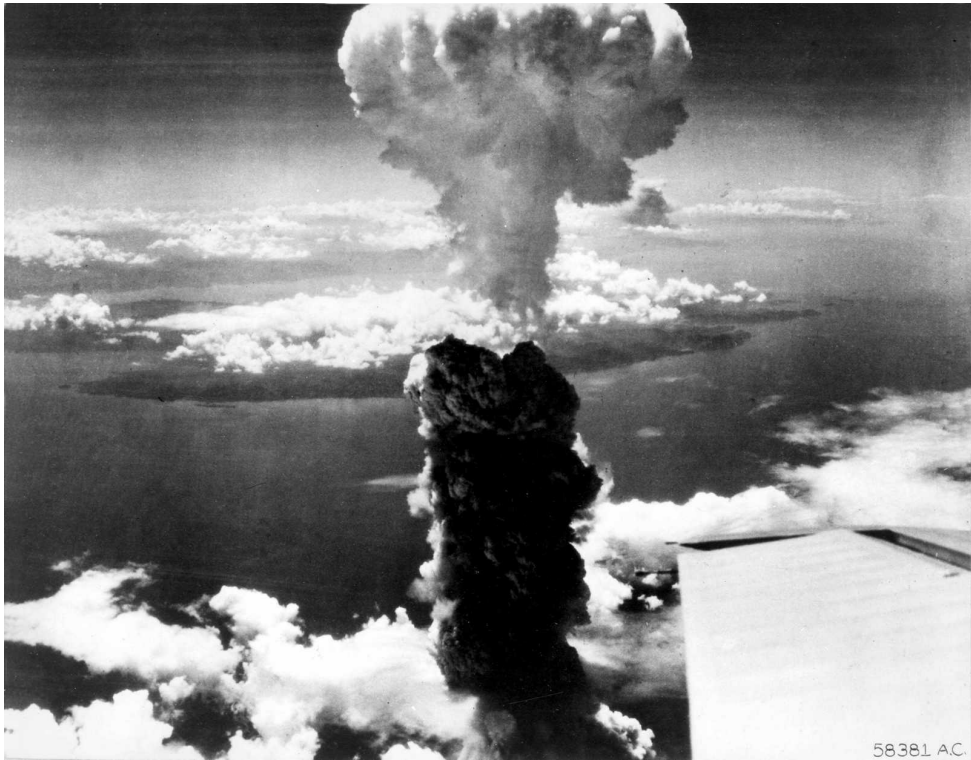


**Italian Postwar Experimentalism
in the Wake of
English-Language Modernism**



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Trinity Term 2011

How many flies buzzed round you innocent of your
grime, while you cursed the heavens of the
railroad and your flower soul?

Poor dead flower? when did you forget you were a
flower? when did you look at your skin and
decide you were an impotent dirty old locomotive?
the ghost of a locomotive? the specter and
shade of a once powerful mad American locomotive?
You were never no locomotive, Sunflower, you were a
sunflower!

And you Locomotive, you are a locomotive, forget me
not!

So I grabbed up the skeleton thick sunflower and stuck
it at my side like a scepter,

and deliver my sermon to my soul, and Jack's soul
too, and anyone who'll listen,

We're not our skin of grime, we're not our dread
bleak dusty imageless locomotive, we're all
beautiful golden sunflowers inside, we're blessed
by our own seed & golden hairy naked
accomplishment-bodies growing into mad black
formal sunflowers in the sunset, spied on by our
eyes under the shadow of the mad locomotive
riverbank sunset Frisco hilly tincan evening
sitdown vision.

From "Sunflower Sutra" by Allen Ginsberg

Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank Ela Tandello, whose supervision and support have been invaluable. Thanks for encouraging my interest in Rosselli even before I was officially your student. Thanks especially for giving me the necessary extra push over the last few months. I am looking forward to us just being neighbours, drinking green tea and eating strawberries in the garden without having to pore over drafts together. Many many thanks also to my co-supervisor Ron Bush for inspiring me about Eliot and Pound in my Masters year, and for supporting me through the DPhil.

Thanks to my funders who made this PhD possible – to the AHRC for paying my fees, to the National University of Ireland for awarding me the “Travelling Studentship in the Arts and Humanities”, and, especially, to Martin Foley and the Balliol College Foley-Béjar scholarship. Thanks also to the Christina Drake Fund, the Isaiah Berlin Bursary and the AHRC who funded my research trips to Florence, Rome and Bologna.

Many thanks to those who provided extra academic support and input along the way – to my college advisor Diego Zancani, and to Niva Lorenzini, Daniela LaPenna, Chiara Carpita, and Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli. And thanks to the fabulous tutors I had in UCD before coming to Oxford: to Declan Kiberd for sharing his Joyce so generously, and to Daragh O'Connell, Jennifer Petrie, John Barnes, Deirdre O'Grady and Marco Sonzogni for sparking and fostering my interests in all things Italian with so much kindness and energy. Thanks also to the Samuel Beckett Debts and Legacies crowd for encouraging my work and keeping me in the fold in spite of the fact that I have deserted the Beckettian cause in this thesis.

Enormous gratitude to my wonderful parents who have been in the wings the

whole way through, and whose support has never wavered. Special thanks to my mum, who painstakingly proofread the *entire* manuscript - I will have to find some way to give you back those four days of your life! Thanks to my sister Maeve for administering love on an almost daily basis, for early morning skype chats from Uzbekistan on Sundays, and for generally being my partner in crime.

Thanks to my 11 Glanville Road family – to Riley, Nadia, Doro and Maike. And to our honorary family member Libby, for procrastinatory Egyptian cookery, folk harmonisings and yoga sessions towards the end of our thesis writing. Thanks to Pete for coming with me to Bologna and for getting me out of the libraries at the end of the day and getting me onto the stages of dingey winebars singing tacky coversongs! Thanks to all my community foodie friends of various stripes: Phil, Joe, Julian, Annabelle, Dan, Alex, Em, Pete, Marleen, Chris, and Hannah. Thanks for all of your extravagant visionings, but most of all thanks for turning them into action rather than letting them dissipate into the ether. And thanks to all the The Thread Girls for the laughter and love– Ain, Eibh, Derv, Olaya, Anna, Chaz, Barb, Cathy, Anne and Stéphan.

Thanks to all my study-buddies, old and new (and especially to Chris, Jenn and Rhi), who have made the office-less PhD possible through a variety of elaborate strategies of mutual motivation. And finally, infinite “thank you”s go to Aina, for our “PhD Bootcamps” over the last 8 months – in Oxford, Brussels, Taugelboden and Mayo. We should patent our How-To-Write-Up-A-PhD Toolkit: a blend of military discipline, excellent food, yogic focus, a fine balance between solidarity and guilt, and a healthy dose of psychorigidité! It *literally* wouldn't have been possible without you. And it wouldn't have been half as fun. Thank you!

ABSTRACT: Italian Postwar Experimentalism in the Wake of English-Language Modernism

Doireann Lalor, Balliol College, DPhil, Trinity Term 2011

After World War II in Italy the cultural scene was in need of resuscitation. Artists searched for tools with which to revivify their works. Central to this, for many key figures in the fifties and sixties, was an engagement with English-language Modernism. This phenomenon has been widely recognised, but this thesis is its first sustained analysis.

I draw together the receptions of three English-language Modernist authors – T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce – who, as a triad, were instrumental in the radicalisation of the arts in Italy in the fifties and sixties. I show that their works were elevated as models of an experimental approach to language that was revisited by Italian artists – most notably by poets associated with the Neoavantgarde. The specific Modernist linguistic techniques which were adopted by the Italians that we will consider here are the mingling of languages and styles, the use of citations, and the perversion and manipulation of single words and idioms.

The poets considered in most depth to exemplify this phenomenon are Edoardo Sanguineti, who was a major exponent of the Neoavantgarde, and Amelia Rosselli, who was more peripherally and problematically associated with the movement. Both poets desecrated the traditional language of poetry and energised their own poetry with recourse to Modernist techniques which they consciously and deliberately adopted from Eliot, Pound and Joyce.

An unpicking of the mechanics of these techniques in Sanguineti's and Rosselli's poetry reveals that their texts necessitate an *active* mode of reading. This aligns with the intellectual ideas propounded by Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco, all of whom grounded their theories on readership in analyses of the linguistic experiments of Modernism. Sanguineti's and Rosselli's poetry fulfil the characteristics of Eco's "open" work, Barthes' "polysemous" work, and bring about Benjamin's "shock-effect" in the reader. These radical linguistic techniques, appropriated from the Modernists, contribute to each poets' overall poetic projects – they enact Edoardo Sanguineti's anarchic and revolutionary impulses, and stage Amelia Rosselli's thematic conflicts.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT: Italian Postwar Experimentalism in the Wake of English-Language Modernism

Doireann Lalor, Balliol College, DPhil, Trinity Term 2011

After World War II in Italy the cultural scene was in need of resuscitation, and artists searched for tools with which to revivify their works. Central to this, for many key figures in the fifties and sixties, was an engagement with English-language Modernism. This has been widely recognised, but the existing criticism is, for the most part, brief, often superficial, and much of it is now rather outdated. This thesis presents the first sustained analysis of the phenomenon, drawing together and assessing the existing criticism, and supplementing it where critical lacunae are identified. My analysis is firmly grounded in an understanding of English-language Modernism – as embodied here by the figures of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce. This is a new approach, as previous criticism on this phenomenon has focused on the impact of just one of these Modernists, which inevitably gives us only one element of what I demonstrate to be a much wider phenomenon.

This thesis considers in detail the case of two poets who exemplify this intertextual phenomenon in particularly innovative ways: Edoardo Sanguineti and Amelia Rosselli. Sanguineti and Rosselli were experimental Italian poets who, in their early poetry of the fifties and sixties, drew heavily on these English-language Modernists in their respective projects for radicalising poetic language. Both poets desecrated the traditional language of poetry and energised their own poetry with recourse to Modernist techniques, consciously and deliberately adopted from Eliot, Pound and Joyce.

This thesis makes a contribution to two separate fields of study. Firstly, it contributes to the field of “Italian Studies”, by enriching our understanding of culture and the arts in Italy after World War II. This is done by providing a thorough survey of the Italian *fortuna* of the English-language Modernists, and by providing in-depth

analyses of features of Sanguineti and Rosselli's poetry that have not yet been addressed. Secondly, it contributes to the assessment of the international reception of English-language Modernism, adding an “Italian” element to the very diverse portrait that has been materialising with increasing commitment over the last number of decades.

