguineti brings together these two related media under the same umbrella in virtue of their ontological similarity of framing, selecting, and recording an excerpt of the broader field of vision. Seeing photographically, in this case, is equal to the conscious adoption of a photographic and cinematographic gaze onto the world. In this sense, Sanguineti's views closely follows Marra's cine-photographic aesthetic discussed in Chapter One. The writer's way of seeing thus resembles that of Pirandello's Serafino Gubbio and Calvino's Paraggi, for whom the technological mediation offered by both the still camera and the film camera redefined the interactions between subject and object, and thus presented new perspectives on seeing and understanding the world.

The "Kodak retinica": Seeing Photographically

> (ho scattato qualche istantanea mnemonica, insomma,
> con l'assonnata coda della mia kodak retinica)[685]

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[684] According to McLuhan, "Any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex" and "the personal and social consequences of any medium — that is, of any extension of ourselves — result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology", McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 5, 14. McLuhan's book also includes a section dedicated to photography titled *The Photograph: The Brothel Without Walls*, and one dedicated to film, *Movies: The Reel World* in McLuhan, *Understanding Media*. More recently, the prosthetic nature of technology has also been explored by Lury, *Prosthetic Culture*. In the still/moving field, Rossak has pointed out the receptiveness of the body to technological media, which Sanguineti clearly exemplified in his writing and poetics: "The body is not just the carrier of a personal history, but a storage site and an intensified receptive surface in a media-saturated society. Thus, the body belongs to a history of media and mediation", Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 12.

[685] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 252.

The epigraph above, taken from *Stracciafoglio 21*, stands as an eloquent complement to *Postkarten 13*'s "cinematografo della mia mente".[686] The whole poem reads as follows:

21.

con l'A 13 bloccata da un piccolo vortice di autoambulanze, senza riuscire
a esaminare nemmeno bene la piccola catastrofe, puntammo in bus sopra
Leidschendam (e immediati dintorni): (con immediato recupero, poi):
ho visto qualche
        chiatta, cosi, qualche anziano pescatore attendato, accoccolato con signora, attardato
in sedie bianche da campeggio (e un'affollata scuola elementare, nell'ora
della ricreazione):
        (ho scattato qualche istantanea mnemonica, insomma,
con l'assonnata coda della mia kodak retinica): (e dopo tanta pace presa a caso,
sarà piu arduo lasciarla, la terra, qui, la vita, per me persino, lo so bene, lo sento):
non ti scrivevo da un secolo:
        (e, a pensarci, non era mica da scriverti, questo):[687]

The poem describes a daily scene: Sanguineti's persona is on a bus driving towards the Dutch city of Leidschendam, to escape the highway traffic caused by an accident. During this detour, the poet's eye surveys the surrounding panorama and provides a list of "snapshots", detailing a few old fishermen accompanied by some women, and a crowded primary school during morning break. Sanguineti calls these images "istantane[e] mnemonic[he]" (mnemonic snapshots), taken by his photographic eye. The identification of eye and camera is made explicit through the paronomasia linking "coda" to "kodak", which is, in turn, inserted within the context of an Italian idiomatic expression, 'la coda dell'occhio', equivalent to the English "the corner of the eye". The "kodak" is then syntactically placed to directly substitute the "occhio" (eye), and such a bond is reinforced by Sanguineti's juxtaposition of the noun "kodak" with the adjective "retinica" (retinal). This photographic eye particularly focuses on details from daily life, and usually records snapshots, or "immagini revisionate attentamente", to compile a list of images often relayed in the form of chaotic accumulation (Spitzer), like in *Postkarten 13*, "con una sofisticata successione / di bevande calde e fredde, di cibi insipidi e drogati, di giornali di vario formato",[688] or in *Stracciafoglio 21*, "qualche /

[686] Sanguineti, 137.
[687] Sanguineti, 252.
[688] Sanguineti, 173.

chiatta, cosi, qualche anziano pescatore attendato, accoccolato con signora, attardato / in sedie

bianche da campeggio (e un'affollata scuola elementare, nell'ora / della ricreazione)".[689]

Sanguineti's identification between body and technological apparatus suggests that the self

somewhat *becomes* this very "embodied" apparatus and sees the world accordingly: framing and

capturing snapshots of reality. In one of his conversations on cinema, included in

Sanguineti/Novecento. Conversazioni sulla cultura del Novecento,[690] Sanguineti seemed to offer a

direct commentary on *Stracciafoglio 21*:

> La fotografia certamente ha già agito con un'idea di inquadratura, ha educato l'occhio a serie di
> istantanee, a memorizzare e contemplare la realtà, organizzandola secondo modi che prima potevano
> essere suggeriti dalla pittura, ma che, naturalmente, la fotografia rendeva progressivamente di massa.
> Bene, io trovo che tutti noi siamo stati nel Novecento, sempre di più, delle specie di macchine da presa
> viventi.[691]

There are at least two things to note in this passage: the first is that technologies of vision, for

Sanguineti, shape our way of approaching reality and, like in *Stracciafoglio 21*, they teach the eye to

contemplate, memorise and organise snapshots from reality; the second is that Sanguineti tended to

consider photography and cinema in light of their common technological likeness,[692] with a

predilection for the latter.

A similar concept is reiterated and expanded in Sanguineti's two-day seminar on *Il montaggio

nella cultura del Novecento* given at the University of Turin in 2004, contained in the recent *Edoardo

Sanguineti: Un poeta al cinema* (2017). Even though these and the former reflections are elaborated

at the end of Sanguineti's poetic career, they both offer a retrospective look at what Sanguineti calls

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[689] Sanguineti, 252.

[690] Sanguineti, *Sanguineti/Novecento. Conversazioni sulla cultura del Novecento*.

[691] Sanguineti, 75.

[692] While Sanguineti was perfectly aware of the difference between these media, he nevertheless brought them together in light of the phenomenological mediation between subject and object that their optics entail. Both, in fact, impose a filter between the observer and the thing observed thanks to the process of framing, selecting, and recording. Sanguineti stressed exactly the idea of "selecting" images through these technological media as a way to relate to reality and to interpret it: "Ho parlato di 'realtà' della rappresentazione, mettendo però la parola 'realtà' tra virgolette perché quando guardiamo un film dobbiamo abbandonare l'idea che il cinematografo e la fotografia producano riproduzioni del reale ed offrano una vera oggettività. Qualunque immagine statica o in movimento è un'interpretazione della realtà", Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 25.

"il secolo interminabile" ("the interminable century"),[693] and they therefore prove crucial to gain a better understanding of Sanguineti's relationship to cinema and photography. During the first day of the seminar, Sanguineti declared that:

> I mezzi audiovisivi hanno modificato in modo sostanziale il modo di vedere degli esseri umani. È come se ognuno di noi, da quando esistono il cinematografo e la televisione, fosse egli stesso una sorta di macchina da presa incarnata. Prima dell'invenzione del cinema vedevamo il mondo diversamente; ora invece guardiamo spesso il mondo intorno a noi in modo casuale, senza ordine, e così ci sentiamo molto "vicini" alla realtà. Incarniamo in noi stessi i procedimenti tecnologici a tal punto che pensiamo siano gli strumenti migliori per accostarci alla realtà e comprenderla ma, in verità, siamo noi che imitiamo la tecnologia, non è la tecnologia che imita il nostro sguardo. Abbiamo imparato a guardare in un altro modo ogni cosa, anche ogni espressione artistica: guardiamo in modo diverso anche i quadri da quando, grazie alla macchina fotografica e alla macchina da presa cinematografica, possiamo realizzare ingrandimenti e vedere dettagli che nessun occhio umano avrebbe mai potuto distinguere.[694]

According to Sanguineti, then, the way we look at the world imitates technology, and not vice versa; furthermore, since the invention of cinema has taught us to adopt a chaotic gaze, our surveying eyes frequently change frames, zoom in and out of focus, and blow up images until they are hardly recognisable. These features all form part of Sanguineti's own way of writing, which often takes the form of a labyrinth – as the very title of his debut work, *Laborintus*, suggests – a disorienting place where the reader is invited to wander and perhaps get lost.

The prosthetic and augmented quality of this way of looking, in contrast with the previous de-potentiated "human eye" ("*possiamo* realizzare ingrandimenti e *vedere dettagli che nessun occhio umano avrebbe mai potuto distinguere*"[695]) is therefore quite central to Sanguineti's work. In particular, the reference to the blow up seems to nod, on the one hand, to Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966), and, on the other, it pays tribute to Benjamin's reviewing Karl Blossfeldt's photographic book on plants in *Novità dal mondo dei fiori*:

> Chi ha realizzato questa raccolta di fotografie di piante è un tipo in gamba. Ha contribuito in prima persona a quell'enorme revisione dell'inventario dei modi della percezione che trasformerà ancora in maniera imprevedibile la nostra imagine del mondo. (...) Che noi osserviamo le fasi della crescita di una pianta in sequenza accelerata o ne mostriamo l'immagine sottoposta a un ingrandimento di

[693] This is the epithet that Sanguineti chose to introduce his intermedial work *Ritratto del Novecento*, presented at Sala Borsa, Bologna, in 2005. The talk titled *Ritratto del Novecento come di un secolo interminabile* is now available in Sanguineti and Lorenzini, *Ritratto del Novecento*.
[694] Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 25.
[695] Prono and Allasia, 25–26.

quaranta volte, in entrambi i casi accade che nei territori dell'essere, dove meno l'avremmo sospettato, un geyser sprigioni nuove immagini del mondo.[696]

Technological advancement, then, provides us not only with the ability to see and to look at the world from a new perspective, almost as if our eyes were seeing through the lens of a camera; but also, and most importantly, it allows for a new means of organizing the world, as Sanguineti emphatically pointed out:

Ma quello che chiamiamo punto di vista è un modo di organizzare una visione del mondo. Il punto di vista è il modo con cui l'occhio si dirige sul mondo. E nel nuovo secolo, ci siamo evoluti, diventando telecamere o videocamere in movimento per la città. (...) Perché il punto di vista cinematografico, non a caso, si fa metafora. Può nascere da uno sguardo empirico per poi diventare un modo di organizzare la realtà.[697]

This is a crucial point to reposition the references to photographic culture within Sanguineti's work: if the cinematographic point of view – made up of a photographic eye and a cinematic mind – becomes a way to organize reality, it follows that, within his poetry, this photographic and cinematographic point of view will play a structural role in the organisation of the poetic text, both in form and content.

If we agree with Pietropaoli and recognise that Sanguineti's poetic work can be divided into mainly two aesthetic periods[698] – "l'anticomunicativo dell'avanguardia, come critica del linguaggio; e il comunicativo della neofigurazione, come linguaggio della critica"[699] – it will be worth investigating the role of photography in both, as well as its function in the passage from one period to the other. Thanks to its peculiar collocation within Sanguineti's collections of poems, *T.A.T.* can

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[696] Benjamin, *Breve storia della fotografia*, 58.

[697] Sanguineti, *Sanguineti/Novecento. Conversazioni sulla cultura del Novecento*, 75–76.

[698] Pietropaoli also suggests a chronological partition, according to which the first avant-garde phase would include *Triperuno* (*Laborintus, Erotopaegnia*, and *Purgatorio de l'Inferno*) and *T.A.T.*, thematic apperception test, the first section of *Wirrwarr*. However, in my reading both *Erotopaegnia* and *Purgatorio* already mark a clear stylistic move towards communication, such as how *Erotopeagnia 3* clearly exemplifies: "afferra questo mercurio, questa fredda gengiva, questo miele, questa sfera / di vetro arido; misura attentamente la testa del nostro / bambino e non torcere adesso il suo piede / impercettibile: / nel tuo capezzolo devi ormai convertire / un prolungato continente di lampade, il fiato ossessivo dei giardini / critici, le pigre balene del ventre, le ortiche / e il vino, e la nausea e la ruggine; / . . . perché ogni strada subito / vorrà corrergli incontro, un'ernia ombelicale incidere / il suo profilo di fumo, qualche ippopotamo donargli / i suoi denti di forfora e di fosforo nero: / evita il vento / i luoghi affollati, i giocolieri, gli insetti; / e a sei mesi egli potrà raddoppiare il suo peso, vedere l'oca, / stringere la vestaglia, assistere alla caduta dei gravi; / strappalo dunque alla sua vita di alghe e di globuli di piccoli nodi, / di indecisi lobi: / il suo gemito conquisterà le tue liquide ferite / e i suoi occhi di obliquo burro correggeranno questi secoli senza nome!", Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 53. Tellingly, this quite lyrical and communicative poem is prefiguring the introduction of the character of Sanguineti's son, here still in the womb, who, by representing "the structure of hope", is partially responsible for the author's own change of style.