The introductory chapter gives the historical, political, economic and cultural backdrop to the engagement of postwar Italian artists with English-language Modernism. I explain the conditions which brought about rapid industrial and economic development during the period known as the “*miracolo economico*”. This so-called miracle was accompanied by social problems, cold war tensions and the collapse of many of the traditional mores and hierarchies that had previously structured society. These contexts, alongside the sense of alienation that they brought about in society and in the individual, are reflected in the literature and in the cultural theory of the time. Many young artists in Italy in the fifties and sixties felt that the reigning literary traditions in Italy – *neorealismo* and *ermetismo* – did not deal with these new social and psychological realities effectively, and so they strove to develop innovative linguistic strategies in order to encapsulate this new reality and, for some, in order to provide a form of resistance to it.

In the introductory chapter I outline two interconnected features of Modernism which were particularly important to subsequent critics and poets. Firstly, I explain that language was perceived to be in crisis; writers found that language was worn out and inadequate for expressing the complexities and nuances of modern life. Some of the key techniques used by the Modernists to deal with the linguistic crisis were the mingling of languages (*plurilinguismo*), the mingling of styles (*pluristilismo*), the extensive use of allusion (*citazionismo*), and the perversion of single words (*portmanteau punning*) and of familiar phrases (*idiomatic manipulation*). Secondly, I explain the Modernist sense that there was a need for a

new mode of readership in which the hierarchy between author and reader was be modified and the new active reader could collaborate in the creative process. The five techniques listed above bring together these two features of Modernism: on the one hand they *enact* the crises in language (and in society), and on the other hand, they *combat* them by revivifying language and by bringing about the new reader, who I call the reader-turned-activist.

These two features of Modernist works functioned as stimuli for a number of cultural theorists – most notably Walter Benjamin (in the thirties), and Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco (in the sixties). These critics drew on Modernist texts in order to theorise the crisis of language, which was exacerbated after the war, and also to theorise the need for a new kind of reader, which was even more pressing after the war. They saw that Modernist linguistic strategies could help artists to confront the new postwar realities and to resuscitate language. They also saw that these strategies could help to politicise art, along broadly Marxist lines: they identified language and literature as forming part of the Gramscian cultural hegemony which masks the oppressive structures of capitalism. But Benjamin, Barthes and Eco also recognised that writers faced with this reality were not impotent, and that language and literature could play a role in exposing it.

The poets of the Italian Neoavantgarde, as well as other experimental poets in the fifties and sixties, in line with Benjamin, Barthes and Eco, elevated the Modernists, and Joyce, Eliot and Pound in particular, as models on which to base their own projects for *radicalising* - and to differing degrees, also *politicising* - language and art. Sanguineti, Rosselli, and many of their peers put into practice Benjamin, Barthes and Eco's theories by explicitly employing and at times overturning Modernist linguistic strategies.

My analysis of Sanguineti and Rosselli's appropriation of features of Eliot's, Pound's and Joyce's poetics is rooted firmly in a notion of intertextuality which aligns

with Barthes' "polysemy" and "jouissance", Benjamin's "shock-effects", and Eco's "openness", as well as on these critics' debunking of the notions of "influence" and "originality". In this thesis I dismiss "influence" in favour of a more radically pluralistic model of intertextuality, and I discard "originality" in favour of an explicit strategy of creation based on "unoriginality". I also have recourse to the psychological notions of "cognitive dissonance" and "double bind" throughout my analysis, which allow us to conceptualise the "shock effect" in cognitive terms.

After the introductory chapter, I give a detailed account of the reception of the English-language Modernists in Italy after World War II. I draw together the existing criticism on the individual *fortune* of Eliot, Pound and Joyce, and demonstrate that although these *fortune* have, for the most part, been related separately, they tell much the same story. What emerges when we consider the receptions of these three writers together is that each of them engendered *some* interest in Italy during the twenties, thirties and forties, but it was not until the fifties and sixties that their techniques were fully digested and put into practice in innovative ways by Italian artists.

What also emerges is that these Modernist writers were taken up as *experimental* writers, for their iconoclastic approaches to language, style and form. As such, it was the Pound of the *Cantos*, the early Eliot of *The Waste Land* (rather than the "classical" or "mystical" Eliot), and the late Joyce of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* (rather than "Joyce the poet" or the Joyce of *Dubliners* or *A Portrait*) who formed the nucleus of this reception. And so I demonstrate that a strong English-language Modernist "triad" emerges in postwar Italy, in the figures of Eliot, Pound and Joyce. I also add to the existing analysis of Eliot, Pound and Joyce's postwar Italian receptions detailed accounts of the roles of Luciano Anceschi and Umberto Eco. Anceschi explicitly elevated Eliot and Pound as models for young innovative writers in this period, and Eco propounded Joyce as a model in much the same way.

Many of the artists associated with the Neoavantgarde, prompted by Anceschi and Eco, thus became recipients of this iconoclastic Modernist model.

After giving this reception history, I move on to a consideration of Edoardo Sanguineti's engagement with the Modernists in Chapter III. Although Sanguineti translated some of Joyce's poems and recognised Joyce as a crucial figure in the overturning of literary norms, it was Eliot and Pound who functioned as models for his creative works, particularly for his first collection of poetry *Laborintus* and his collaborative project with the composer Luciano Berio, *Laborintus II*. Eliot and Pound's impact can be seen operating, in particular, along the lines of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*. Eliot and Pound also functioned as mediators to Dante, who, much earlier, had developed experimental hybrid approaches to language and style. In this way a triangulation is established between Dante, Eliot and Pound, and Sanguineti, which helps to inform our reading of the plurilingual and pluristylistic features of *Laborintus*.

In terms of *plurilinguismo*, Eliot and Pound employed foreign-language fragments primarily in order to add exoticism and authenticity to their poetry, to establish a synoptic, supranational vision of reality, and to attempt to transcend the fragmented nature of modern life by piecing together its ruins. For Sanguineti, however, efforts to reconstruct the shattered world are futile - all that remains for him to do is to expose the ruins for what they are. I examine the points in the text at which Sanguineti performs linguistic code-switches, and demonstrate how Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo*, at this very local level that other critics have not considered, is put to the service of bringing about Benjaminian "shock-effects" for the reader.

In terms of *pluristilismo*, I show that Eliot and Pound, again drawing on Dante, juxtaposed divergent styles in order to represent the multifaceted nature of modern life. Sanguineti looked to the stylistic range of Dante, Eliot and Pound in

order to develop the stylistically hybrid *Laborintus*, and used this to effect a delyricisation of the traditional language of poetry. But on Sanguineti's own (very recent) admission, his *pluristilismo* reveals not only a Dantescan heritage, but, most unprecedentedly, also a Petrarchan one. This problematises our Dante/Modernist/Sanguineti triangulation and dismantles the Continian view (which has been a critical commonplace for fifty years) of a binary distinction between a Petrarchan *monolinguismo/monostilismo* and a Dantescan *plurilinguismo/pluristilismo*.

My analysis of the citational mode in Sanguineti also demonstrates a deliberate appropriation of Eliot and Pound's techniques. For Eliot and Pound, while they disrupt the citations that they use through a variety of techniques, the fragments, on the whole, retain the sense that they carry in their original text, and thus help to “conserve” the ruins of history. But Sanguineti exposes these ruins without attempting to reconstruct the artefacts, and more often than not he desecrates the semantic content of the citations. The Modernists, with their citational projects, undermined the concept of literary “originality”, and Sanguineti pushes this even further in *Laborintus*, following a Benjaminian/Barthesian approach, and fulfilling his own claim that “tutto è citazione”. *Citazionismo* is used, then, as yet another means of generating “shock-effects” and thereby bringing about a new kind of reader who can cope with and even *enjoy* these alienating montages.

Sanguineti also follows Eliot in his strategy of providing citational “red herrings”, misdirecting the reader with incomplete or misleading notes. Eliot does this in order to protect himself by concealing some of his less canonical sources, but Sanguineti's motive is to frustrate his readers and thus to keep them on their toes. While Eliot inserts into his poetry recognisable fragments of major texts, Sanguineti constantly defeats the reader's expectations by providing citations of minor works by canonical figures, or extracts from very obscure texts. Through his citational

techniques, Sanguineti razes to the ground all literary hierarchies, as well as the hierarchies between the reader and the author. In *Laborintus II*, Sanguineti drives this home by actually including fragments from Eliot and Pound's texts in his own citational montage. *Laborintus II* displays less deviant approaches to *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*, which are in some ways closer to Eliot and Pound's own uses of the techniques than to Sanguineti's uses in *Laborintus*. But Sanguineti intensifies the “shock-effects” in a number of other ways, through the score and *mise-en-scène* of the piece.

Sanguineti himself, and most of his critics, have side-lined Pound's impact and concentrated more on the role of Eliot in Sanguineti's poetics. I address this and suggest that it stemmed from a conscious strategy used by Sanguineti for distancing himself from Pound's collusion with Fascism. I identify one particular locus of engagement with Pound in *Laborintus II* which bears out this problematic relationship: the theme of usury. I show that Sanguineti shared Pound's (and Dante's) attitude to usury, but that the contexts for this common attitude were dramatically different – anti-semitism on Pound's part, and anti-capitalism on Sanguineti's. And, so, here, with this side-lining of Pound, Sanguineti follows Eliot's self-protection “red herring” strategy.

This chapter draws on two fundamental articles published in the 2000s by Sanguineti, in which he spells out explicitly the Modernist features of his *plurilinguismo* and *citazionismo*. With recourse to these articles, combined with a deeper understanding of English-language Modernism than is often found in criticism of Italian poetry, I have provided the first thorough and extensive exploration of Sanguineti's English-language Modernist engagement.

In Chapter IV I outline Amelia Rosselli's intertextual dialogue with the English-language Modernists. First I outline her linguistically and culturally hybrid background, which triggered a different kind of engagement with Eliot, Pound and

Joyce than that engendered by Sanguineti's more "Italian" upbringing. I outline Rosselli's contact with the works of the English-language Modernists, and the place of the Modernists within the broader context of her literary development, before going on to examine how they helped to shape her radically individual poetic practices.

I consider Rosselli's approaches to the Modernist techniques of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*, which, although they share some features with Sanguineti, are put to different ends. Rosselli's *plurilinguismo* manifests most notably in the fact that she writes in three languages: Italian, English and French. Although Rosselli does display engagement with Eliot and Pound in her critical and creative writings, it is her recourse to Joycean techniques which is more fundamental for her creation of an experimental approach to language. One of Rosselli's embodiments of the plurilinguistic and pluristylistic impulses is her practice of *portmanteau punning*. Excellent accounts of her punning techniques have been published in recent years, but I add a consideration of the Joycean derivation of her portmanteaux, and read them as embodiments of Eco's "openness".

The major contribution of this chapter is in my work on Rosselli's technique of *idiomatic manipulation*, which also has a Joycean precedent. I present the critical literature that exists on the rhetorical device, outline Joyce's use of the technique, and give a full account of manipulated idioms in Rosselli's *Variazioni belliche* and in *Sleep*. I argue that this overlooked technique is a key feature of Rosselli's linguistic experimentalism, which has otherwise been studied very thoroughly. The manipulated idioms also represent Rosselli's most innovative way of employing *plurilinguismo* and *citazionismo*. Although Rosselli's linguistic experimentation recalls Dante in many ways, these manipulated idioms also reveal an unacknowledged dialogue between Rosselli and Petrarch, centring around her ambivalent relationship to the lyric mode, which ties in with that explored in

Sanguineti.

The portmanteaux and manipulated idioms are particularly intense sites of the transgressive, “bellic” energy of Rosselli's poetry. The manipulated idioms, in particular, generate dramatic defamiliarizing “shock effects” for the reader since they attack the most “familiar” and stable forms of language. I read this in Benjaminian terms – these experimental techniques generate shocks for the reader and thus force an active engagement with the text.

An unpicking of the mechanics of these Modernist techniques in Sanguineti and Rosselli, then, reveal that the real legacy of the English-language Modernists is the act of radicalising language. Their strategies align with the intellectual ideas propounded by Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco: Sanguineti's and Rosselli's poetry fulfil, in a variety of different ways, the characteristics of Eco's “open” work, of Barthes' “polysemous” work, and bring about Benjamin's “shock-effects” in the reader. These radical linguistic techniques, appropriated from the Modernists, contribute to each poet's overall poetic project – they enact Edoardo Sanguineti's anarchic and revolutionary impulses, and stage Amelia Rosselli's thematic conflicts. They also help both poets to address the crisis in language, and they contribute to bringing about a paradigm shift in the mind of the reader, who learns to confront these textual crises head-on, and, perhaps, also to confront the underlying crises which dominate their internal and external landscapes. I conclude by suggesting that this new reader-turned-activist can even learn to revel in the transgressive *jouissance* of texts like Sanguineti's and Rosselli's.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
Contributions, Structure and Definitions.....	3
Amelia Rosselli and Edoardo Sanguineti: Analogues and Counterpoints.....	6
Italy After World War II.....	11
The Neoavanguardia: A Radical Italian Response.....	14
Defining Modernism.....	17
Defining the Modernist Techniques.....	20
Modernism as a Stimulus in Postwar Cultural Theory.....	22
Debunking Influence and Originality.....	27
Cognitive Dissonance and Double Binds.....	31
Rosselli and Sanguineti's Neo-Capitalist Inferni.....	32
CHAPTER II: The Italian Postwar Reception of English-Language Modernism	40
The Italian Reception of T. S. Eliot.....	43
The Italian Reception of Ezra Pound.....	50
Luciano Anceschi's Role in the English-Language Modernist "Fortuna".....	57
The Italian Reception of James Joyce.....	65
Umberto Eco's Role in the English-Language Modernist Fortuna.....	70
Joyce, Eliot and Pound: The Triad of Models for Postwar Italian Experimentalism	75
CHAPTER III: Edoardo Sanguineti and English-Language Modernism.....	77
Sanguineti's Joyce.....	82
Edoardo Sanguineti: Translator of Joyce's Poetry.....	82
Sanguineti reviews Ellmann's biography of Joyce	87
Sanguineti on Joyce.....	88
Sanguineti and Joyce: The Critics.....	92
Dante, Eliot, Pound: Models and Mediators.....	95
Dante as a model for Eliot and Pound.....	96
A Triangulation: Dante, the Modernists and Sanguineti.....	98
Sanguineti and Plurilinguismo.....	101
English-Language Modernist Plurilinguismo.....	103
Sanguineti's Plurilinguismo: In Theory.....	108
Sanguineti's Plurilinguismo: In Practice.....	113
Plurilinguismo experienced as Shock.....	122
Sanguineti and Pluristilismo.....	127
English-Language Modernist Pluristilismo.....	128
Sanguineti's Pluristilismo: Dante or Petrarch?.....	131
The Citational Mode in Eliot, Pound and Sanguineti.....	143
Citazionismo in Eliot and Pound.....	143
Sanguineti's Citazionismo: In Theory.....	153
Sanguineti's Citazionismo: In Practice.....	158
Modernist Mummie in Sanguineti's Citazionismo.....	169
Ezra Pound: Il grande fascino.....	176
Sanguineti Reviews the 'Pisan Cantos'.....	177

Pound in Sanguineti's Poetry.....	180
Pound, Sanguineti and the Theme of Usury.....	183
Politics in the Palus.....	192
 CHAPTER IV: Rosselli and English-Language Modernism.....	 202
Rosselli's "formazione non italiana": Languages and Literatures.....	205
The Modernists in the "Diario in Tre Lingue".....	209
The Modernists in Rosselli's Cultural Criticism.....	214
Langue "Douplemens/sationel": È alla Joyce.....	222
Rosselli's Portmanteaux.....	225
Rosselli and Plurilinguismo, Pluristilismo and Citazionismo.....	237
Rosselli versus the Neoavantgarde.....	237
Rosselli's Plurilinguismo.....	239
Rosselli's Pluristilismo.....	241
Rosselli's Citazionismo.....	244
Rosselli and Idiomatic Manipulation.....	250
The Rhetorical Device.....	250
Joyce's Idioms.....	257
Rosselli's Manipulation of Idioms.....	261
Categories of Manipulation: Omission, Addition, Substitution.....	266
The Mould Substitutions.....	269
The Filling Substitutions.....	273
The Recombinations (or "Idiom-Based Puns").....	280
Staging Conflict in Rosselli's Poetry.....	283
The Portmanteau and the Idiom-Based Pun: Transgressive Agents?.....	289
Transgressing the Lyric Mode.....	294
Who's "in preda ad uno shock violentissimo"?.....	299
 CHAPTER V: Conclusion: 'Disarmonia perfetta'?.....	 303
 Works Cited.....	 312
Primary Sources:.....	312
Secondary Sources:.....	313

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

*Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision,
Will not stay still¹*

Contributions, Structure and Definitions

In Italy after World War II there was a surge in interest in English-language Modernism, particularly in three of its major exponents – T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce.² This manifested in the emergence of Italian translations of the poetry, novels, plays and essays by these Modernist writers, as well as in a marked increase in critical engagement by the literary intelligentsia with the poetics of these complex texts. This, in turn, generated a conscious and sustained project on the part of many young Italian artists to elevate works like Eliot's *Waste Land*, Pound's *Cantos* and Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* as *models* for their own artistic exploits. Although this is a widely-recognised phenomenon, it is one which has, as yet, received only partial analysis. This thesis, entitled “Italian Postwar Experimentalism in the Wake of English-Language Modernism”, brings together the existing work that has been carried out on the topic, and supplements it by addressing a number of the critical lacunae that persist.

This thesis will consider in detail the case of two poets who exemplify this phenomenon in particularly innovative ways: Edoardo Sanguineti and Amelia Rosselli. Sanguineti and Rosselli were experimental Italian poets who, in their early

¹ T.S. Eliot, “Four Quartets”, in *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London, 1969), p. 175. I will refer to this text parenthetically in the body of the text from now on using the following notation: (CPP 175).

² I use the term “English-language Modernism” as opposed to the terms “English” or “British” Modernism, which would be inaccurate as they would not account for the fact that Eliot and Pound were “Anglo-American” and that Joyce was “Anglo-Irish”.

poetry of the fifties and sixties, drew heavily on these English-language Modernists in their respective projects for radicalising poetic language. This thesis aims to make a contribution to two separate fields of study. Firstly, it contributes to “Italian Studies”, by enriching our understanding of culture and the arts in Italy after World War II. It does this by providing a thorough survey of the Italian *fortuna* of the English-language Modernists, and by providing in-depth analyses of features of Sanguineti and Rosselli's poetry that have not yet been addressed. Secondly, it contributes to the assessment of the international reception of English-language Modernism, adding an “Italian” element to the very diverse portrait that has been materialising with increasing commitment over the last number of decades.

What we will find is that although Sanguineti and Rosselli's poetic methods and motivations often differ, they both propound an *approach* to literature that stems from these Modernist writers – an approach that *enacts*, through their highly experimental linguistic strategies, the crises in the individual and in society at large. This linguistic enactment of crisis, for the Modernists, for Sanguineti and for Rosselli, can then serve to shunt into existence a new kind of reader – an *active reader* - who is capable of confronting these textual crises head-on, and, perhaps, also of confronting the underlying crises which dominate their internal and external landscapes.

This thesis is structured in the following way. In Chapter II, entitled “The Postwar Italian Reception of English-Language Modernism”, the phenomenon of the rising *fortuna* of Eliot, Pound and Joyce in Italy after World War II is outlined. In this chapter the crucial role played in this reception history by one particular group – the Neoavantgarde or “Gruppo 63” – becomes apparent. In Chapter III, the ways in which the Modernists feature in the critical and creative works of Edoardo Sanguineti is analysed. This chapter serves to interrogate the importance of Eliot, Pound and

Joyce for Sanguineti, but it also functions as a more thorough case-study of the wider Neoavantgarde intertextual engagement with the Modernists. In Chapter II, the ways in which the Modernists feature in Amelia Rosselli's criticism and poetry are investigated. This chapter also has a dual function: that of thoroughly analysing Rosselli's engagements with the three Modernist writers, and also that of representing the other experimental voices - the voices *outside* the Neoavantgarde - that were vital to the reception of the English-language Modernists in Italy after World War II.