[699] Pietropaoli then divides the neofigurative phase in two subcategories. See Pietropaoli, *Unità e trinità di Edoardo Sanguineti*, 59.

be considered as a sum of the avant-guardist experimentation with language and, therefore, as a necessary point of passage to open up the discourse to Sanguineti's more communicative and diarist poetic production.

T.A.T.: Photography and the Text as Test

> Se oggi possiamo proclamare che ogni testo è un test,
> è perchè, in fondo, la fotografia ce lo ha insegnato.[700]

T.A.T., or *Thematic Apperception Test*, is a collection of seven poems first published in 1968 in an intermedial format. Along with Sanguineti's poems dedicated to Marcel Duchamp, the book presented four illustrations by Gianfranco Baruchello. In the colophon, the book is described as follows: "T.A.T.: sette poesie inedite di Edoardo Sanguineti, adorne di quattro incisioni (due litografie + due acqueforti) di Gianfranco Baruchello. Edizione tirata in torchi a mano da Renzo Sommaruga, in centocinque esemplari: settantanove numerati da 1 a 79 e ventisei, ad personam, segnati con lettere da A a Z. Ciascun esemplare reca le firme del Poeta e dell'Incisore. Verona, nell'estate del 1968".[701]

In 1972, a second edition of *T.A.T.* was published as the first section of *Wirrwarr* – a Romantic term that means chaos, confusion – and followed by a second section titled *Reisebilder*, comprising fifty-one poems. Compared to the first edition, the 1972 version only maintains the text of the poems, while presenting an epigraph with a quotation from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, rather than a dedication to Duchamp. Within Sanguineti's poetic trajectory – from the experimental phase of *Laborintus* to increasingly communicative attempts and to a style of diary-like writing centred around a fictional, yet autobiographical, double of the author – *T.A.T.* represents a relapse, or, for Angelo Petrella and Walter Pedullá, a summary aimed at "freezing" and handing down to future generations

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[700] Sanguineti, "Ma com'è fotogenica la realtá…anche troppo," 305.
[701] Fastelli, "*T.A.T.* — Verba Picta."

the whole experience of the neo-avant-garde.[702] Its experimental nature is in fact apparent from the very opening of *T.A.T. 1*:

> (e: eh!); è nascosta; e devo dire, e voglio (per intanto) dire; (e
> per emozione): eh!; dire: eh, meine Wunderkammer! mein
> Rosenfeld!; (corno di unicorno!); (cercando (per esempio) l'exaltation
> vague);
>   e scendendo (il 22 aprile) per Rue Royale, poi per Rue
> du Bois; e devo dire: tu sei un granchio (per insinuazioni) petrificato;[703]

The reader is presented with a nearly unintelligible piece of plurilingual and fragmented discourse, characterised, to borrow one of Sanguineti's poignant expressions, by a condition of "asintassia furibonda".[704] The rules of syntax and punctuation are systematically breached, while the subjects of the verbs remain ambiguous and unattainable. For example, the subject of the first verb, "è nascosta", is implied, whereas the identity of the pronoun "tu" is ever shifting and acquires different animal referents throughout the poem: "tu sei un granchio", "tu sei un camaleonte", "tu sei una / mosca, un ragno (in gelatina)". Similarly, the first person pronoun "io" – though we might assume it to be Sanguineti's double – is nullified and devoid of its depth, in line with the Novissimi's poetics of the "Reduction of the I". Finally, the referent of the tonic pronoun "LUI", appearing later in the poem, is also left implicit.[705]

The other six poems present a similar degree of fragmentation, which also extends to the visual elements of discourse. These include the versification layout, composed by using extreme forms of enjambment; and the typography, with the use of italics and block letters. Such visual fragmentation is apparent in *T.A.T. 3*: "it fits! ("URSUS HORRIBILIS"): E ALLOR per un *Totale* di= 9: / (*palloni*); e il decimo (già) cade; di fianco; (là): sopra le azzurre pietre;",[706] or in *T.A.T. 6*, where the morphological, and visually performed, deflagration of the word is the pretext for the poem

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[702] Petrella, "Edoardo Sanguineti," 546.
[703] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 95.
[704] Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 120.
[705] "LUI" could be possibly identifying Flaubert, since the French inserts in the poem are quotations from Flaubert's letters.
[706] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 98.

itself: "scrivo: "cosí"; (cosí): / scrivo: CO (sopra, prima); e poi: SÍ (sotto, dopo); / (cosí: CO / SÍ);".[707]

Sanguineti, then, is providing the reader with a series of densely linguistic and yet hardly decipherable texts. Yet, what at first sight seems to be a loss of interest in the reader is instead a relaunch of the very principle of Eco's "open work", and of the *Novissimi*'s poetics. It is, in other words, an invitation for the reader to take up a primary and integral role in the poetic process. In fact, some practical indications on the role that the reader should here undertake can be found both in the title of *T.A.T.* and in two of Sanguineti's articles, one titled *Il trattamento del materiale verbale nei testi della nuova avanguardia* (1964),[708] and the other *Ma com'è fotogenica la realtà…anche troppo* (1985),[709] which seem to provide a parallel commentary to this particular collection of poems.

Beginning with the title, *T.A.T.* is the acronym for Thematic Apperception Test, a projective psychological test developed by Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan during the 1930s, which asked patients to develop a personal narrative by looking at a series of ambiguous images. The fact that Sanguineti chose this title for his seven poems, therefore, might imply that these texts aim to function as the images used in Murray's test. In line with this reading, the "image-poems" presented by the author would serve as an enigmatic invitation for the reader, called to interpret them and give them meaning. The idea of conceiving poems as images is also implicitly reinforced in the titles of the two following poetry collections: *Reisebilder*,[710] which literally means "travel images"; and *Postkarten*, or postcards, which once more links poetry writing to images and travels. Sanguineti's inclusion, in the epigraph, of a quotation from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) can also be read in line with this interpretation: "Kunstwerke sind kein thematic apperception test ihres Urhebers",[711] "Artworks are not thematic apperception tests of their makers". Thus, if the artwork, and in this case the text, is not a thematic apperception test *of* their author, it can, however, function as a test *for* the reader.

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[707] Sanguineti, 101.

[708] Sanguineti, "Il trattamento del materiale verbale nei testi della nuova avanguardia." Previously published in "Lettere italiane", 4, 1964.

[709] Sanguineti, "Ma com'è fotogenica la realtá…anche troppo."

[710] *Reisebilder* is a title borrowed from the Romantic author Heine.

[711] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 93.

Sanguineti explored the link between test and text in more depth in *Il trattamento del materiale verbale nei testi della nuova avanguardia*,[712] and specifically while providing a commentary on Nanni Balestrini's use of language. These reflections are written a few years before *T.A.T.*, thus validating the intuition that, in choosing *T.A.T.* as the title for his collection of poems, Sanguineti was making reference to a specific and already theorised formal discourse. More precisely, Sanguineti seemed to either pay tribute to, or draw inspiration from, the very work of Balestrini, since some structural devices are entirely mutuated from Balestrini's *Non smettere*.[713] For example, Sanguineti's morphological fragmentation directly followed Balestrini's footsteps. It will suffice to compare Sanguineti's comment on Balestrini's use of the enjambment:

> Questa inconcludenza strutturale, inoltre, si riflette puntualmente nel sistema metrico (...) Accade cioè, in maniera tipograficamente assai traumatica, che la spezzatura si produca all'interno di un medesimo vocabolo, (...) Cosí, fin dal primo verso della prima strofa (la poesia conta quattro strofe) abbiamo un caso come il seguente: che la parola "carta" deposita in tale primo verso la prima metà di sé, cioè a dire "car," mentre la seconda metà, cioè a dire "ta," è scaraventata di brutto nel verso secondo.[714]

with *T.A.T. 6*, already quoted above, here in its original visual layout:

> scrivo: "cosí"; (cosí):
> scrivo: CO (sopra, prima); e poi: SÍ (sotto, dopo);
> (cosí: CO
>   SÍ);

This "sintassi abnorme",[715] or "asintassia furibonda",[716] for Balestrini as well as for Sanguineti, recreates on the page an "ideogramma verbale" testifying that "ritorno al disordine"[717] which the *Novissimi* advocated for. According to Sanguineti, the most obvious contestation to "operazioni di quest'ordine, e cioè di questo disordine, di poesia per montaggio, visiva, elettronica"[718] is that they

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[712] Sanguineti, "Il trattamento del materiale verbale nei testi della nuova avanguardia."
[713] *Non smettere* will be included in Balestrini's collection *Ma noi facciamone un'altra* (1966). However Sanguineti's comment is from 1964.
[714] Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 115–16.
[715] Sanguineti, 116.
[716] Sanguineti, 120.
[717] Sanguineti, 117.
[718] Sanguineti, 118. Disorder and montage are also phenomenologically linked, in Sanguineti's view: "È come se ognuno di noi, da quando esistono il cinematografo e la televisione, fosse egli stesso una sorta di macchina da presa incarnata. Prima dell'invenzione del cinema vedevamo il mondo diversamente; ora invece guardiamo spesso il mondo intorno a noi in modo casuale, senza ordine, e così ci sentiamo molto 'vicini' alla realtà", Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 25.

can only make sense the first time. Yet, why did Balestrini continue to write, adhering to the

imperative imposed on himself in the title, *Non smettere*? Sanguineti's answer, incredibly, sheds some

light on the experience of *T.A.T.* itself:

> Perché, disgrazia o fortuna che sia, non lo so ancora, ma le parole hanno la singolare virtù, anche le parole, di funzionare pur sempre, anche valutate a livello minimo, e cioè in condizioni di asintassia furibonda, come le troppo celebri tavole di Rorschach, dove ogni spettatore ci vede quel che ci sogna sopra. Anche valutato a livello minimo, ripeto, che è il livello della macchia policroma, il *Non smettere* di Balestrini si rende pur *sempre leggibile come un test*, che ammette, anche a non pretendere di più, almeno un'interpretazione statistica. (...) perché cioè *Non smettere* di Balestrini è, esso stesso, in prima istanza, una serie di associazioni libere, *una bella macchina di Rorschach*, o, per dirla più esattamente, tanto *perché a nessuno venga in mente un qualche automatismo di scrittura, che qui non c'entra, o poco c'entra, una scrupolosa mimesi di questo genere di cose*.[719]

If words, removed from their syntactical order, have the power to function as Roscharch's tables, it

follows that Balestrini's *Non smettere* becomes, itself, a test for the reader, or more precisely a

"scrupolosa mimesi di questo genere di cose", intentionally designed by the author and far from being

the consequence of automatism.[720]

Interestingly, Sanguineti's comment on Balestrini takes a further step forward, linking the

idea of the "text as test" to the functioning of photography:

> la chiave che ora offro ha, ai miei occhi, un singolare vantaggio: arriva a stabilire un preciso punto di contatto, quale ci è mancato sinora, tra le tavole di Rorschach e la pagina del quotidiano, cioè poi, in trasposizione e in allegoria, tra il contenuto e la forma. Non per nulla, infatti, la finestrella si trova in quella terza strofa il cui materiale, come vedrete, è dedotto dalle cronache dell'uccisione del presidente Kennedy. Ecco, si tratta di *questa breve proposizione che ora, a lato del titolo, collochiamo idealmente come ideale epigrafe, o come istruzione per l'uso della poesia*: *"ha fatto sí che la fotografia risultasse mossa e sfocata senza che nulla perdesse"*.[721]

In *T.A.T.* Sanguineti consciously produced his own version of this carefully fabricated literary device

that functions like a Rorschach's test. The instruction to decipher this set of poems is thus disclosed:

the poet, like a photographer,[722] "ha fatto sí che la fotografia risultasse mossa e sfocata senza che

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[719] Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 120, my italics.