But first, in this introductory chapter, explanations will be given concerning the motivations for choosing these particular authors to exemplify this instance of cross-cultural exchange. This will be followed by a series of contextualisations. The social, political, economic and cultural landscape of Italy after World War II will be outlined. The various terms used throughout the thesis will then be explained, beginning with a working definition of "Modernism". The technical features of Modernism which were taken up by Sanguineti and Rosselli will then be identified and defined. These techniques are *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo*, *citazionismo*, *portmanteau punning* and *idiom manipulation*. Pertinent aspects of the cultural and intellectual life during the fifties and sixties in Italy and beyond, which arose out of a study of Modernist aesthetic strategies, will then be outlined. These include the concepts of "shock", "multiplicity" and "openness". This will be followed by a debunking of the notion of "influence" (in favour of a more radically pluralistic model of intertextuality) and of "originality" (in favour of an explicit strategy of creation based on "unoriginality"). Some cognitive bases for the "shock-effect" will then be explored in a section outlining the psychological theories of "cognitive dissonance" and "double bind". Finally some paradigmatic samples of Sanguineti and Rosselli's poetry, which demonstrate their linguistic strategies as well as their thematic

concerns will be given. These will be followed by indications of the conclusions that will be drawn in later chapters on the nature and impact of this intertextual dialogue.

Amelia Rosselli and Edoardo Sanguineti: Analogues and Counterpoints

Edoardo Sanguineti is best known for his first collection of poems, *Laborintus* (1956), an extremely innovative and provocative text which represents a decisive turning point in the Italian literary *novecento*. Sanguineti was born in 1930, spent most of his life in Turin and Genoa, and died in 2010. Right up until his death, he contributed in a wide variety of ways to Italy's intellectual and political life. As a young man he made his mark as “the foremost theorist and creative artist of the *Neoavanguardia*”.³ Yet later on he was prolific and influential not only as a poet and intellectual, but also as a novelist, journalist, essayist, dramatist, librettist, professor of Italian, city councillor and parliamentarian.⁴

Amelia Rosselli is best known for her collection *Variazioni belliche* (1964). She was, like Sanguineti, born in 1930, and after protracted mental health struggles she cut her own life short in 1996. Rosselli's upbringing was multilingual and multicultural; she was the daughter of an Englishwoman and of the prominent Italian anti-Fascist Carlo Rosselli. She lived in France, England and the United States before settling in Italy, and her poetic output reflects this in a variety of highly

³ *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature*, eds. P. Hainsworth and D. Robey (Oxford, 2002), p. 353.

⁴ The critical literature on Edoardo Sanguineti has increased substantially over the last number of years, with, for example, the publication in 2006 by Erminio Risso of the first critical edition of Sanguineti's *Laborintus*, various book-length studies of his works, such as Elisabetta Baccarani's monograph *La poesia nel labirinto: Razionalismo e istanza 'antiletteraria' nell'opera e nella cultura di Edoardo Sanguineti* (Bologna, 2002) and Luigi Weber's *Usando gli utensili di utopia: traduzione, parodia e riscrittura in Edoardo Sanguineti* (Bologna, 2004), collections of essays, such as *Per Edoardo Sanguineti: "good luck (and look)"*, ed. A. Pietropaoli (Naples, 2002) and *Album Sanguineti*, ed. N. Lorenzini and E. Risso (Lecce, 2002), and two extensive book-length interviews: *Sanguineti's Song: Conversazioni immorali*, ed. A. Gnoli (Milan, 2006), and G. Galletta, *Novecento: Conversazioni sulla cultura del ventesimo secolo* (Genoa, 2005), p. 49-50.

distinctive ways. Rosselli has been defined as “perhaps the most important Italian woman poet” of the 20th Century,⁵ and her poetry, which is recognised as being startlingly unique, is, increasingly, considered “un perturbante classico, [...] senza pari nel panorama della poesia italiana del secondo Novecento”.⁶ Rosselli lived a much quieter life than Sanguineti, not contributing in such overt ways to the cultural life of her generation, but the critical evaluation of her works has intensified since her death, and with this her status as a major postwar poet has solidified.⁷

Let us now consider in what ways Sanguineti and Rosselli can be seen to exemplify the Italian postwar engagement with English-language Modernism. Many other Italian writers were also impacted by English-language Modernism in the fifties and sixties, but some of these, for example Mario Luzi, Alberto Moravia or Pier Paolo Pasolini, did not engage with Modernism *at the level of linguistic and stylistic experimentation*. In other words they did not adopt and develop Eliot, Pound and Joyce's experimental linguistic and stylistic techniques (of, for example, *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo*, *citazionismo*, *portmanteau punning* and *idiomatic manipulation*) in the way that Sanguineti and Rosselli did. As a result these authors would not serve as good exponents of the *kind of intertextual dialogue* that is under consideration here.

But Sanguineti and Rosselli were not the only Italian artists who *did* engage with this facet of Modernism. Others, most of whom who were associated to some degree with the Neoavantgarde, even had recourse to the particular linguistic and stylistic techniques mentioned above, but in spite of this they have not been chosen

⁵ *The Oxford Companion*, p. 524-25.

⁶ A. Baldacci, *Amelia Rosselli* (Bari, 2007) p. 3.

⁷ A number of book-length studies published in the last number of years have greatly supplemented the critical literature on Amelia Rosselli: A. Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, ed. F. Caputo (Novara, 2004), A. Baldacci, *Amelia Rosselli* (Bari, 2007), T. Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli: Un 'distorto, inesperto, espertissimo linguaggio'* (Florence, 2007), E. Tandello, *Amelia Rosselli: la fanciulla e l'infinito* (Rome, 2007), S. de March, *Amelia Rosselli tra poesia e storia* (Naples, 2006).

as the focus of this thesis. For example, Alfredo Giuliani⁸ adopted the *portmanteau punning* technique exploited in *Finnegans Wake* in his collection of poetry *Nuove predilezioni* (1963-64) and in his novel *Il giovane Max* (1972). Giuliano Gramigna⁹ was also impacted by Joyce's linguistic experimentalism; in *Il gran trucco* (1978) he had recourse to Joyce's *portmanteau punning* technique, and he made playful references to Joyce in his parodic programme of *citazionismo*. Elio Pagliarani¹⁰ had recourse to Modernist technique of *pluristilismo* in the stylistically heteroglot poem “La ragazza Carla” (1960). Giulia Niccolai¹¹ developed the Wake's *portmanteau punning* techniques, especially in her English-language concrete poems in *Humpty Dumpty* (1969), and engaged with Eliot, Pound and Joyce's *plurilinguismo* in her collection of geographical nonsense poems, *Greenwich* (1971) and in the comical code-switches of *Rusky Salad Ballads* (1977). The composer Luciano Berio¹² also adopted a Modernist *plurilinguismo*, for example in the text of *Coro* (1976-77), and employed Modernist-inspired techniques of *citazionismo* in, for example, his electro-acoustic sampling project composed of fragments of the “Sirens” episode of *Ulysses*,

⁸ **Alfredo Giuliani** (1924-2007) was a critic and poet, and a professor of contemporary literature. He is particularly known for his collection of essays on European poetry *Le droghe di marsiglia* (1977), his first collection of poetry *Il cuore zoppo* (1955), and his experimental novel *Il giovane Max* (1972). He was poetry editor of *il verri* in the late 1950s, he edited and introduced *I novissimi*, the anthology which launched the Neoavanguardia, and he was the first editor of the journal *Quindici* (1967-1968) (*The Oxford Companion*, p. 268).

⁹ **Giuliano Gramigna** (1920-) is a literary critic, poet, and novelist whose criticism, which appeared in periodicals such as *il verri* and *Aut-Aut*, displayed a “strong interest in psychoanalysis and linguistics”. His first collection of poems, *Taccuino* (1948), was hermetic, but his subsequent creative writings have “constantly explored modern and post-modern questionings of literary structure and personal identity” (*ibid.*, p. 275).

¹⁰ **Elio Pagliarani** (1927-) is a poet, teacher, magazine editor, reviewer, and critic. Among his numerous collections of poetry are *La ragazza Carla e altre poesie* (1960), *Lezione di fisica* (1964), and *Rosso Corpo Lingua* (1977).

¹¹ **Giulia Niccolai** (1934-) is a poet “who played a prominent part in avant-garde developments in the 1960s and 1970s”, founding the review *Tam-Tam* with Adriano Spatola, and composing sound-poetry, visual, and nonsense-poetry. *Harry's Bar e altre poesie* (1981) collects her poetry from 1969-1980, and “includes work in English, French, German, and Latin as well as Italian, all with a playfully absurd intent” (*ibid.*, p. 410).

¹² **Luciano Berio** (1925-2003) was an avant-garde composer who pioneered electronic music. He studied under Luigi Dallapiccola in the early 1950s, where he was exposed to “dodecaphonic” music, and attended summer schools at Darmstadt, where he met Boulez and Stockhausen. In 1955 he founded the *Studio di Fonologia della RAI* with Bruno Maderna, which hosted many renowned musicians, such as John Cage. Berio carried out numerous collaborative projects with Edoardo Sanguineti.

Thema (Omaggio a Joyce) (1958).

These authors' recourse to Joyce, Eliot and Pound certainly deserves critical attention; indeed virtually nothing has been written about it. But Edoardo Sanguineti and Amelia Rosselli exemplify more thoroughly and engagingly the nature and scope of the general cultural phenomenon under investigation in this thesis. It may seem an obvious choice, given that many would argue that Sanguineti and Rosselli have entered the canon in a more enduring manner than any of these other artists. As such it might seem to make sense to tease out their relationships to Eliot, Pound and Joyce prior to dealing with those of the more minor figures. But there were other motivating factors behind these choices too, which can be divided into *analogies* and *counterpoints*.

Sanguineti and Rosselli's poetic projects can be said to be *analogous* in a number of ways. They both took stimuli (intellectual or creative or both) from *all three* of these English-language Modernists: Eliot, Pound and Joyce. They both engaged with the critical and creative writings of these three Modernists, and left a legacy of this in their critical and journalistic essays. They both put the Modernist linguistic and stylistic techniques mentioned above to innovative and unprecedented usages, moving beyond their models in a variety of ways. Both of their engagements with the Modernists mediate a dialogue with Dante, and, more unexpectedly, both also mediate a dialogue with Petrarch. Both poets used Modernist stimuli to challenge literary and linguistic hierarchies, and the language of poetry, especially the language of the lyric. Both poets are also considered to be "difficult" poets, and this difficulty is, for the most part, located at the sites in their texts where the Modernist techniques are used. As well as engaging with the Modernist techniques of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* (Sanguineti and Rosselli) and of portmanteau punning (Rosselli), both poets also appropriated one aspect from their

models that was not taken up by any other Italian poet in this era. For Rosselli, this was Joyce's technique of *idiomatic manipulation*, and for Sanguineti, this was Pound's *approach to the theme of usury*.

There are also elements of difference between Rosselli and Sanguineti, causing them to function as *counterpoints* to one another in a variety of ways. Firstly, although they were both born in 1930, Sanguineti grew up entirely in northern Italy speaking Italian, whereas Rosselli grew up in a much more unstable and multicultural environment, experiencing different countries, languages and literatures. Although both authors were influenced intellectually by all three Modernist poets, it is Eliot and Pound who figure most prominently in Sanguineti's creative works, but it is Joyce who impacts Rosselli's poetry most significantly. Although their uses of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* are analogous in a number of ways, the divergences between Sanguineti and Rosselli's employment of these techniques also embody important differences in their poetic approaches. Both poets were also involved with the Communist cause in Italy and, more generally, with Marxist ideologies, but their political outlooks and their understanding of the role of poetry in politics and of the role of politics in poetry were very different.

Sanguineti and Rosselli themselves did not acknowledge the parallelism of their projects. Rosselli, in fact, scorned Sanguineti's dialogue with Eliot, Pound and Joyce, judging it to be derivative and dated. Sanguineti more or less ignored Rosselli entirely, and the Neoavantgarde in general seems to have excluded Rosselli as well as other female artists.¹³ Perhaps partly as a result of this, and of the ensuing polarization of critics either to Sanguineti's side or to Rosselli's, there has been little critical assessment of the interesting parallels between the ways in which Eliot,

¹³ Cf. L. Re, "Language, Genders and Sexuality in the Italian Neo-Avant-Garde", in *MLN (Italian Issue)*, 119, 1, January 2004.

Pound and Joyce figure in their works. It is time that we put aside these partisan differences and considered things more dispassionately. We will see that their individual projects are much more alignable than the poets themselves would have had us believe, and indeed this is true *especially* along the lines of their engagements with Joyce, Eliot and Pound that we are interrogating here.

Italy After World War II

Italy was socially, politically, economically and culturally ravaged by the repressions and violence of the *ventennio nero* of Benito Mussolini's fascist rule, and by the horrific casualties of the country's involvement in World War II.¹⁴ After Mussolini's death and the dissolution of Fascism in 1945, a political regrouping began: the monarchy was dissolved, new parties were formed, and an all-party government put in place a parliamentary democracy. Economically, Italy was on her knees, and the social unrest which resulted from this manifested, for example, in the major strikes of 1947. But a very dramatic economic turn-around occurred after World War II, and a stronger economy – albeit an imbalanced one with extreme North/South disparities – was put in place. This economic recovery came about due to Italy's new political alliances, most importantly with the United States, which began to inject dollars into Italian industry from 1947 under the Marshall Plan, aiming to halt the spread of Communism through a physical and ideological rebuilding of Europe along American lines. More stabilizing alliances were formed with Italy's admission to NATO in 1949 and to the United Nations in 1955, as well as through its role as a founding member of two precursors of the European Union: the

¹⁴ A. Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958-c.1974* (Oxford, 1998), p. 26. In my short survey of the historical period, I draw on Marwick's thorough and authoritative study as well as on C. Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy* (Cambridge, 1994).

European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, and the European Economic Community in 1957.

The period of the late fifties and sixties in Italy is known as the “miracolo economico”, a boom which lasted until the oil crisis in 1973. The extraordinary economic development began in what is called the “triangolo industriale” of Milan, Turin and Genoa, to which there was a massive population transfer from the agriculture-based south of the country. But even in the south, consumer goods flooded into Italian homes during this period. Arthur Marwick describes the rapid “changes in the provision of amenities, facilities, modern conveniences, and consumer goods” in Italy during the fifties and sixties.¹⁵ In a very short space of time, Italian families acquired basic amenities such as access to water, modern sewerage systems, electricity and roads. And, even in the poorest regions, more sophisticated consumer goods like refrigerators, washing machines, radios, television sets, and the iconic Fiat *seicento* or *vespa* rapidly became the norm.¹⁶ In Italy, as elsewhere in Europe, the Neo-Capitalist era had been launched, with the establishment of an “economic basis [...] for the production, consumption and international exchange of new consumer goods.”¹⁷

But things were not quite as rosy as this picture makes them seem. The rise in consumerism at an individual level was not always accompanied by an improvement in public services and infrastructure (e.g. in schools, housing, hospitals, transport). The wages in the new industrial jobs were low, the commutes were long, and mass migration brought about social stratification. The sinister sides of the “miracolo economico” are memorably portrayed in Federico Fellini's film *La dolce vita* (1960), which ironised the glamour of the period, and in Luciano Bianciardi's highly satirical

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 362-3.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 360-63.

¹⁷ Marwick, *The Sixties*, p. 36.

novel *La vita agra* (1962).

Other social problems also came to the fore in the late fifties and throughout the sixties in Italy, manifesting in rising levels of urban crime and social unrest. Highly organised criminal networks gained strength and capitalised on the development of international commerce for their increasingly sophisticated drugs trade, which led to the “Mafia Wars” in the early sixties.¹⁸ On the international scene, more tensions, outrage and hysteria erupted out of the Cold War climate and nuclear proliferation, which brought about such momentous events as the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the American intervention in the Vietnam War.¹⁹ Old empires were also crumbling during this period, with many African states gaining independence from their European rulers.

In Italy, there was a rise in left-wing sentiment known as the “apertura a sinistra”, especially among the workers of the North, and in 1963 the *Partito socialista italiano* was in government. The social tensions and inequalities described above led to the student and worker occupations of universities and factories (most notably the Fiat factory in Turin), reaching a peak in the events of the *sessantotto* and the *Autunno caldo* of 1969, and these movements came into contact with a very punitive police force.²⁰ These events were then followed by the extreme political instability and violent confrontations of the *Anni di piombo* of the late sixties and seventies, with terrorist acts (such as the assassination of Aldo Moro by the *Brigate Rosse*) coming from left and right-wing paramilitary groups. These events, while of course being distinctive to Italy, cohere with the patterns outlined by Marwick not only in Italy, but also in France, the UK and the US. This was a period which was, in many ways, “swinging”, but the heady, hedonistic, youthful image of the sixties

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 30.

conceals a host of tensions and conflicts.²¹

The rise of the left in the fifties and sixties included a renewal of Marxism, not just in Italy, and an accompanying rejection of consumerism by many of the young, who were disenchanted with the conservatism and materialist values of their parents' generation. This questioning of entrenched Capitalist values and traditional hierarchical and paternalist structures of authority seeped into the intellectual and cultural life of the era. In the United States Allen Ginsberg and the Beat poets embodied the beginnings of this countercultural movement, railing against the new consumerist society, most famously in Ginsberg's *Howl*, which was published after an infamous trial in 1957. In France, Guy Debord and the *Situationistes*, with their theories of society as “spectacle” and their revolutionary art of the late 1950s, also attacked consumerism, asserting that mass media and advertising masked the degenerative effects of Capitalism.²² And, less dramatically, the *nouveau romanciers*, who were associated with the journal *Tel Quel* founded in 1961, also advanced “anti-bourgeois” ideas in French literature by overthrowing the forms and features of the traditional novel.²³

The *Neoavanguardia*: A Radical Italian Response

In the fifties and sixties, Italian artists also responded to this *zeitgeist* with a general impulse to break with the literary norms of their time. One example of this drive was embodied by the literary journal *Officina* (1955-1959), founded by Pier Paolo Pasolini, Francesco Leonetti and Roberto Roversi, which aimed to reassess nineteenth and twentieth Century literature, particularly *neorealismo* and

²¹ Cf. Marwick, *The Sixties*, p. 16-20.

²² *ibid.*, p. 32.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 288.

ermetismo, and to put forward a new poetics which they termed *neosperimentalismo* that was to be free of ideologies. But this movement did not succeed in giving rise to a coherent programme of literary innovation, nor did it put into question the traditional structures and hierarchies that were crumbling around them in society.²⁴ A much more significant and concerted Italian response came from the *neoavanguardia* or 'Gruppo 63', who engaged - in depth and most polemically - with the social, economic and political realities described above.²⁵ The core poets of this group were Edoardo Sanguineti, Alfredo Giuliani, Elio Pagliarani, Nanni Balestrini,²⁶ and Antonio Porta.²⁷ These poets are known as the Novissimi after their 1961 anthology of the same name,²⁸ the publication of which has been dubbed one of the “turning points in modern Italian poetry”.²⁹

The Novissimi recognised that language was in a state of crisis and “considered most postwar Italian literature to be intolerably tedious”.³⁰ Niva Lorenzini explains that Italian poets did not have at their disposal “una lingua adeguata a veicolare una diversa percezione del reale”, and that, as a result, poetry, as

²⁴ For more background on “Neosperimentalismo”, see F. Gambaro, *Invito a conoscere la neoavanguardia* (Milan, 1993), p. 27-29, A. Russi, *La narrativa italiana dal neosperimentalismo alla neoavanguardia (1950-1983)* (Rome, 1983), and G. C. Ferretti, «Officina». *Cultura, letteratura e politica negli anni cinquanta* (Turin, 1975).

²⁵ Many major studies and critical resources regarding the Neoavantgarde have been published in the last decade, thereby facilitating study of the movement, most notably: *Gruppo 63. L'antologia*, eds. A. Giuliani and N. Balestrini (Turin, 2002), *Gruppo 63. Critica e teoria*, eds. R. Barilli and A. Guglielmi (Turin, 2003), *Il gruppo 63: quarant'anni dopo*, eds. R. Barilli, N. Lorenzini, F. Curi (Bologna, 2005). The following publications have made the Neoavantgarde more accessible to an Anglophone readership: *The Novissimi: Poetry for the Sixties*, ed. A. Giuliani (Los Angeles, 1995), and J. Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy: Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices* (Toronto, 2004).