[720] I believe this is also the full meaning of Adorno's epigraph, which opens *T.A.T.*; the extended quotation reads: "Only dilettantes reduce everything in art to the unconscious, repeating cliches. In artistic production, unconscious forces are one sort of impulse, material among many others. They enter the work mediated by the law of form; if this were not the case, the actual subject portrayed by a work would be nothing but a copy. Artworks are not Thematic Apperception Tests of their makers". Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 9.

[721] Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 122, my italics.

[722] The parallel author/photographer is made explicit in the extended quote from Balestrini's poem: "il fotografo che ha scattato questa imm / agine poi si portò sulla destra ponendo all'altezza / della sua spalla ha fatto sí che la fotografia ri / sultasse mossa e sfocata senza che nulla perdesse", Sanguineti, 123.

nulla perdesse". In other words, the author intentionally writes his poems as if he were taking a blurred and out of focus photograph; the resulting literary image, like a Roscharch's inkblot, tells an indistinct story, which each reader is called to reconstruct.[723]

Several years after the publication of *T.A.T.*, in *Ma com'è fotogenica la realtà…anche troppo* (1985), Sanguineti reiterated these ideas and eloquently concluded claiming that: "Se oggi possiamo proclamare che ogni testo è un test, è perchè, in fondo, la fotografia ce lo ha insegnato".[724] The article, which discussed the role of photography in society, posited that the advent of mass photography, somehow occasioned by Kodak cameras and epitomised by the "bad snapshot" of amateur photographers, marked the shift from a pre-history to a history of photography. These "bad snapshots" are snapped by the "fotoamatori o fotodilettanti" who do not need to know how to take good photographs, but can just press the camera shutter, since, like the Kodak announced, "nessuno può più sbagliare una fotografia".[725]

According to Sanguineti, the lack of technical skills needed and the automation of the process are also responsible for the death of the author and, consequently, for the new role of the reader. The powerful trait of this new phase of photography is that it allows for "una visione non antropomorfica, verso un'ottica senza occhio".[726] Pushed to its limits, this statement goes far beyond Sanguineti's more moderate concept of the Kodak eye, since it somehow removes altogether the body from the picture. Such an extreme view, however, makes perfect sense in the economy of *T.A.T.*, if we take this collection to be the relaunch, and at once the sum, of the experimental practices of the neo-avant-garde. The non-anthropomorphic character of the image is, therefore, in line with the *Novissimi*'s prescription of the "Reduction of the I", that is to say the downsizing of the role of the author in the text, in favour of the reader. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Sanguineti spoke of "una poetica

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[723] Alessandro Giammei has recently proposed a different focus for the reading of Balestrini's poems. Downsizing Sanguineti's suggestion, Giammei advocates for a return to meaning, so as to "leggere insomma, più che vedere o sentire, le poesie di questo autore", Giammei, "Il contenuto della poesia informale nell'archivio dei pre-testi di Nanni Balestrini."

[724] Sanguineti, "Ma com'è fotogenica la realtá…anche troppo," 305.

[725] Sanguineti, 303.

[726] Sanguineti, 304.

della fotografia" and of "poesia documentaria", when describing the act of "immaginare immagini" prompted by the photograph:

> Una *poetica della fotografia*, come documento, e proprio come tale falsificabile, non è per sé riduttiva. Vale l'opposto. Di fronte all'essere perennemente in posa della realtà, di fronte alla sua essenziale fotogenia, l'istantanea può parlare proprio in termini di *poesia documentaria, assai prima e meglio che di verità documentaria. L'umanesimo fotografico, in breve, si sposta integralmente sul versante dell'interpretazione del documento, e insomma dall'occhio del fotografo allo sguardo dell'osservatore del prodotto. La forza della fotografia è nel fatto che non scriviamo noi, con la luce, ma che la luce scrive, e che noi possiamo tentare di leggere il testo che ci esibisce.* Chi abbia poi in orrore, comunque, il rischio di una riduzione documentaria, può confrontarsi con il pensiero che permane, e diventa dominante, un'analogia primaria con un tratto pittoricamente primario, che è l'immaginare immagini, dotabili di senso, sopra le forme delle nuvole, le macchie sopra i muri, *le tavole di Roscharch. Se oggi possiamo proclamare che ogni testo è un test, è perché, in fondo, la fotografia ce lo ha insegnato.*[727]

In this "documentary poetry" enabled by photography, stress is shifted from the photographer's eye to that of the observer, who is now presented with an enigmatic image, like a Roscharch inkblot, that acts upon them as a test to be interpreted and read. In line with Eco's "opera aperta", Sanguineti's poetry, like that of the other *Novissimi*, called for the structural role of the audience, since each person ultimately completes it by constructing their own unique and individual interpretation of it.[728]

In conclusion, if photography has taught us that each text is a test, in Sanguineti's case it has also provided a point of departure for the theoretical structuring of one of his poetry collections. In fact, Sanguineti made an abundant use of intermedial references to photographic and cinematographic culture: while in *T.A.T.* such references clearly emerge in the poetics and in the architecture of the collection of poems, they also play a decisive role in the formal and stylistic format of Sanguineti's writing, thus engendering what we can argue to be a photographic mode of writing. Yet, what are the formal characteristics of this photographic mode of writing? The next section of this chapter will comment on *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* to show how the technique of collage is linked to montage

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[727] Sanguineti, 304–5, my italics.
[728] Eco's "open works", indeed, "vengono portate a termine dall'interprete nello stesso momento in cui le fruisce esteticamente (...) ogni fruitore porta una concreta situazione esistenziale, una sensibilità particolarmente, una determinata cultura, gusti, propensioni, giudizi personali, in modo che la comprensione della forma originaria avviene secondo una determinata prospettiva individuale", Eco, *Opera aperta*, 33–34.

and to writing. Subsequently, it will show how this technique takes formal shape in Sanguineti's poetry providing a stylistic analysis of several textual examples from the same two poetry collections.

A Photographic Mode of Writing: Of Montage and Collage

In a brief and collective questionnaire titled *Il lavoro dello scrittore*, curated by Simona Cigliana and published in *Il cavallo di Troia* in 1986, Sanguineti detailed the start of his poetic career as follows:

> In principio fu un mio quaderno prescolastico, che intitolai "TUTTO" e in cui raccoglievo, ritagliando e incollando, da giornali, riviste, libri, fogli pubblicitari cartoline illustrate, ecc. ecc., immagini fotografiche di tutte le "cose" del mondo (opera incompiuta, sventuratamente, e perduta); quello che poi seguí fu l'Ersatz di quel quaderno. [729]

In this extremely interesting account of his preludes as a writer, [730] Sanguineti explained his writing journey as an imitation of, and a surrogate for, his very first artistic work as a young child. The book titled *TUTTO* (*EVERYTHING*), unfinished and lost, formed the model for his subsequent writing and it included photographic images taken from books, journals, magazines, ads and postcards, cut and pasted together in the attempt to list "all" the things in the world. In short, the underlying technique that made the whole possible was that of collage – "ritagliando e incollando" – which already gathered and mixed several different and possibly clashing sources, bringing together high culture and popular culture. These strands – the collage technique, the visual component, and the strive to list and catalogue all the things in the world – would remain highly characteristic of Sanguineti's work, both in his neo-avant-garde, experimental phase and in his more communicative production.

Sanguineti referred to these elements in the talk *Il montaggio nella cultura del Novecento*, where he pointed out how Benjamin, in writing his *Passages* (1982), was actually composing a visual collage of quotations. The process Sanguineti described is strikingly similar not only to the one used for his childhood book *TUTTO*, but also for his literary production at large:

> Questo ci riporta ancora una volta ad un'idea di Benjamin il quale, quando scrive il famoso libro sui *Passages* di Parigi (uscito in Italia con il titolo *Parigi capitale del XIX secolo*) ad un certo punto fa

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[729] Sanguineti, "Il lavoro dello scrittore," 30.
[730] The question here answered is number one: "Quando e come hai cominciato a scrivere?", Sanguineti, 13.

questa affermazione: *"Non ho niente da dire, soltanto da mostrare". La sua idea è quella di un testo che sia fatto di sole di citazioni: lui non scrive niente di originale, ma monta frammenti di testi di ogni tipo che tutti insieme forniscono un ritratto sfaccettato di Parigi (...) Alcuni temi nodali si ampliano fino a formare un volume sterminato rimasto incompiuto e inconcluso. Ma questa incompiutezza è inscritta nel processo stesso: se non faccio nulla se non mostrare, allora non c'è limite all'esibizione di cose che, collegate e giustapposte tra loro, vengono ad elaborare un discorso che può evidentemente continuare all'infinito, perché ogni giorno posso scoprire un nuovo testo. Abbiamo così un collage di parole nel caso di Benjamin e un collage di immagini nel caso di Godard, due tipi di montaggio che rivelano la realtà. Si aprono così infinite possibilità di strutturare l'opera letteraria o cinematografica attraverso strategie diverse di montaggio.*[731]

Sanguineti defined both the collage of words and the collage of images by using the hypernym "montage"; in this sense, therefore, it is possible to speak of a (cine)photographic mode of writing, that is to say of a writing that mimicked photographic media techniques. Similar to what happened in Porta's work, for Sanguineti these "different strategies of montage" could be used to structure the very literary work by bringing together "frammenti di testi di ogni tipo" in a potentially unending discourse, able to show and reveal reality. Sanguineti's extensive use of the colon, for instance, is indicative of this never-ending discourse, in which the period loses its conclusive validity and the colon preludes to a continuation of the poem.

The use of the technique of montage[732] is a stylistic constant in Sanguineti's work, beginning with the very first collection of *Laborintus*: "indico l'ustione linguistica frammenti che costellano / il notturno giardino dei succubi",[733] where the linguistic burn promoted by the poet created visually distinct fragments, such as in *Laborintus 23*, "s.d. ma 1951 (unruhig) χαί χρίνουσιν e socchiudo gli occhi / οί πολλοί e mi domanda (L): fai il giuoco delle luci?".[734] As we have seen, this highly heterogeneous mosaic of fragments is also a characteristic of *T.A.T.*, where the montage technique was used to enhance the "Reduction of the I", as well as to create visually and syntactically complex poems. In slightly different forms, montage provided the formal structure for Sanguineti's first attempts at a communicative poetry, *Erotopaegnia (1956–1959)* and *Purgatorio de l'Inferno (1960–1963)*, in particular through an extensive use of chaotic accumulation.

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[731] Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 52–53, my italics.
[732] In line with Sanguineti's definition, I will use the hypernym "montage" to refer to collage, too.
[733] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 14.
[734] Sanguineti, 43.

In the two poetry collections immediately following *T.A.T.*: *Reisebilder* (1971) and *Postkarten* (1972–1977), the stylistic elements of montage already explored in his previous production acquired a new personal and diary-like dimension. In these collections, the poetic I compiled a sort of travel journal: a long series of poems, fifty-one in *Reisebilder*[735] and sixty-seven in *Postkarten*, recorded detailed "images" of the traveller's daily life and listed times, places, as well as interlocutors and strangers encountered during the journey. These facts were then offered to a reader at once drawn to, and irremediably distanced from, the texts presented. Sanguineti's staged personal account relied on a recording of events, adhering, in Sanguineti's words, to a "nuova direzione in cui l'ideologia si manifestava come fatto e accadimento, e non come enunciato astratto, trasformandosi cosí in un racconto, in una registrazione di eventi".[736] The account offered a poetry in which ideology was no longer allegoric, but rather empirically presented and exemplified. Shortly after, commenting on *Reisebilder*, Sanguineti added:

> L'idea della poesia come comunicazione bassa, come prosaismo privilegiato, si coniugava inoltre con la mimesi di un diario che capovolge, almeno in prima istanza, l'idea novissima della depressione dell'io. Con *Reisebilder* nasceva una poesia tutta imperniata sull'io e sul racconto in prima persona: veniva dunque fabbricato un personaggio che racconta, il quale per comodità era un io. Naturalmente, non ha nessuna importanza verificare la maggiore o minore corrispondenza all'esperienza biografica dell'autore, benché naturalmente sia presente nel testo il gusto di *utilizzare elementi di realtà, selezionati e tagliati in un certo modo.*[737]

This new writing style, which at first seemed to be in contrast to the former "Reduction of the I", was hinged around the figure of an I that narrated his personal story through "elements of the real".

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[735] The travelling places in *Reisebilder* are identified by Gabriella Sica: "Nei *Reisebilder* l'autore ripercorre la traccia dell'itinerario interno ed esterno compiuto nel suo lungo girovagare dal giugno all'ottobre del 1971, tra Germania e Olanda, a Rotterdam, a l'Aja, a Monaco e a Berlino. Il corso delle sue giornate si svolge tra impegni di lavoro e gli svaghi obbligatoridel turista, in una literary supper, al Nomber One, al Bahnh of Zoo con i bambini, 'a pranzo al Paris Bar, a cena allo Yang Tse Kiang', 'in un appartamento dove abitò un tempo Hindenburg (oggi, una casa d'artista)', al Museo, a Spandau a 'esplorare secli di bastioni e di mattoni», tra «le rovine dei Giftgaslaboratorien', su un qualsiasi Bus 94, 'nell'Akademie', 'in una pista di dancing'.", Sica, *Edoardo Sanguineti*, 51.

[736] Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 156. Sanguineti also linked this recording of events to the recording of a historical situation, directly reconnecting to Benjamin's practice: "Più che registrazione del privato, questo è un modo per esprimere la caduta di certe illusioni ideologiche e di certe speranze storiche. (...) Fanno parte invece della storia di un personaggio, documentano delle insicurezze che non sono personali ma date oggettivamente. L'esaurimento fisico allude a un orizzonte che va molto al di là della persona, come appunto accadeva già in Reisebilder, dove parlavo di 'malattia morale', del nostro essere schiacciati 'tra il patetico e il volgare'. Cosi facendo, mi riallaccio a Benjamin e alla sua idea di una poesia come registrazione di esperienze concrete, dove concrete non significa autentiche nella cronaca, ma semplicemente sperimentabili. E questo, in fondo, è il vecchio tema del realismo", Sanguineti and Gambaro, 159.

[737] Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 157–58.

These elements were in turn brought together through a writing mode that referenced the technique of collage and montage. Like in *Stracciafoglio 21*, the "travel images" and events are selected, recorded, cut, and finally mounted together to construct the poem. Even though Sanguineti alerted the reader against the reliability of his narration – "non ha nessuna importanza la maggiore o minore corrispondenza all'esperienza biografica dell'autore" – the resulting ambiguous truth[738] was nonetheless a plausible one, and could potentially be true, "un piccolo fatto vero".[739] This "little true fact" was then inserted in a system theorised in *Postkarten 49*:

> per preparare una poesia, si prende "un piccolo fatto vero" (possibilmente
> *fresco di giornata):* c'è una ricetta simile in Stendhal, lo so, ma infine
> ha un suo sapore assai diverso: (e dovrei perderci un'ora almeno, adesso,
> qui, a cercare le opportune citazioni: e francamente non ne ho voglia):
> conviene curare
> spazio e tempo: una data precisa, un luogo scrupolosamente definito, sono gli ingredienti
> più desiderabili, nel caso: (item per i personaggi, da designarsi rispettando l'anagrafe:
> da identificarsi mediante tratti obiettivamente riconoscibili):
>   ho fatto il nome
> di Stendhal: ma, per lo stile, niente codice civile, oggi (e niente Napoleone, dunque,
> naturalmente): (si può pensare, piuttosto, al Gramsci dei *Quaderni, delle Lettere*, ma
> condito in una salsa un po' piccante: di quelle che si trovano, volendo, là in cucina,
> presso il giovane Marx): e avremo una pietanza gustosamente commestibile, una specialità
> verificabile: (verificabile, dico, nel senso che la parola può avere in Brecht, mi pare,
> in certi appunti dell'Arbeitsjournal): (e quanto all'effetto V, che ci vuole, lo si ottiene
> con mezzi modestissimi): (come qui, appunto, con un pizzico di Artusi e Carnacina):
> e
> concludo che la poesia consiste, insomma, in questa specie di lavoro: mettere parole come
> in corsivo, e tra virgolette: e sforzarsi di farle memorabili, come tante battute argute
> e brevi: (che si stampano in testa, cosí, con un qualche contorno di adeguati segnali
> socializzati): (come sono gli a capo, le allitterazioni, e, poniamo, le solite metafore):
> (che vengono a significare, poi, nell'insieme:
>   attento, o tu che leggi, e manda a mente):[740]

This poetic manifesto, which places a "piccolo fatto vero" at the center of the poem, clearly nods toward Tristan Tzara's collagist instructions "To make a Dadaist poem".[741] Similar to Tzara,[742] for

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[738] The ambiguity of truth is already apparent in the predilection for a "poesia documentaria", over a "verità documentaria", as discussed in Sanguineti, "Ma com'è fotogenica la realtá…anche troppo," 304.

[739] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 209.

[740] Sanguineti, 209.

[741] See Pietropaoli: "Con *Postkarten 49* Sanguineti detta il manifesto poetico del suo periodo di mezzo in forma di ricetta gastronomica, forse a immagine e dissomiglianza dalle note prescrizioni dadaiste di Tristan Tzara", Pietropaoli, *Unità e trinità di Edoardo Sanguineti*, 11.

[742] The whole poem reads: "TO MAKE A DADAIST POEM / Take a newspaper. / Take some scissors. / Choose from this paper an article of the length you want to make your poem. / Cut out the article. / Next carefully cut out each of the words that makes up this article and put them all in a bag. / Shake gently. / Next take out each cutting one after the

Sanguineti the elements of the poem needed to be cut out and isolated – "mettere parole / come / in corsivo, e tra virgolette". However, if Tzara prescribed the aleatory use of words collected from newspapers, Sanguineti favoured elements consciously selected from the everyday life of an alienated individual. [743]

Yet, what are the elements comprising Sanguineti's poetry? A closer look at *Postkarten 49* informs us of the most significant ones, which partially align with Welle's aptly formulated intuition that, in Sanguineti's work, montage manifests itself in the syntactical and semantic discontinuity of the poem, as well as in the clashing of everyday events with "philosophical, aesthetic, or political references", [744] and with Sanguineti's extensive use of quotations.

In *Postkarten 49*, we learn that the collagist quality of the poem is obtained by pasting together "**elementi di realtà**"[745] pertaining to a "piccolo fatto vero", such as "una data precisa, un luogo scrupolosamente definito" and "personaggi, da designarsi rispettando l'anagrafe". These are then brought together with often unexplicited **quotations and intramedial references**: "e dovrei perderci un'ora almeno, adesso, / qui, a cercare le opportune citazioni: e francamente non ne ho voglia"; or **intermedial references** to artworks or movies. For example, "Gramsci (…) condito in una salsa un po' piccante" is an unexplicit intermedial reference to Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966). As I

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other. / Copy conscientiously in the order in which they left the bag. The poem will resemble you. / And there you are – an infinitely original author of charming sensibility, even though unappreciated by the vulgar herd", Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, 39.

[743] The strand of uniting subjective and collective history is simplified in *Postkarten 62*, where the daily experiences of the individual intermingle with references to journalism and the newspaper: "con questa poesia molto quotidiana (e molto / da quotidiano, proprio): e questa poesia molto giornaliera (e molto giornalistica, / anche, se vuoi)", Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 222. In *Reisebilder*, in particular, Sanguineti travelled to a Germany still divided by the wall; he told Gambaro: "le impressioni di viaggio a Berlino Est fanno emergere molti elementi critici e ironici. Sono tutte pagine di un comunista perplesso che si pone una quantità di interrogativi, anche se non è in grado di pronunciare un giudizio di cui si senta sicuro", Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 212. In addition to the perplexity posited by the socio-political backdrop, *Reisebilder* also discusses the contradictions of a poet, Sanguineti, who finds himself often trapped in the web of the very bourgeoise he contests, like in Reisebilder 23: "pensa la crisi / dell'alienazione intellettuale, nella segregazione professionale, nella divisione sociale / del lavoro, nell'alienata invidia del lavoratore alienato: (...) ma per finire, considera, / Luziana (come pronunziò l'allegro poliziotto della DDR, che sillabava / sopra il tuo passaporto), quell'espressione che dice: noi uomini / borghesemente limitati:", Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 127.

[744] Welle, "Edoardo Sanguineti: A Profile of the Poet as a Cinephile," 174.

[745] That is, elements drawn from reality, such as specific indications of time and place, ekphrastic descriptions of travel scenes, fragments of conversation. Sanguineti also referred to them as "effetti di realtà": "la maggiore leggibilità era procurata piuttosto dai nomi di luoghi, di persone, di oggetti che producevano un loro 'effetto di realtà'", Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 81.

will illustrate in detail in the next section, not only is the poem obtained through the juxtaposition of elements pertaining to the semantic content, it is also created via a "specie di lavoro" on the **formal elements** of discourse, ranging from punctuation, to typographical choices, and to figures of speech: "mettere parole come / *in corsivo*, e *tra virgolette* / (...) con un qualche contorno di adeguati segnali / socializzati): (come sono *gli a capo, le allitterazioni, e, poniamo, le solite metafore*):".[746]

The montage of these fragments, stylistically obtained through an intervention on form, is also responsible for the estrangement effect ("l'effetto V"[747]), in this case exemplified via an intramedial reference to Artusi and Carnacina's cook books – "quanto all'effetto V, che ci vuole, lo si ottiene / con mezzi modestissimi): (come qui, appunto, con un pizzico di Artusi e Carnacina".[748] The final product is a frantic and ideologically charged pastiche,[749] "questo pasticcio di pasta, di colla, di sborra, di vernice",[750] in which the reader is at once identifying with the narrating I, through the empirical experience presented in the poem, and ostracised from the narration, in "una strategia di distanziamento e insieme di coinvolgimento del lettore".[751]

The estrangement effect engendered by the very montage of these fragments places the reader face to face with a disorienting text, where the quotations, the intermedial allusions to artworks, and even the indications of space, time, or characters belong to the personal set of references of the author and, as such, they often appear hardly accessible to the reader. In a sense, Sanguineti employed a process similar to that used for *T.A.T.*: here, too, the texts still function as tests. The readers are thus

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[746] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 209, my italics.

[747] For a more detailed discussion on the "V effect" and Brecht's influence in this poem, see Pietropaoli, *Unità e trinità di Edoardo Sanguineti*, 11, 49–51.

[748] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 209.

[749] On the underlying ideological nature of these poems, Sanguineti said: "Il discorso politico infatti non viene mai proposto come una serie di enunciazioni in prima persona, ma come registrazione di enunciazioni date: c'è un personaggio 'io' che parla con altri personaggi, che fa alcune azioni, ma tutto appare sempre in modo distanziato, attraverso uno straniamento di tipo frantumatamente narrativo. In pratica, io faccio un racconto che, per lampi e in modo sempre inquieto, comunica fatti ed eventi, rendendo possibile una concretezza ideologica che nello stadio 'labirintico' non era pensabile", Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 80.

[750] This verse is drawn from *Postkarten 4*: while the poem is an ekphrastic description of Robert Rauschenberg's *Charlene* (1954), the expression is here also elevated to a metaphor for Sanguineti's poem, and for life itself, Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 164.