²⁶ **Nanni Balestrini** (1935-) is a poet, novelist and cultural and political activist who “played an influential role in several leading avant-garde movements and institutions”, including the *Gruppo 63* and *Potere Operaio*. He is known for his experimental and political approaches to literature, which come to the fore, for example, in his poetry collections *Il sasso appeso* (1961), *Come si agisce* (1963), *Ma noi facciamone un'altra*, and in his novel *Tristano* (1966) (*The Oxford Companion*, p. 40-41).

²⁷ **Antonio Porta** (1935-1989) was a poet and critic. His early poetry volumes, including *La palpebra rovesciata* (1960), which are collected in *I rapporti* (1966), deal with sadism and violence. He edited an important anthology *Poesia italiana degli anni sessanta* (1979), as well as an anthology of his own poetry with a self-commentary entitled *Nel fare poesia* (1985), and he wrote two novels and a collection of short stories (*ibid.*, p. 477).

²⁸ *I novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, ed. A. Giuliani (Turin, 1965).

²⁹ *The Oxford Companion*, p. 21.

³⁰ D. Sassoon, “Edoardo Sanguineti”, *The Guardian*, Thursday May 27th 2010.

an embodiment of language, needed to revolt against “una tradizione lirica ormai completamente inaridita”.³¹ The Novissimi considered the reigning Italian literary traditions since World War II, of *ermetismo* and of *neorealismo*, to be inadequate for the expression of their rapidly changing society. They felt that Italian literature was lagging behind other national literatures which had seen important experimental developments in the late forties and fifties, such as the German “Gruppe 47”, the American Beats, and French Absurdism, Existentialism and Situationisme. The Novissimi were also frustrated that Italian literature seemed to be developing slowly in comparison to music and the visual arts, which manifested in various non-representational projects of the postwar era, for example, in Action Painting, Abstract Expressionism, and Concrete and Serial Music. Thus the Neoavanguardia sought to bring Italian writing “up to date”, both with foreign literatures and with the other arts.³² And this project was also intensely political, with all of the Novissimi being critical of consumer culture and engaging, albeit in distinctive ways and to differing degrees, with the intellectual debates of the era and with Marxist theory.

It is a key feature of the group that the Novissimi looked beyond the restricted sphere of the Italian tradition for tools with which to forge new works of art. They made an attack on the *literati* of the time, particularly on those associated with *Officina*, accusing them of cultural backwardness and provincialism.³³ The Neoavanguardia reacted to this stagnation and set out to deprovincialise Italian literature, drawing upon a wide body of sources for stimulation. One of their aims was to reconnect with the historical avant-garde of the early decades of the century. In Italy these radical projects had been aborted with the advent of the First World War, and had not been resuscitated during the two decades of fascist cultural

³¹ N. Lorenzini, “Eliot e i 'Novissimi’”, *Nuova corrente*, 103 (1989), p. 102.

³² Cf. J. Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy: Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices* (Toronto, 2004), p. 6, and F. Gambaro, *Invito a conoscere la neoavanguardia* (Milan, 1993), p. 32.

³³ Cf. Gambaro, *Invito a conoscere la neoavanguardia*, p. 60.

repression that followed. One of the key groups of non-Italian writers from this earlier era to which they turned were the English-language Modernists, and, in particular, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce. The formal and linguistic innovations of these authors had (and indeed continue to have) considerable repercussions on a vast spectrum of literatures across the globe. But *Italy*, as the critic John Picchione states, had, by the late fifties, not yet “witnessed the linguistic turmoil present in writers such as Joyce, Pound, or even Eliot”.³⁴

Defining Modernism

The term Modernism, is, of course, a slippery one, which throws up slightly different temporal and ideological parameters for everyone who engages with it. What is generally uncontested is that Modernism refers to a grouping of artistic movements and individual artists who responded in radical ways to the rapid changes brought about by the onslaught of Modernity around the turn of the century. Many of these societal changes were precursors of those that occurred after World War II which we delineated above – unprecedented technological change, rapid urbanisation, increased industrialisation, mass production and the rise of capitalism, war, the collapsing of empires and the chipping away at other structures of authority, including those that governed organised religion and male/female relations. Modernist artists (whether novelists, poets, composers, painters or sculptors), broke the formal harmonies, unity and fluidity that had previously characterised artistic expression, and foregrounded dissonance, discord, disjointedness and fragmentation. Some Modernists *celebrated* the changes brought about by modernity, for example Marinetti and the Futurists, who glorified speed and

³⁴ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 6.

mechanisation. Others, such as W.B. Yeats, considered that the “cultural fragmentation” that accompanied these societal changes went hand in hand with a “spiritual bankrupt[cy]” and projected apocalyptic visions of the future.³⁵

Two features of Modernist works stand out in the contexts of this thesis and will become increasingly pertinent throughout our analysis of Sanguineti and Rosselli: firstly, the perception that *language was in crisis*, and secondly, *the changing role of the reader*. Let us begin with language. There was a general sense that in a world marked by the effects of Modernity, the sign and the signified no longer corresponded to one another in the comfortable relationship that they had previously enjoyed. Old linguistic modes were becoming increasingly ineffective for expressing the new reality of, for example, life in a modern city, a topic confronted most famously by Baudelaire and by Eliot. Eliot's *Prufrock* captures the impotence of the “old” language when he proclaims that “It is impossible to say just what I mean,” and the *Waste Land* famously proclaims that the poet is left with “only / A heap of broken images!” out of which to construct a poem. Joyce, while he was writing *Ulysses*, described his mind as littered with the linguistic and existential detritus of the modern city: “my head is full of pebbles and rubbish and broken matches and bits of glass picked up most everywhere”.³⁶

This impression of the loss of linguistic stability was accompanied by the more tangible sense of a need to “reclaim” language from the degrading forces of mass culture; to free language from what Terry Eagleton describes as its function as “a mere instrument of science, commerce, advertising, and bureaucracy”.³⁷ Making the comparison of worn-out language to old coins, Remy de Gourmont bemoaned the clichéd language of the turn of the century, and Ezra Pound took up this image when

³⁵ P. Childs, *Modernism* (New York, 2008), p. 102. See this book for a fuller account of the critical discourse around Modernism.

³⁶ R. Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford, 1982), p. 512.

³⁷ Childs, *Modernism*, p. 105.

he wrote in 1912 that “language, the medium of thought’s preservation, is constantly wearing out”, and called for poets to “new-mint the speech”.³⁸ An important aspect of Modernist poetics, in the Anglophone world and beyond, grew out of precisely this aim to “new-mint” the corrupted literary idiom. Eliot, Pound, and Joyce all consciously addressed this problem; each had their own head-on confrontation with the “worn coins” of language, and each responded to the crisis with strategies for “revivify[ing] language”.³⁹ Often this involved *enacting* the crisis within their texts. One such Joycean enactment occurs in *Finnegans Wake*, in which he visually shatters the “bits of broken glass and split china” of the modern mind into “bi tso fb rok engl a ssan dspl itch ina”.⁴⁰ Another way that Joyce did this was in the creation of neologisms, as the young Samuel Beckett explains: “Mr Joyce recognises how inadequate 'doubt' is to express a state of extreme uncertainty, and replaces it by 'in twosome twiminds’”.⁴¹

The second feature of Modernist aesthetics that will prove pertinent to this thesis is the changing role of the reader or spectator. The “ideal” Modernist reader or spectator is not passive in his or her consumption of the art-work; they are expected to *engage* with it in new ways. The Modernist author who most explicitly embodies this drive was Bertolt Brecht, the German dramatist. As we shall see shortly, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco all theorized this quality of the Modernist text particularly effectively. The Modernists achieved this new author/reader relationship through their revivification of language, using highly experimental techniques for creating “linguistic turmoil” to “shock” the reader/spectator into their new, *active*, role. And so these two features of Modernist discourse are intimately interconnected.

³⁸ Pound, Ezra. *Selected Prose*, ed. W. Cookson (New York, 1973), p. 330-1.

³⁹ Childs, *Modernism*, p. 26.

⁴⁰ J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London, 1992), p. 124.

⁴¹ S. Beckett, Bruno, Vico... Joyce” in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. R. Cohn (London, 1983), p. 28.

It is precisely these two aspects of Modernism which informed Edoardo Sanguineti and Amelia Rosselli's intertextual dialogue with the works of Eliot, Pound and Joyce. The linguistic techniques that Eliot, Pound and Joyce used to “revivify” their literary language, and hence to embolden their readers - *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo*, *citazionismo*, *portmanteau punning* and *idiomatic manipulation* - are the techniques taken up by Edoardo Sanguineti and Amelia Rosselli. These techniques, which will be considered throughout Chapters III and IV, become the sites of these Italian poets' intertextual dialogues with English-language Modernism.

Defining the Modernist Techniques

The aforementioned terms are used throughout this thesis to describe the Modernist techniques that are adopted and developed by Sanguineti and Rosselli. The following brief definitions of these terms will serve to disambiguate them from one another, and from other terminology and associations.

Firstly, *plurilinguismo* is a term that has often been used as a catch-all term to describe linguistic eclecticism in literary texts (to include various linguistic and stylistic strategies, such as the mingling of styles), most notably in the *Divina Commedia*. But in this thesis it is used in its most concrete sense: to designate the presence of different national or regional languages within one text or within a poet's oeuvre. In English, the terms “multilingualism”, “plurilingualism” and “polyglottism” are used more or less interchangeably in discussions of this technique in literature, but here, the Italian term will be used throughout. When more than one language is present within one text, the relationships between them, following suite from Tatiana Bisanti, will be designated along the lines established by Carol Myers-Scotton in 1993. Bisanti explains that Myers-Scotton attributes the term *matrix language* to the

“lingua base, quella alla quale è riconducibile la struttura morfosintattica degli enunciati”, and the term *embedded language* to “quella da cui derivano gli elementi forestieri inseriti nella lingua matrice”.⁴²

Secondly, ***pluristilismo*** is a term which indicates the presence of different linguistic “styles” or modes of discourse taken from *one* national or regional language which are mingled within a text. This term has often been subsumed into the term *plurilinguismo*, but, here, for the sake of clarity, these two terms will be used in their most literal senses. This terminological division does not, however, mean that our analysis is not informed by an awareness that what we define as *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo* often coalesce or interact within texts.

Thirdly, ***citazionismo*** is a term which refers to the deliberate use of citations or quotations from other writers or cultural sources within a text. It refers to a practice which could also be described as “extensive open allusion”. The Italian term rather than the corresponding English term “quotationism” will be used for consistency with the terms defined above. *Citazionismo* is sometimes used as an alternative to the term “intertextuality”, by critics who do not wish to engage this modern theory and prefer to work within the more traditional and ideologically neutral realm designated by terms such as “influence” and “allusion”. Here, however, *citazionismo* is used in its most concrete sense and by no means implies a shunning of the “intertextual”.

Fourthly, ***portmanteau punning*** is a more straight-forward term which is understood by all to designate the coining of neologistic compound-words through the monolingual or plurilingual fusion of two or more existing words. And finally, ***idiomatic manipulation*** also expresses an uncontested concept. It consists of the

⁴² T. Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli: Un 'distorto, inesperto, espertissimo linguaggio'* (Florence, 2007). Bisanti is drawing on C. Myers-Scotton, *Duelling Languages. Grammatical Structure in Code-Switching* (Oxford, 1993).

manipulation, following a variety of different techniques, of an “idiom”. The term “idiom” is used here as an umbrella term to include clichés, proverbs and other forms of idiomatic (i.e. linguistically “fixed”) discourse.

Modernism as a Stimulus in Postwar Cultural Theory

We must now unite two of the contextualising discussions that we have had, and consider the role played by the Modernist textual enactment of the *crisis of language* in the intellectual responses to the social, political, and economic conditions in Europe after World War II. Modernist texts, including those by Eliot, Pound and Joyce, actually served as a *stimulus* for some of the most defining expressions of the cultural climate in postwar Europe.

The crisis of language was exacerbated in the period following Modernism's apogee. *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* were both published in 1922, the year that Mussolini came to power in Italy. Language and literature, under both Mussolini and Hitler's forms of Fascism, became dramatically censored and stagnant, and the reader/spectator was forced to passively consume propagandistic rhetoric. In addition to this, the increasingly rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in the fifties meant that language had become even more “worn” than it had been for the Modernists writing between the turn of the century and 1922; language was heavily automatised, cliché-ridden and invaded by mass media. The Modernist crisis of language, therefore, was *magnified* by the enormity of the social and technological changes brought about by World War II and its aftermath. The old linguistic forms, which were rigid and hierarchical, could not keep pace with the changing social norms and mores – they could not mould to the new cities, new bodies and new minds that came into being in the fifties and sixties.

A renewed Marxism infused the cultural climate of this period. Antonio Gramsci's notion of "cultural hegemony" was particularly influential. For Gramsci, the ruling classes imposed their world view on society as a whole, presenting it as a universally valid ideology when it was, in fact, only beneficial to those in power. This hegemony, for Gramsci, was established through the indoctrinating effects of compulsory schooling, mass media and popular culture. For many theorists with a Marxist bent, even *language itself* had been put to the service of reinforcing these hegemonies, and of masking the structures and institutions of oppression. According to these intellectuals, then, the postwar exacerbation of the crisis of language described above stemmed from the co-option of language by the ruling classes. But this situation could also be turned on its head – a radical approach to language could bring about a more active reader/spectator, and could thereby *expose* these oppressive structures. In order to demarcate this programme, many theorists - most notably the German philosopher Walter Benjamin who was associated with the Frankfurt School, and the French post-structuralist Roland Barthes who was associated with *Tel Quel* - had recourse to the study of Modernist works of art.

Walter Benjamin considered that art had a major role to play in the overturning of capitalism. In his essay "What is Epic Theatre" (1931) he states that the task of revolutionary art is not to simply "reproduce" life as the Naturalists did, but rather to expose or "discover" the "conditions of life", and to "alienate [*verfremden*] them". This process must take place through the "interruption of happenings".⁴³ And indeed "interruption", for Benjamin, is "one of the fundamental devices" used for structuring art, and is also an underlying structuring principle of life itself.⁴⁴ In Brecht's "epic theatre" the constant interruptions of the action on stage (caused by, for example, an actor beginning to sing unexpectedly, or by an actor

⁴³ W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt (London, 1970), p. 152.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 152-53.

walking across the stage with a placard) create what Benjamin calls “shocks” for the spectator. For Brecht, these “shocks” provoke the spectator's awakening from passivity, consumption, apathy, and even from empathy with the characters, which he deems unproductive. The spectator, then, is forced and to engage more profoundly with the social and political substance of the play. Benjamin explains:

Like the pictures in a film, epic theatre moves in spurts. Its basic form is that of the shock with which the single, well-defined situations of the play collide. The songs, the captions, the lifeless conventions set off one situation from another. This brings about intervals which, if anything, impair the illusion of the audience and paralyze its readiness for empathy. These intervals are reserved for the spectators' critical reaction – to the actions of the players and to the way in which they are presented.⁴⁵

In other words, the “suspension of disbelief” is disallowed in “epic” theatre.

In “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), Benjamin takes up the “shock effect” again, this time considering how it is used in cinema. He writes:

Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested.

Benjamin explains that “The spectator's process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change. This constitutes the shock effect of the film”.⁴⁶ For Benjamin, this “shock effect” is a major feature of art from Modernism onwards, and is embodied not only in the works of Brecht, but also in other Modernist works, such as Baudelaire's poetry.

Roland Barthes, like Benjamin, focuses on the necessity for a resuscitation of the spectator or reader, but he looks more closely at the *role of language* in this process. Barthes exposed the fact that the signs with which we are constantly bombarded in a consumerist society form a mask that “prevents us from seeing what is really happening”.⁴⁷ In other words, the oppressive values of capitalist society that

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 240.

⁴⁷ Marwick, *The Sixties*, p. 298.

Gramsci was aware of are *encoded*, for Barthes, not only in societal structures and institutions, but also in language itself. Roland Barthes, like Benjamin, had recourse to Modernist aesthetics, as embodied by, for example, Mallarmé, Baudelaire and Brecht, in order to formulate his influential theories on the changed roles of author and reader, and on the nature of the modern work of art.

Barthes' vision of the modern "texte", propounded in his famous essay from 1968, "La mort de l'auteur", is one based on multiplicity – the text is "tissé de mots a sens double". Before Barthes, Bakhtin had posited language as "dialogic" - heteroglot, double-voiced, polyphonic. For Bakhtin, unpalatable structures of authority and oppressive hierarchies could be toppled through a grotesque hybridising approach to language that he defines as "carnavalesque", and Barthes drew heavily on this notion to develop his own theory of the "multiplicity" inherent in the text. Multiple meanings, for Barthes emanate from "plusieurs cultures", and "entrent les unes avec les autres en dialogue, en parodie, en contestation".⁴⁸ And this "écriture multiple" contains a tangled-up mass of meaning rather than one stable meaning that we can decipher:

tout est à *démêler*, mais rien n'est à *déchiffrer*; la structure peut être suivie, "filée" (comme on dit d'une maille de bas qui part) en toutes ses reprises et à tous ses étages, mais il n'y a pas de fond; l'espace de l'écriture est à parcourir, il n'est pas à percer, l'écriture pose sans cesse du sens mais c'est toujours pour l'évaporer: elle procède à une exemption systématique du sens.⁴⁹

For Barthes, the plurality and instability of the text, and, indeed, of language itself, is the means of exposing and overturning the dominant cultural myths and ideologies of the capitalist system. When we refuse to assign one stable meaning, or what Barthes calls "un sens ultime" to the text and, by extension, to the "monde comme texte", we set in motion a revolutionary process:

une activité que l'on pourrait appeler contre-théologique, proprement révolutionnaire, car refuser d'arrêter le sens, c'est finalement refuser Dieu et ses

⁴⁸ R. Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. E. Marty, vol III, (Paris, 2002) p. 45.

⁴⁹ Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 44.

hypostases, la raison, la science, la loi.⁵⁰

And with this, the modern reader is born, the “message’ de l’Auteur-Dieu” is ousted from the “texte” irrevocably, and the traditional hierarchical relationship between the author and reader is flattened.⁵¹ Barthes’ “lecteurs” do not *passively consume* texts, they must *re-write* them.

This concept of the multiple text which contains no central meaning also finds expression in the ideas of a theorist who was closely associated with the Neoavantgarde, Umberto Eco.⁵² Eco put forward his theory of textual “openness” in his ground-breaking work *Opera aperta* (1962). The composition of “open” works is, Eco explains, a strategy used by the artists of his time to encapsulate what confronts them: “la provocazione del Caso, dell’Indeterminato, del Probabile, dell’Ambiguo, del Plurivalente”.⁵³ This is a strategy in the arts in the late fifties and sixties that manifests in a variety of ways, depending on the form or genre employed. It is, for example, the strategy used by “serial music” when it strives to

libera[re] l’ascolto dai binari obbligati della tonalità e moltiplica[re] i parametri su cui organizzare e gustare il materiale sonoro; è quello perseguito dalla pittura informale quando cerca di proporre non più una, ma varie direzioni di lettura di un quadro; è ciò cui mira il romanzo quando non ci racconta più una sola vicenda e un solo intreccio ma cerca di indirizzarci, in un solo libro, all’individuazione di più vicende e di più intrecci.⁵⁴

And this multiplicity, this “openness” demands active engagement from the reader/spectator/viewer/listener, who fulfils what Lucia Re calls an “activist, critical

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵² **Umberto Eco** (1932-) is a semiotician and novelist. The two works that “made his reputation in the early 1960s” were *Opera aperta* (1962) which “sought to establish an aesthetics of indeterminacy in modern art” in the climate of the Neoavantgarde to which he was closely affiliated, and *Apocalittici e integrati* (1964) which was the “first attempt in Italy to understand how the messages transmitted by the media of popular culture actually work”. His *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976) was very influential, and, since 1980, he has “gained worldwide fame as a novelist”, with, for example, *Il nome della rosa* (1980) and *Il pendolo di Foucault* (1988). (*The Oxford Companion*, p. 202). He is also highly respected, in Italy but also in the English-speaking world, as a Joyce scholar.

⁵³ U. Eco, *Opera aperta: Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* (Milan, 1962), p. 7.