[751] The quote continues with "dove un 'piccolo fatto vero', che naturalmente può essere del tutto onirico e delirante, è pur sempre presentato come un'esperienza concreta e significativa", Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 81.

called to engage with the estranging images of *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten*, and to provide their own response to them. However, if in *T.A.T.* the poems functioned like images from Murray's test, in this instance the "test" for the reader is sparked by the sensation of looking at orphan photographs (or video recordings, or both) from a travelogue, that is to say, decontextualised photographs for which we no longer have access to the subjects or events portrayed.[752] When reading poems from *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten*, the "travel images" sketched on the page, like the orphan photographs, appear to be at once alluring and yet impeding a satisfactory connection with the narrating subject. For instance, in *Reisebilder 28*: "il 1° agosto (Domenica), nel pomeriggio, tutti a Spandau, con Bisinger",[753] the clear indications of time, place, and character are only superficially informative, since the reader is likely not to know that Spandau is a suburb in Berlin, or that Bisinger is an Austrian poet. An analogous level of inaccessibility also characterises the other references inserted in the poetic collage, such as quotations, intramedial and intermedial references to books, film, or artworks, or references to politics.[754] While these fragments can only be recognised by readers who are already familiar with them, they nonetheless create an organic and at once disorderly whole, recording "piccoli fatti very".

In Sanguineti's photographic mode of writing, then, the montage technique is the key tool to string together heterogeneous elements. Like in his childhood book *TUTTO*, Sanguineti's poems are composed by mounting together fragments of different types, from indications of time, place or characters, to intramedial and intermedial references, to references to politics. The final work provokes an estrangement effect in the reader, who is potentially disoriented by the disorderly coexistence of several layers of communication, some often left implicit. Yet, how does writing, in Sanguineti's poetry, formally reflect these conceptual indications of poetics? In the next section, I

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[752] A definition is provided by Tina Campt: "the main characteristics of 'orphan photographs' is that 'we no longer have access to their owners or producers, the subjects featured in them, or the families of those who witnessed or might authenticate their circumstances'" (Tina Campt 2012, 87)", quoted in Stańczyk, "The Rebelling Orphan," 1042.
[753] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 132.
[754] This classification is again drawn from Welle, "Edoardo Sanguineti: A Profile of the Poet as a Cinephile.".

attempt to answer this question by mapping the formal and stylistic devices that reveal montage in Sanguineti's poems: the cutting, selecting, and organising of fragments within a text.

The Elements and Form of Montage

Sanguineti's photographic mode of writing operates both at the level of form and content. The elements and literary strategies outlined here characterise Sanguineti's production from 1956 to 1972,[755] although in *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* these are inserted in a more fluid and diarist narrative. However, the reason why all these collections, albeit different, present recurring stylistic features lies in Sanguineti's assumption that language always incarnates a living ideology. In fact, the disrupted linearity of the syntax in Sanguineti's poetry defies and critiques the syntactical order of the bourgeois discourse.[756] As I have mentioned before, this anarchic drive is achieved in the text through an imitation of the technique of montage.

As *Postkarten 49* already laid out, the poems in *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* present "piccoli fatti veri", that is to say glimpses of everyday life from Sanguineti's travels in the form of conversations, encounters, situations. The everyday "registrazione di eventi" is then interspersed with reflections and references to books, artworks, film. These, then – the "elementi di realtà", the reflections and the intramedial or intermedial references – are the very elements Sanguineti juxtaposed to create a fragmented text that still retains its unity. Since several of these aspects have been discussed by other scholars,[757] below I offer a schematic mapping of these building blocks and provide a textual sample for each one, as ideal exempla:

1. The "elementi di realtà" include:

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[755] See, for example, the analysis of *T.A.T.* provided in the section *T.A.T.: Photography and the Text as Test*.
[756] I will discuss this topic in further detail in the following section.
[757] On the indications of space and time, see Pietropaoli, *Unità e trinità di Edoardo Sanguineti*, 19–32.; and Colangelo, *Il soggetto nella poesia del Novecento italiano*, 109–18. On the intermedial references to film: Welle, "Edoardo Sanguineti: A Profile of the Poet as a Cinephile"; Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*.

Indications of space, time, and characters that can be particularly specific, like in *Postkarten 25*: "sopra il balcone del reparto 8, / nel convalescenziario alla Crocetta, il 19 settembre 1972, martedí, / verso le 14";[758] or *Postkarten 7*: "ha concluso Constant, che meditava sopra il mio profilo con Lambert".[759]

Fragments of conversations, in line with the idea of "recording" events and conversations, "(e ogni nostra parola sarà registrata su nastro):",[760] as for instance in *Reisebilder 3*: "mi telefona Vasko: sei sveglio? mi dice: certo, gli dico; e / ho già parlato con mia moglie".[761]

Detailed descriptions of events, like in *Reisebilder 34*: "al funzionario doganale in minigonna, che mi ha prescelto, con i suoi occhi di sibilla / e di colomba, dentro una fila interminabile di viaggiatori in transito, ho detto / tutta la verità, confinato in un séparé-confessionale di legno/ compensato:".[762]

2. **Reflections**: the narration of everyday situations is often alternated with the author's reflections on life, politics, family, ideology, such as in *Reisebilder 19*, where a description of Luciana (Sanguineti's wife) buying a red flag in Berlin is followed by a reflection on the fallen aura of the poet, who is now an employee working for the bourgeoisie: "oggi, non so: ti guardo/ lí al Zentrum, in quella che fu Alexanderplatz (e oggi è a stento / un nome) che comperi gelosamente una bandiera rossa (…) *(ma stasera, prima che discutiamo se fare o non fare un quarto figlio, ti commento due passi del Manifesto: / quello in cui è detto che la borghesia / ha spogliato la poesia del suo Heiligenscbein, trasformando il poeta in un suo dipendente / salariato*".[763]

3. Intramedial and intermedial references:

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[758] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 185.
[759] Sanguineti, 167.
[760] This verse is taken from *Postkarten 20*, Sanguineti, 180.
[761] Sanguineti, 107.
[762] Sanguineti, 138.
[763] Sanguineti, 123.

Intramedial references, references to writers or literary works, like in *Postkarten 43*: "volume superstite di una pregiata edizione delle *Oeuvres / complètes* di *Voltaire*",[764] or

quotations, in *Postkarten 62*: "quell'articolo di Fortini che chiacchiera / della chiarezza degli articoli dei giornali, (...) che ha per titolo, appunto, 'perché è difficile scrivere chiaro'".[765]

Tellingly, in *Per una teoria della citazione*, Sanguineti linked the idea of montage to that of quotations: "il montaggio non è altro che la messa in evidenza del fatto che tutto è citazione, nel senso che tutto è combinazione di codici".[766]

Intermedial references to artworks, like in *Postkarten 4*: "davanti a Charlene (1954) (…) alludo, adesso, allo stretto specchio / deformante, eretto sotto la tavolozza derisoria di un frivolo ombrello spiaccicato:",[767] and **film**, in *Reisebilder 16*: "(come Archibaldo de la Cruz, sono delitti che non so commettere:".[768]

These heterogeneous elements are then brought together and juxtaposed in Sanguineti's poems. See below for some of the building blocks that comprise *Reisebilder 1*:

che cosa potevo fare o dire, Vasko,[769] quando quella seria Shirley
Temple[770] in technicolor mi ha raggiunto correndo sulla Lijnbaan,[771] agitando
la sua rossa coda ridendo?[772] ho subito sentito i suoi artigli – come
si dice – nel mio cuore:
                      tiene il mio teschio tra le sue zampe, ma la sua faccia,
adesso, è pulita: e succhia la mia spina dorsale sopra questo deserto
di Rotterdam, dentro questo Number One, in questo literary supper:[773]
è una cosa (lei) del genere Holbein d.J. (penso al *Portret*
van een onbekende vrouw):[774] non è riuscita cosí bene, si capisce, ma
è più magra: e con il pipistrello in testa, per esempio: e senza tutto quel velo giallo:
le ho chiesto anche il nome (lo hai sentito anche tu): una parola come lnneke,[775]
credo:
      e poi, che cosa posso scrivere, ormai, se devo ancora discutere
fino alle sei del mattino, camera 348, con l'europeo Tchicaya,

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[764] Sanguineti, 203.
[765] Sanguineti, 221.
[766] Sanguineti, *Cultura e realtà*, 347.
[767] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 164.
[768] Sanguineti, 120.
[769] Indication of character.
[770] Intermedial reference to film.
[771] Indication of place.
[772] Ekphrastic description.
[773] Indication of place.
[774] Intermedial reference to painting.
[775] Indication of character.

con Breyten, con te?[776]
(non riesco nemmeno a telefonare a mia moglie, vedi, a finire
le *Affinità elettive*[777]): e ho anche un paio di pustole in faccia:[778]

Compared to the poems in *T.A.T.*, this text unravels through a very colloquial, at times oneiric,[779] but overall fluid narrative structure, which describes the encounter of the author with a woman, Shirley Temple, alias Inneke, in the streets of Rotterdam. At first sight, *Reisebilder* seems stylistically very far from *T.A.T.*. However, by focusing on some of the formal features of this text a deeper connection clearly links the experimental phase to the more communicative one, since, like Sanguineti avowed: "sulle mani sporche permangono, e certo permarranno, le buone macchie di melma".[780] In fact, the informal account of *Reisebilder 1* presents an unusual layout and an equally uncommon use of punctuation, which disrupts the seeming linearity of discourse, both visually and syntactically. The versification – characterised by strong enjambments, "Shirley / Temple", "*Portret / vaan*", and by the visual indentation – together with the use of colons and brackets that isolate and glue together segments of text, all contribute to construct a fragmented and jolty whole.

It is at the very level of language, then, that montage takes place first. The condition of "asintassia furibonda"[781] experimented in *T.A.T.* is here proposed again in slightly mutated terms. As Pietropaoli accurately noted, in *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* there is a shift from a condition on "asintassia" to one of "ipersintassia";[782] both, however, reconstruct an estranged use of syntax, which

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[776] Indication of time, place, and character.

[777] Intramedial reference.

[778] This last part is also a reflection on the difficulty of writing, a constant theme in *Reisebilder*.

[779] Often, the oneirc components correspond to ekphrastic description of unexplicited artworks or films. In general, the quality of dreams is an element Sanguineti discussed when speaking of montage, especially a la Buñuel, where disconnected images are forced together in a pseudo-narrative progression. While speaking of the first example of literary montage, by Lautréamont Sanguineti said: "Tutto il Surrealismo è strutturato su quest'idea da cui deriva l'importanza del sogno, cioè di immagini incongrue alle quali si cerca di dare un ordine. Il fatto che il tavolo di dissezione, la macchina da cucire e l'ombrello siano elementi artefatti, tecnologici, industriali dimostra la presa di coscienza di una fascinazione indotta dal mondo tecnologico", Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 33.

[780] Giuliani, *I Novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, 204.

[781] Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 120.

[782] Pietropaoli notes: "il quadro generate della sintassi sanguinetiana muta e l'asintassia, con un ultimo movimento evolutivo, si trasforma in un regime sintattico di estrema ricchezza accumulativa, in una tale articolazione e proliferazione di sintagmi e frasi, sia ipo che (soprattutto) paratattica, da potersi definire per contrasto ipersintassia molecolare. (...). E dunque, ma già lo sappiamo, ciò che realmente passa dal primo al secondo periodo e il solito principio barocco dell''esagerazione', quell'invariante di parossismo che sostiene e spiega tutte le variazioni di superficie della stilistica sanguinetiana (la cosa infatti si ripetera puntualmente nella terza fase)", Pietropaoli, *Unità e trinità di Edoardo Sanguineti*, 76–77.

reflects a disorderly way of looking at reality. It is a disorderly gaze also engendered by the invention of cinema and montage, as Sanguineti reminded us.[783] Accordingly, Sanguineti *decides* to imitate technology in his writing: the acts of selecting, cutting, and mounting together textual segments are recreated in the text through the disruption of syntax, performed on three often intertwined levels: 1. the grammatical; 2. the rhetorical; 3. and the typographic.

1. **Grammatical** – Punctuation is the most powerful and systematic means that Sanguineti uses to isolate segments and break up the fluidity of syntax. The markers, such as colons, brackets, and commas, are used in slightly different ways:

   Colon: each and every poem in both *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* ends with a colon. While, on the one hand, the final colon indicates that the poem belongs to an unending discourse, inextricable from the flow of the lived experience, on the other, the colon also indicates a juncture, a point of suture between a poem and another, but also between a fragment and the other. When used within the poem, the colon entirely loses its explicative function and becomes instead structural to the mechanism of literary montage, as in *Reisebilder 1*, combined with the polysyndeton of "e" : "è più magra: e con il pipistrello in testa, per esempio: e senza tutto quel velo giallo: / credo: / e poi (...)";[784] or *Reisebilder 2*: "sopra i colori: sopra il rosso (rouge): forse anche sopra l'azzurro";[785] *Reisebilder 3*: "bene, dice Vasko: ma è proprio la settimana / santa, allora, per te: (questa:della Knaak-Poetry):";[786] *Reisebilder 45*: "subito: (e puoi capirmi): questo è il mio corpo:";[787] *Postkarten 12*: "senti, è terribile: vivo ai tuoi piedi, scrivo / ai tuoi piedi: (tu non ci credi, credo, e non lo vedi):";[788] *Postkarten 25*: "e le infermiere erano in moto perpetuo: / ho fumato: ho sesaminato il vario verde / degli alberi, giù, nel cortile: / stavo già quasi conglobato, dentro il pensionato:".[789]

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[783] Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 25.
[784] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 105.
[785] Sanguineti, 106.
[786] Sanguineti, 107.
[787] Sanguineti, 145.
[788] Sanguineti, 172.
[789] Sanguineti, 185.

The **brackets,** used to isolate fragments of discourse, are also pervasive in Sanguineti's work. They are often combined with the colon to increase the effect of cutting and isolating excerpts, via the brackets, and mounting them together through the joining force of the colons, such as in *Reisebilder 13*: "(stanno impiccati, qui intorno, gli emblemi / della gioia di vivere): (del valore d'uso): (ti segnalo i due flauti, / per esempio):"; or, more explicitly in *Reisebilder 15*:

: (e adesso, cambiamento di scena (e colpo di scena):
(spariscono (a Schöneberg) animali e bambini, entrano (casa di professore)
intellettuali e docenti):
                riconoscono l'artista nordico, il realista, il supernaturalista,
il viaggiatore curioso, la giovane strega): (sento applausi per l'anarchismo
vitale (che è in camicia nera, alla lettera)): (e, *in primo piano*, un Weltkind
che russa, sdraiato su un divano):
                doch gibt es ein Gedichtchen):[790]

here the complex bracket system, interspersed with the use of terminology borrowed from cinema, suggests that the author, by "changing scene" (from a house full of animals and children to one with professors and intellectuals) and performing a close-up on a "Weltkind che russa", is consciously adopting the role of editor within the linguistic text, arranging scenes and zooming in and out on the characters. "The film camera of Sanguineti's mind" is therefore directly intervening on the formal qualities of the text to construct a photographic, and more specifically cinematic, mode of writing, as Sanguineti meta-poetically explained in *Postkarten 13*: "(e con immagini revisionate attentamente, nel cinematografo / della mia mente, relative tutte a ieri, 23 marzo): (come il fantasma di un Bussotti / in carne ed ossa".[791]

In line with the use of colons and brackets, **commas** also serve the function of breaking the linearity of the discourse: in fact, commas are often used to impose unnatural or unnecessary pauses to the syntactical unities, such as in *Reisebilder* 7: "(piuttosto, figli miei, un passo indietro, adesso, attenti, tutti / insieme";[792] or *Reisebilder 38*: "troppa grazia, /

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[790] Sanguineti, 119.
[791] Sanguineti, 173.
[792] Sanguineti, 111.

accidenti, juter Jott: che di città, cosí, ne hai fatte due:";[793] *Postkarten* 10: "e passa a leggermi,

non la mia mano, / ma le mie mani, al plurale, ma la mia vita, tutta, scrupolosa:".[794]

2. **Rhetorical** – Similarly, the figures of speech, in particular those pertaining to syntax, such as

   the enumeration through asyndeton or polysyndeton, and the enjambment, are employed to

   further complicate the syntactical order. I will also include the plurilingual inserts in this

   section, since I consider them as a type of rhetorical strategy.

   Enumeration: The role of enumeration in Sanguineti is particularly relevant to the

   idea of montage. On the one hand, Sanguineti placed it side by side with the insertion of the

   indications of place, time, and character, as a way to anchor the poetic discourse to reality, in

   its chaos:

   Questa strategia [della catalogazione] nasce innanzitutto dalla passione per il catalogo e per
   l'enumerazione caotica, da intendere - per usare la formula di Spitzer - come modo di esprimere il
   caos dell'universo. (...) Il catalogo insomma è un modo per vincolare il discorso all'emergenza della
   realtà, ricorrendo agli oggetti. Allo stesso scopo risponde anche la passione per la data, il nome, il
   luogo, l'informazione precisa: tutti elementi che ricorrono spesso nelle mie poesie, concorrendo
   evidentemente alla loro desublimazione.[795]

   On the other hand, Sanguineti discussed chaotic enumeration as the strategy beyond the first

   example of literay montage, created by Lautréamont:[796] "L'enumerazione ordinata ha sempre

   messo insieme tante cose; quella caotica, studiata da Spitzer, è altrettanto importante

   relativamente a quest'idea di montaggio: butto dentro qualsiasi cosa e avanti ... Anzi, più

   caotico è il procedimento, più è efficace".[797] In *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* there are a few

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[793] Sanguineti, 142.

[794] Sanguineti, 170.

[795] Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 160.

[796] The following excerpt is indeed preceded by a comment on Lautréamont's example of literary montage: "Ho già accennato al fatto che il montaggio in quanto procedimento mentale è anteriore al cinema. Se dovessi citare il più arcaico esempio di montaggio che io conosca, sceglierei un passo dei Chants de Maldoror di Lautréamont (siamo dunque nell'Ottocento inoltrato) dove l'autore fa una comparazione tra varie cose belle e, come esempio di bellezza, cita l'incontro casuale sopra un tavolo di dissezione anatomica di una macchina da cucire e di un ombrello. Ora, citare come esempio di bellezza l'insieme di questi tre elementi del tutto eterogenei ed incongrui, è forse il primo esempio di montaggio (...). Questo effetto di montaggio di elementi eminentemente visivi potrebbe essere assimilato al collage. Pensiamo alla pop art e a molte opere di Rauschenberg che sono puro collage costituito dall'assemblaggio di elementi pittorici con oggetti vari: un paio di scarpe, una foto di Kennedy, una tessera, una penna", also note the overlapping of montage and collage, Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 32.

[797] Prono and Allasia, 32.

examples of enumeration: *Reisebilder 17*, enumeration through asyndeton: "(e un elemento / del colore locale, anche: come i mulini a vento, i tulipani, le vacche, / i Vermeer, ecc.):";[798] *Postkarten 39*: "le ragazze, per me, sono tipi classificabili, ormai: come i francobolli, i folk- / tales, gli insetti:";[799] and *Postkarten 53*: "la mia evoluzione si è arrestata a uno stadio di piedi sudaticci,/ di narici eccessive (e, in piu, eccessivamente irritabili), di costole distorte / come costolette troppo cotte, di forfore, di gibbosità varie:";[800] enumeration through polysyndeton in *Postkarten 46*: "ho visto un sacco di tipi ridursi come mosche / d'inverno, come flaconi crepati, come gomme da masticare masticate:".[801]

Particularly significant is *Reisebilder 41*, where the enumeration constitutes the pretext as well as the formal structure of the poem, side by side with references to photography and cut outs from newspapers. While Sanguineti broadly defined literary montage as a "collage of words", in this case the technique employed is more similar to collage proper, in which "photographic" images, reproduced through writing, are pasted one after the other:

der Gote con gli stivali si è esibito a cavallo (in fotografia):
                                              sono apparsi,
nel seguente ordine, dalla sua cartella di prestigiatore (o dalla sua bocca, insieme
con la sua lingua): la Loren (con il coniuge e la prole), la Cardinale (un ritaglio
di giornale, o weh! piegato in quattro), un campione della box degli anni Trenta (e
un ulteriore detentore di primati teutonici, incorniciato con l'autografo), un podista
nostrano della stessa epoca, Balbo (il quadrumviro), un'olandesina molto
marginale, Hitler (ein Verbrecher), Mussolini dumm (e la sua Verliebte),
l'architetto dell'Olympiastadion (un Werner March, con la sua busta
di milioni), Nino Benvenuti, Rommel e un professore anonimo, e (per finire)
un Adolphe Menjou (gesto dei baffi) piovuto proprio dal cielo: (...)[802]

Enjambment: In *Reisebilder 5*, Sanguineti defined his poems as "petites proses en poème".[803] The apparent prosaic style thus still conformed to the formal constraints of poetry. As Lorenzini has aptly pointed out, throughout the 1970s, Sanguineti often hid "misure

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[798] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 121.
[799] Sanguineti, 199.
[800] Sanguineti, 213.
[801] Sanguineti, 206.
[802] Sanguineti, 145.
[803] Sanguineti, 109.

regolari, pur elaborate, dilatate o reduplicate (…) tramite una ridondanza del lessico"[804] in his

colloquial discourse. For Sanguineti: "La spinta verso il controllo formale non è mai venuta

meno; anzi, il ricorso ad alcuni elementi di artificio – compreso l'uso più o meno straniato di

elementi strofici e metrici tradizionali – si è persino intensificato nel corso del tempo".[805] The

estranged use of traditional versification strategies recalled by Lorenzini, and confirmed by

Sanguineti, is equally pursued through the use of the enjambment. In fact, while, at first sight,

the poems in *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* seem to adhere to the format of "petites proses",

where the lines maintain a similar length and conform to a loosely justified visual layout,[806]

the enjambments actually take up a role of control and modulation of the verses, in line with

the forms of poetry, in a "duplice funzione metrico-sintattica di controllo: della misura del

verso, più spesso per mantenerla grossomodo inalterata che per variarla; e/o soprattutto della

compattezza grafica (visiva) dei sintagmi coinvolti", as Pietropaoli suggested.[807] Most

importantly, however, the use of enjambments, and of versification in general, is in line with

Sanguineti's deconstruction of the linearity of syntax and with the construction, instead, of a

jolting, and rhythmically fragmented structure, like in *Reisebilder 13*: "ma per te, ormai, grido

l'imperativo categorico: pensa / a far soldi";[808] *Reisebilder 47*: "ha la sua gracile gloria,

godereccia e gestuale, la bella Barbara / miope e loquace, brutalmente tatuata-bistrata,

finissima intenditrice / di psicologia fisiologica, che da me prese congedo promettendo (nella

lingua / di Cervantes), con quattro quinti di un abbraccio di striscio, lettere / su lettere:";[809] or

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[804] Lorenzini, *Poesia del Novecento italiano*, 160.

[805] Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 161.

[806] Often, two adjacent verses are separated and the second is indented so as to align to the external margin, as in *Reisebilder 12*:

come si tengono bene per mano, dicevi, quell'uomo e quella donna
che passeggiano insieme:
                              si tratta di Tenti e di sua moglie, ti ho spiegato,
numero di inventario 12547: (e lui è un sacerdote di basso rango):
e ti avverto: sono di pietra colorata, e camminano dentro una tomba:
Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 116.

[807] Pietropaoli is here referring to *Laborintus*, but the use of enjambments has a similar function in these two poetry collections. Pietropaoli, *Unità e trinità di Edoardo Sanguineti*, 72–73.

[808] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 117.

[809] Sanguineti, 151.

in *Postkarten 11*, where the enjambment also presents a tmesis: "si precipita acrobatico, giù, dall'oblò semi-/ sbadigliante,".[810]

      Plurilingual inserts:[811] Sanguineti often interspersed his writing with syntagms or short sentences in foreign languages. Compared to *Laborintus*,[812] the use of plurlingualism in *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* is more moderate, and it often coincides with intramedial and intermedial references, such as in the title for artworks in *Reisebilder 1*: "*Portret / van een onbekende vrouw*";[813] to directly quote some writing: "indovina che cosa c'era scritto (nella toilette del ristorante) / ancora, c'era scritto cosí, proprio: "haben sie nichts liegen lassen"?", and "un biglietto che diceva, precisamente: / wie geht es dir?" in *Reisebilder 4* and *16* respectively;[814] or even to include fragments of conversation: "disse, moraleggiando (sparito il König Wenig): 'der Traum ist frei':".[815] A more estranging use of plurilingual inserts, corresponding to a sudden code switching, rather than to an act of quotation is in *Postkarten 2, 3, 23*: "riaffioro da una Bali, travolto / da una rijsttafel", "dove schiamazzano saltellando, pingui waterhoentjes", "con il suo torace / da calzolaio (che si dice pectus excavatum), tremare e delirare, come / tombé en enfance";[816] and in *Reisebilder 23*: "ti segnalo questo elementare scrivere-/ descrivere (nel testo, un ovvio schreiben-beschreiben): (e più esattamente (dopo un was kann ich tun, was tue ich!), questo da setz'ich mich hin / und schreibe und beschreibe):".[817] Here the textual montage and its fabrication become increasingly apparent, as the reader is forced to halt and move from one language to another.

3. **Typographic**: the fragmentation and mounting of elements also occurs on a visual, typographic level. While these strategies were extensively employed during Sanguineti's

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[810] Sanguineti, 171.

[811] On Sanguineti's plurilinguism see Rodda, "Triperuno. Sanguineti e il plurilinguismo folenghiano"; Schiavulli, "Io sono una moltitudine. Pratiche linguistiche della soggettività in 'Laborintus' di Edoardo Sanguineti."

[812] *Laborintus* presented a frequent mixing of live and dead languages, such as ancient Greek and Latin.

[813] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 105.

[814] Sanguineti, 108, 120.

[815] Sanguineti, 113.

[816] Sanguineti, 162,163,183.

[817] Sanguineti, 127.

experimental phase, as examples from both *T.A.T.* and *Laborintus* clearly exemplified, in his communicative poetry they are used more sparingly and sometimes even conventionally, since Sanguineti advanced "un discorso in atto".[818] Nevertheless, when these typographical strategies appear in *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten*, they align with Sanguineti's montage technique.

Both in *Reisebilder* and in *Postkarten*, the **typographic** interventions mostly concern the use of italics and of white spaces. If in previous poetry collections the italics could be used in a non-normative way,[819] here its use appears standardized, to indicate the title of artworks or books – "le *Affinità elettive*):"; and "Leslie A. Fiedler, quello di *Love and Death*:".[820] In a sense, Sanguineti is here alerting and informing the reader that the text encloses an intramedial or intermedial reference, which can be further explored.[821]

Sanguineti's peculiar use of **white space** in *Reisebilder* and *Postkarten* is a feature that had been introduced since *Erotopaegnia* (1956–1959). While in these collections there is no clear division of the poems in stanzas, the abrupt interruption of some lines, combined with the indentation of the following verse, create a visual division of the poem in sections, like in *Reisebilder 12*:

come si tengono bene per mano, dicevi, quell'uomo e quella donna
che passeggiano insieme:
                        si tratta di Tenti e di sua moglie, ti ho spiegato,
numero d'inventario 12547: (e lui è un sacerdote di basso rango):
e ti avverto: sono di pietra colorata, e camminano dentro una tomba:[822]

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[818] Pietropaoli, *Unità e trinità di Edoardo Sanguineti*, 175. Yet, this discourse is still undermined by "una folata di vento (…) a scombinare le carte dei sintagmi", in "un persistente ebbro formicolio della realtà e dell'esperienza, formalizzata di nuovo a livello sintattico", Pietropaoli, 175.

[819] See for example the use of capital letters and italics in the already cited *T.A.T. 3*: "it fits! ("URSUS HORRIBILIS"): E ALLOR per un *Totale* di= 9: / (*palloni*);", Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 98.

[820] Sanguineti, 105,106.

[821] Sanguineti distinguishes between quotations and allusions, but the underlying intention is that of creating a complicity with the reader, as he explicates in *Per una teoria della citazione*: "per questo insisto sulla complicità che si instaura fra autore e lettore. Non si parla mai a tutti, ma si parla a coloro che possono intendere il codice in cui ci si muove. Questo codice può essere estremamente ristretto, ed è in ogni caso un canone. Se io adesso vi citassi due righe di Pitigrilli scommetto che, salvo un eroe che sta facendo una tesi di laurea su Pitigrilli, la cosa passerebbe assolutamente inosservata", Sanguineti, *Cultura e realtà*, 140–41.

[822] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 116.

or *Postkarten 48*:

i miei occhi sono bruciati dentro i tuoi occhi, dentro i tuoi pacchi: sono bruciati
come ragni bruciati, come giornali, come giorni:
                                       i miei occhi di felci
e di fieni e di fiati: che sono bruciati come mani bruciate, come vetri
bruciati, come pipe:
                    i miei occhi che sono bruciati come gli occhi che sono bocche:
che cantano: e ti cantano questa canzonetta, in questo reparto speciale, al San Martino:[823]

The white space follows a shorter line, ended by a punctuation mark (usually the colon), and another one is then inserted before the following line, which starts roughly where the previous verse had ended. If the two adjacent verses are combined, their length usually aligns with the longer verses, so that the overall poem recalls the formal layout of prose. Yet, in this case, once more, this strategy is meant to visually disturb and fragment the linear flow of the text.

In conclusion, Sanguineti's formal structure is an illustration, as well as evidence, of the author's intention to recreate a montage effect. The influence of montage is thus apparent on several layers: from that of the author's perception of reality (as an integrated and embodied way of looking at the world) to that of poetics, encompassing both content and form. By taking into consideration that, in Sanguineti's scheme of thought, form and language incarnate ideology, it becomes necessary to finally investigate how, exactly, montage and ideology intertwine in his work.

Ideology and Montage

I have argued how in Sanguineti's work language is also constructed through montage, in opposition to the linearity of syntax. I have also posited that Sanguineti's challenge to syntax order and his disorderly way of looking and writing constitute a challenge to the hegemonic order of the bourgeoisie. Language, therefore, incarnates ideology. This concluding section will expand on Sanguineti's critique to contemporary alienated society as it appears in his intersecting ideas on language and montage.

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[823] Sanguineti, 208.

In *Ritratto del Novecento*, Sanguineti posited that syntax, in its normative use, reflected the authoritative order of the hegemonic class: "La classe dominante impone una sintassi, con norme discorsive che corrispondono a un'idea astratta e ideale di ordine (...) configurata secondo un'impostazione sempre molto calcolata e autoritaria".[824] On the contrary, the stylistic technique of montage, when applied to syntax, has the power to deconstruct the hierarchies imposed by the ruling class and to put forward the divergent value of "disorder", thus fostering "una concezione della poesia identificata con una occasione assolutamente e deliberatamente irrazionale, fortuita, che svela per effetto di shock qualcosa che prima era completamente impensabile".[825] For Sanguineti, therefore, using montage as the founding strategy beyond an artwork would formally and ideologically constitute a "slap to the bourgeoisie", and to the expectations set out by the art market. In a comment on the work of Buñuel, Sanguineti clarified:

> Non credo che Buñuel si ponesse il problema se stava o no anticipando il mercato. Certamente c'era in lui il tentativo di conquistare un'egemonia culturale. Non fa un film per divertirsi ma per mollare uno schiaffo alla borghesia. Il pubblico borghese vuole una storia? Bene. Lui gli scaglia contro un groviglio mostruoso, orripilante, insensato, delirante.[826]

Within the Marxist conflict between classes, reflected in the very structures of language,[827] Sanguineti assumed the role of a Gramscian "intellettuale organico",[828] feeling the moral responsibility to take political sides in his artistic practice and to refute the order of the bourgeoisie. This is exactly why Sanguineti strenuously tried to raise awareness on the identification between language and ideology. For Sanguineti, the neo-avant-garde writers had to be aware of, as well as embrace, the eversive quality of their work with the aim to perform "un costante controllo di coscienza politica".[829] In fact, Sanguineti's attempt to convince the other neo-avant-garde writers to

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[824] Sanguineti and Lorenzini, *Ritratto del Novecento*, 27–28.
[825] Sanguineti and Lorenzini, 27–28.
[826] Prono and Allasia, *Un poeta al cinema*, 46.
[827] For Sanguineti, "è questo conflitto medesimo [between classes] che si riflette a livello del linguaggio", Sanguineti and Camon, *Il mestiere di poeta*, 230.
[828] For a commentary on the "intellettuale organico" in Gramsci in relation to Sanguineti's artistic practice see Erminio Risso's *Il chierico organico. Per una storia dell'intellettuale*, in Sanguineti and Risso, *Edoardo Sanguineti. Il chierico organico. Scritture e intellettuali*.
[829] Sanguineti and Camon, *Il mestiere di poeta*, 231–32.

join his political contestation partially led to the dissolution of the literary journal *Il Quindici* in 1968, and to the subsequent dismemberment of Gruppo 63.

At any rate, despite Sanguineti's intention to be intellectually organic to the proletariat,[830] he was also aware of his middle-class background: "cresciuto in una dimensione borghese",[831] as Weber pointed out. Sanguineti clearly denounced such contradiction in *Reisebilder 31*:

> durante una conversazione serale, piuttosto squallida (non ricordo i particolari,
> ormai), e a tratti astrattamente teorica, ho sentito che eravamo segnati
> da una mortale malattia morale:
>   è stato quando ho parlato della degradazione
> della quotidianità privata: (e dovevo insistere meglio sopra questo nostro
> lasciarci andare cosi, schiacciati tra il patetico e il volgare, chiusi
> nel deforme dell'esperienza borghese):
>   non so se esagero: ma c'è qualcosa
> che non funziona anche nei nostri gesti (guarda come stai seduta per esempio
> in questo momento):
>   e anche quando ti racconto che il giovane Goethe,
> a Lipsia, tormentava tutti per sapere che cosa fosse quell'Erfahrung che tutti
> gli dicevano che gli mancava:
>   (e come gli rispose un ufficiale in congedo):[832]

In this poem, the bourgeoisie is described as a "mortale malattia morale" able to trap and clash the writing subject "tra il patetico e il volgare". For Weber, it was precisely Sanguineti's fictional alignment with the bourgeoisie that allowed for a structural criticism of its forms, since he would endow his literary alter ego with "tutti i caratteri, fatui o disprezzabili, comici o tragici, della classe egemone, per offrirli a una critica autentica".[833] Yet, despite Weber's convincing argument, we can also register a sense of nostalgic defeat in the submission to a burgeoise lifestyle – "lasciarci andare (…) nel deforme dell'esperienza borghese" – or in the buffling counterfeiting of the gestures: "non so se esagero: ma c'è qualcosa / che non funziona anche nei nostri gesti". After all, Sanguineti, both as a fictional double and as a committed intellectual, admittingly always lived in the very clothes of the bourgeois: "quasi sempre vissuto in giacca e cravatta".[834]

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[830] On this, see Sanguineti's contribution *Come si diventa materialisti storici?* in Sanguineti, *Cultura e realtà*.
[831] Weber, *Usando gli utensili di utopia. Traduzione, parodia e riscrittura in Edoardo Sanguineti*, 150.
[832] Sanguineti, *Segnalibro. Poesie 1951–1981*, 135.
[833] Weber, *Usando gli utensili di utopia. Traduzione, parodia e riscrittura in Edoardo Sanguineti*, 150.
[834] Sanguineti and Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, 20.

However, within this intrinsic contradiction, the avant-garde, and specifically the neo-avant-garde,[835] remained for Sanguineti the only possible way to speak truthfully of reality:

> ove essa sia davvero compresa, con le proprie contraddizioni, nel tessuto reale delle contraddizioni di base, la via dell'avanguardia diviene effettualmente la via deputata, sul terreno dell'arte, alla comprensione delle cose stesse. E dovrà qui ripetersi, con ferma ostinazione, che il problema del realismo, oggi, non può che essere posto e risolto entro questo orizzonte.[836]

The employment of the montage technique to deconstruct the linear syntactical order of the bourgeoisie was part of Sanguineti's fight against the hegemonic class from within its very being. The disorderly and abnormal use of the syntax thus constituted a "slap" to the bourgeoisie and to its market, while firmly remaining, as we have seen, within the medium of language and of poetic forms, however estranged.

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to illustrate how photography and cinema occupied a central role in the rethinking of poetry as a genre in Edoardo Sanguineti's work. Sanguineti's case most clearly exemplifies the hybridisation between photography and cinema since, like it had been for Porta and Rosselli, visual media are considered as prosthetic extensions of man, able to amplify cognition and offer new ways of seeing and understanding the world. Sanguineti consciously "imitated" these media in his writing, so that a way of seeing could become a way of writing, and eventually a way of putting forward an ideology. It is therefore possible to recognise how, in Sanguineti's work, the use of a cine-photographic mode of writing is essential to the very act of poetry making, on both stylistic and political levels.

On the one hand, the intermedial references to photography and cinema contributed to revolutionise Sanguineti's poetry at the level of style, syntax, and meter. Montage, in particular, had an effect on Sanguineti's syntax – or lack of thereof ("asintassia") – as well as on the textual visibility

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[835] See Sanguineti, *Ideologia e linguaggio*, 78.
[836] Sanguineti, 78.

of his poems, which often included white spaces and visually juxtaposed fragments, marked by the use of capitals or italics. On the other hand, for Sanguineti, the references to both photography and cinema were also instrumental to charge his poetry with an ideological stance. The references to photography served to place the figure of the author in between brackets, since the author, reduced to a "Kodak eye", automatically recorded facts and events. Furthermore, the very poems, like photographs taken by the author, had the role of directly implicating the reader in the poietic process, thus producing "open works" and transforming poetry into an active dialogue with its middle-class readership. Similarly, Sanguineti's cinematic mind embodied a challenge to the authority of the hegemonic class: by employing the technique of montage to recreate a form of asyntactism, Sanguineti meant to deconstruct the syntactical order imposed by the bourgeoisie and thus to align with the ideological needs of the proletariat.

Overall, the analysis of Sanguineti's work has confirmed the prominent role that both photography and cinema played in occasioning new forms of poetic writing across the 1950s and 1960s. This chapter also calls for further studies. As a matter of fact, while taking into account the intermedial references to cinema and photography has allowed new understandings around stylistic and ideological elements of Sanguineti's poetry, the analysis proposed here is circumscribed to the first few decades of his work, thus opening up the field of research to his more recent artistic production. Considering Sanguineti's predisposition towards intermedial practices and his growing awareness around employing techniques drawn from cinema and photography throughout his career, his work would particularly benefit from interdisciplinary and intermedial analyses. Reconsidering his poetry through this lens is bound to add yet more original contributions to growing scholarship on Sanguineti.

Conclusion

In a scene from *La dolce vita*, Marcello joins a gathering of intellectuals at Steiner's salon in his luxurious house. Amongst the guests, a poet who resembles Amelia Rosselli[837] and speaks with a foreign accent epigrammatically addresses Marcello, telling him that he is unable to decide between his two loves: journalism and literature. Torn between his fascination with poetry and his career as a news journalist working side by side with Paparazzo, Marcello embodies the new social figure of an intellectual divided between high culture and popular culture, and continually moving between writing and visuality. Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti also belong to this emerging new type of the intellectual, and their poetry testifies to what Pelizzari described as "the intricate connections between still photography, photojournalism, the press and the Italian film industry", as well as the artistic and literary scenes.[838]

Moving from the awareness of such connections and acknowledging the impact of photography and cinema on Italian culture, this thesis has aimed to determine to what extent, and in what ways, still and moving images interacted with the genre of poetry in the work of Italian experimental and neo-avant-garde writers across the 1950s and 1960s. The thesis posited that during these years Italian poets developed a photographic way of seeing and consequently adopted photographic modes of writing in their works. To verify such an argument, the thesis has offered, as case studies, the work of three of the most important poets of the second half of the twentieth century: Antonio Porta, Amelia Rosselli, and Edoardo Sanguineti. Reflecting on the interconnectedness of literary and visual culture, and aware of the limitations of confining the case studies to literary analysis, this thesis has examined their works by using an interdisciplinary approach that combined

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[837] Carpita, "Nel salotto di Steiner. Ipotesi su una scena della 'Dolce vita.'"
[838] Resembling what Pelizzari described as "the intricate connections between still photography, photojournalism, the press and the Italian film industry", Pelizzari, *Photography and Italy*, 116.

literary criticism with photographic theory, as well as with theories of intermediality, literary visuality, and of the still/moving field. The choice of developing such an approach complied with the need – highlighted by Brook, Mussgnung, and Pieri[839] – to adopt interdisciplinary frameworks in literary studies, with the aim of conceiving literature as a place for the interaction and reformulation of ways of seeing and of narrating the world.

By offering an interdisciplinary analysis of the early poetry of Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti, this study has shown how photographic media, and specifically photography and cinema, have decisively contributed to the shaping and renewal of the very forms of poetry as a genre, including poetic style, syntax, and meter. It found that all three authors spoke intercheangably of photography and cinema, since they perceived them as being profoundly interconnected. Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti, each in their own terms, developed a cognitive relationship with the still camera and film camera, intended as a prosthesis, or a filter through which to re-assess their relationship with reality. In this sense, the camera and film camera were understood as cognitive tools to epistemologically explore the place of the writing subject within the world, and consequently its relation to the objects of writing.

In the work of Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti, references to photography and cinema were in turn employed to rethink the very forms of poetic writing: for these authors, in fact, poetry was no longer the safe space of codified expression, but rather a place for the re-negotiation of literary boundaries. The defiance of traditional meter and form was thus carried out in dialogue with these media: Porta's literary montage, which joined together fragments alternatively evoking the stillness of photography or the motion of cinematic sequences, was achieved through the dismemberment of linear syntax, and through the use of percussive meter, as opposed to the syllabic verse of the Italian tradition. Rosselli, on the other hand, conceptually designed her "metrical space" bypassing the metrical conventions of Italian literature; her metrical system mimicked the functioning of a camera

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[839] Brook, Mussgnug, and Pieri, "Italian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Perspective."

and film camera, and it was devised with the aim of capturing and recording lived experiences, and of appropriating reality. Lastly, Sanguineti, by adopting a montage technique, also deconstructed the linearity of syntax to challenge its normative use; differently from Porta, he reduplicated the syntactical junctures, thus achieving a form of hyper-syntaxis ("ipersintassia"). In general, all three authors actively tried to generate new poetic forms in order to break with a literary tradition that they perceived as inadequate for their socio-historical time. Their inclination towards an inter-artistic approach, especially in the case of Porta and Sanguineti, was also carried out with the same scope.

The protest directed at the very institution of poetic form, systematically challenged and renewed through references to photographic media, was equally echoed by the civic engagement that animated these poets' work. The references to cine-photographic media in poetry provided new means of experimentation to express ideas of protest and resistance: from Rosselli's quest into her own life-story and statement of patriarchal emancipation, reflecting a collective history of loss caused by the Second World War, to Porta's cold scrutiny of a society according to him pervaded by blind violence, to Sanguineti's critique of the very political and economical structures underpinning society. In all these cases, therefore, references to cine-photographic media proved crucial to fuel, and in turn to structure, these poets' inclinations to resist and reform society and literature.

In general, the chapters devoted to Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti have attempted to enrich scholarship on these authors in original ways. More broadly, they addressed the exchanges between poetic writing and photographic media and cultures in order to fill a gap within Italian Studies scholarship. In fact, this thesis has aimed to contribute to establishing a theoretical discussion on how poetry, as a genre, transforms in dialogue with photographic media and cultures. It has done so by developing an interdisciplinary framework that can highlight references to visuality in works of poetry and connect them to questions of style, language use, and metrical choices in poetic writing. This thesis thus has called attention to the way in which the exchanges between visuality and literature can occupy a prominent role in the generation of new literary forms.

The framework proposed here can provide Italian poetry scholars with new tools to read and interpret works of poetry that can thus be applied to other studies. By focusing on a specific timeframe and by limiting the analysis to Porta, Rosselli, and Sanguineti, this study has only partially addressed the gap regarding the interactions between Italian poetry and visuality. There is space to further explore such interactions through the works of other poets, since the recursive relationship of poetic writing and photographic media – even when such interplay unravels as a secondary or peripheral aspect in the work of an author – can provide original insights on the developments of poetry, both for the years analysed here and for the period spanning from the nineteenth century onwards.

More specifically, the whole phenomenon of the Italian neo-avant-garde can be organically re-thought through the lens of visuality: while Alfredo Giuliani and Nanni Balestrini were mentioned in this thesis only briefly, their theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a discourse on the role of photography and cinema in the creation of poetic works are yet to be fully grasped. A reevaluation of these contributions is also bound to offer a more comprehensive understanding of how photographic media played a crucial role in the poetic practices of the neo-avant-garde poets as a group. At the same time, the works of other experimental poets writing in the 1950s and 1960s – including Andrea Zanzotto, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Vittorio Sereni, to name but a few – equally referred to photographic media and culture demonstrating how the visual culture that characterised Italy in those years profoundly interacted with literary cultures, and with poetry in particular. This process has continued and grown in the work of subsequent generations of poets. Thus, we can see how poets who started their careers after the 1980s either integrate intermedial references to photography and cinema in their writing or create intermedial artworks. References to photography can be found, for instance, in Vittorio Magrelli's *Ora serrata retinae* (1980) and *Nature e venature* (1987); and in Elisa Biagini's *Morgue* (1998), a collection of poems written in dialogue with some of the photographs taken by American photographer Andres Serrano. More recently, Marco Giovenale published *La casa esposta* (2007), a photo-book, or more precisely a collection of

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poems with an interlude of photographs taken by Giovenale himself.[840] The inclination to go beyond

the boundaries of poetry and to engage with other disciplines and media has been recently noted by

Vincenzo Ostuni in the introduction to *Poeti degli anni Zero*, an anthology published in 2011 that

collected poems written in the new millennium. Ostuni identified the most emblematic phenomenon

of the 2000s in poetry's tendency to go "outside poetry", that is to say to engage with other disciplines

or media, including, and most frequently, with photography:

> Nella gran parte dei casi si tratta della fotografia (almeno Annovi, Bortolotti, Calandrone, Giovenale, Inglese, Marzaioli, Ventroni, Zaffarano, mentre Pugno ha collaborato strettamente con il fotografo Elio Mazzacane), ma annoveriamo forme installative (Biagini), musicali (Zaffarano), teatrali e cinematografiche (Calandrone, Inglese, Pugno, Sannelli), videoartistiche (Inglese), persino incisioni (Frene) e coreografie (Ventroni) eccetera eccetera.[841]

And yet once more, although the intermedial quality that poetry performs is in this instance

considered emblematic of contemporary poetry, the phenomenon is only briefly mentioned, and its

discussion postponed to future research: "Questo aspetto merita di essere studiato a fondo e qui non

ci limitiamo che ad annotarlo".[842] All this considered, it is hoped that this thesis can encourage a rise

in interdisiciplinary and intermedial approaches to poetry in years to come, as well as a much awaited

historicisation of the interactions between writing and photographic media and cultures in twentieth-

and twenty-first-century Italian poetry.

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[840] Magrelli, *Ora serrata retinae*; Magrelli, *Nature e venature*; Biagini, "Morgue"; Giovenale, *La casa esposta*.
[841] Ostuni, *Poeti degli anni Zero. Gli esordienti del primo decennio*, 13.
[842] Ostuni, 13.

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