⁵⁴ Eco, *Opera aperta*, p. 81.

model of readership”.⁵⁵

For Eco, just as for Benjamin and Barthes, this new kind of text with no central meaning – “open” for Eco, “multiple” for Barthes, and riddled with “shocks” for Benjamin – also came into existence with Modernist aesthetics. Eco focussed in particular not on Brecht or Baudelaire, but on the English-language Modernists, and on Joyce in particular, who became his veritable *model* of the “opera aperta”, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter II. Intellectuals like Benjamin, Barthes and Eco, then, attacked “monological conceptions of meaning and communicability”,⁵⁶ and put forward the notion that it is language which “determines ideas rather than the other way about”.⁵⁷ As such, language can be employed as a disruptive, revolutionary force rather than as a force of oppression. Benjamin, Barthes and Eco learned this lesson through the study of Modernist texts, and promoted a reclaiming of language modelled on Modernist aesthetics. And, simultaneously, they brought into being what we will call from now on the *reader-turned-activist* who would be equipped to reclaim it.

Debunking Influence and Originality

Although we did not use the word at the time, Barthes' conception of the text as “multiple”, which echoes many of Bakhtin, Benjamin and Eco's ideas, constitutes Barthes' model of “intertextuality”. And this Barthesian approach to the intertextual, which stems from Modernist experimental aesthetics, will continue to inform our discussion throughout this thesis. We will speak of the “intertextual dialogue” between Sanguineti and Rosselli and the Modernists, rather than speaking in terms

⁵⁵ L. Re, “Language, Genders and Sexuality in the Italian Neo-Avant-Garde”, in *MLN (Italian Issue)*, 119:1 (2004), p. 150.

⁵⁶ Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 69.

⁵⁷ Marwick, *The Sixties*, p. 309.

of “literary influence”.

A Bloomian model of intertextuality – one which constructs a conflictual, hierarchical relationship between an author and his or her literary precursors along the lines of “anxiety” - is unsuited to our purposes here, for three reasons.⁵⁸ Firstly, Bloom's model does not celebrate the radical “multiplicity” and “openness” of the text, which we will argue are essential to the intertextual dialogues between our Italian poets and the English-language Modernists. Secondly, Bloom figures poetic influence as divorced from the external social, political and cultural contexts, which is also inappropriate here given that both Rosseli and Sanguineti's poetry is so deeply embedded in these contexts. Finally, Bloom's model is rooted in the concept of poetic “originality”, a notion which is overturned in the kinds of experimental art that we are concerned with here.

“Originality” was considered by the Romantics to be an essential and unalienable component of all good art, but this concept was thrown open by the Modernists,⁵⁹ and, throughout the twentieth century it came to be seen as increasingly redundant. Calling it “genius” and “authenticity” rather than originality, Benjamin, in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, deems it an “outmoded concept”. For Benjamin, this concept can even be dangerous and lead to “a processing of data in the Fascist sense” - in other words, to what we have been discussing in terms of the “masking” of oppressive ideologies.⁶⁰ Barthes, too, debunks the notion of originality. In “La mort de l'auteur” he describes the “texte” as “un espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées, dont aucune n'est originelle”; the author cannot even hope to produce something “original”:

⁵⁸ Cf. Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 133-44.

⁵⁹ Cf. E. Gregory, *Quotation and Modern American Poetry: Imaginary Gardens with Real Toads* (Houston, 1996), p. 3.

⁶⁰ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 220.

l'écrivain ne peut qu'imiter un geste toujours antérieur, jamais original; son seul pouvoir est de mêler les écritures, de les contrarier les unes par les autres, de façon à ne jamais prendre appui sur l'une d'elles.⁶¹

Marjorie Perloff has approached this concept very recently, and her enquiries will prove most useful in our assessment of the Italian adoption and development of English-language Modernist techniques. In her book *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (2010), Perloff takes as her starting point various Modernist techniques (including *plurilinguismo* and *citazionismo*) and examines their impact on poetry in the late twentieth and early twenty-first Century, by which time, she argues, the concept of originality is thoroughly defunct. So the poet is forced to make poetry “by other means”; to knowingly recycle other peoples' words, and to embrace and celebrate the “unoriginal”.

Perloff sees the Modernist experimentations with language as precursors of “unoriginal” traits found in contemporary poetry, and traces a trajectory which begins with *The Waste Land*. She identifies a

significant difference between the function of the 'foreign' citations in *The Waste Land* and their role a century later in the global context of shifting national identities, large-scale migration from one language community to another, and especially the heteroglossia of the Internet.⁶²

Walter Benjamin's intensely citational *Arcades Project*, the Brazilian Concrete movement⁶³ and the French OULIPO movement⁶⁴ are seen as *stepping stones* between the kind of Modernist “recycling” found in Eliot, and the new approaches to originality found in contemporary poetics. Perloff analyses the techniques used for celebrating the “unoriginal” by the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets Charles Bernstein and Susan Howe, the plurilingual poets Caroline Bergvall and Yoko Tawada, the

⁶¹ Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 43-44.

⁶² M. Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (Chicago, 2010), p. 123.

⁶³ The Brazilian Concrete Poetry movement began with an exhibition by a group called the “Noigrandes” in 1956, and in 1958 a manifesto was published. Concrete Poetry gives importance to the typographical arrangement of the words.

⁶⁴ OULIPO, the *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*, was founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François le Lionnais, and was a movement mainly centred around French writers who intentionally put formal or mathematical “constraints” on their writing projects in order to generate innovative means of structuring texts. Georges Perec and Italo Calvino were involved.

conceptual poet Kenneth Goldsmith, as well as the poets who inhabit the densely citational “hypertextual” and supranational world of online poetry journals like the Norwegian *nypoesi*, the Brazilian *Sibila*, or the French-English *Double Change*.

The analysis of the “recycling” of Modernist techniques in Sanguineti and Rosselli’s works in Chapter III and IV of this thesis will demonstrate that these experimental Italian poets mark an important episode on Perloff’s trajectory; one that she did not include in her assessment. The experimental Italian poetry of the late fifties and sixties should be considered, alongside the coeval Concrete and OULIPO poets, as important stepping stones between English-language Modernism and contemporary poetics.

This thesis will contextualise and explore Rosselli and Sanguineti’s intertextual engagements with these Joyce, Eliot and Pound. It will not do so within a framework of literary “influence” or “inheritance”. Nor will it seek to establish their position on an arbitrary scale between derivativeness and originality. Sanguineti and Rosselli used the English-language Modernists as models in a number of different ways, and this formed a part of their development of extremely innovative poetic projects – but both poets were also acutely aware of, and at times even and celebrated, the “unoriginal” in their intertextual programmes. Indeed Rosselli and Sanguineti both took up Joyce, Eliot and Pound, as we shall see, precisely *at the sites of intertextuality* within these Modernist works, in full recognition that the Modernists themselves had already struggled with and revelled in the unoriginal and the polysemous.

Cognitive Dissonance and Double Binds

In *Unoriginal Genius*, when Perloff is discussing strategies used by contemporary poets for defeating readerly expectation, she describes the effect as “a kind of cognitive dissonance”.⁶⁵ Perloff does not develop this reference any further, but it will prove very useful for our purposes to do so here. *Cognitive Dissonance* is a theory in social psychology propounded fifty years ago by Leon Festinger and developed over the intervening period, and it is a term that is increasingly creeping into popular culture, for example, by “frequently making its way into the pages of the New York Times”.⁶⁶ *Cognitive dissonance* is a “state of arousal”⁶⁷ brought about by the “inconsistency between [...] expectation and [...] experience”: in other words when expectations are “discordant” with how experiences actually unfold, “the pieces do not fit. You feel perplexed, agitated, and uncomfortable”.⁶⁸ Psychologists have identified a drive within humans to attempt to resolve this dissonance – it seems that “we do not like inconsistency”.⁶⁹

This experience of tension is similar to that which is described as a *double bind*, “a situation in which [someone] is given simultaneous but mutually contradictory cues, so that whatever [they do] will be wrong”.⁷⁰ Whereas in *cognitive dissonance*, two ideas *conflict* with one another, in a *double bind*, which is a more extreme experience, two ideas actually *negate* one another. There is no resolution possible in a *double bind*; it sets up a situation of psychological paralysis. The concepts of *cognitive dissonance* and *double bind* provide a cognitive framework on which we can map the kinds of effects that we described above, in Benjaminian

⁶⁵ Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ J. Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty Years of a Classic Theory* (London, 2007), unpaginated “Forward”.

⁶⁷ Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance*, p. 182.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary* [accessed online, 29/08/11]

terms, as “shock-effects”.

We will see in the analysis that follows that the Modernist linguistic techniques used by Sanguineti and Rosselli bring about clashing or conflicting experiences in the mind of the reader. For example, *plurilinguismo* creates clashes in a text (and therefore in the mind of the reader) between two or more linguistic “codes”, and *pluristilismo* generates clashes between two or more stylistic discourses. *Citazionismo* produces clashes between the expressive mode and contexts of the fragment that is appropriated from one text, and the modes and contexts of the text into which it is embedded. *Portmanteau punning* brings about clashes between the semantic fields and aural qualities of two or more words which are fused to form one word, and *idiomatic manipulation* creates clashes between the stable idiom that is evoked and the perverted form that echoes it in the text.

These techniques, in their Modernist forms as well as in their Italian postwar incarnations, all enact the linguistic and existential tensions inherent in Modernity, and confront the “crisis in language” by generating Barthesian plurality and polysemy. They also force a radical transformation of the experience of reading a text, inflicting “shocks” on our *reader-turned-activist* which manifest in the discomfort of *cognitive dissonance* or the veritable psychological *impasse* of *double bind*.

Rosselli and Sanguineti's Neo-Capitalist *Inferni*

Italy (and/or Europe) figures as an *inferno* in Sanguineti and Rosselli's poetry from the fifties and sixties. In Chapter III, we pay particular attention to the poetic text which launched Sanguineti's career, *Laborintus* (1956), and to a libretto which he wrote with Luciano Berio, *Laborintus II* (1965). In Chapter IV we will have

recourse to Amelia Rosselli's first mature collection of poetry in Italian, *Variazioni belliche* (1964), as well as to *Sleep*, which contains a substantial selection of her English poetry written between 1953 and 1964. Through language that is in an extreme state of crisis, Rosselli and Sanguineti's urban landscapes present a culture that is disintegrating. By releasing a “howl” as indignant and despairing as Allen Ginsberg's, each poet puts paid to any possible romanticisations of the “miracolo economico” of the fifties, or of the so-called “swinging” sixties.

The physical and psychological landscape is characterised by both poets as an infernal space. It is an “Infernum viventes”⁷¹ and “Death Valley” (*L* 88) for Sanguineti. For Rosselli it is a “Hell loom[ing] out / with perfect hands”⁷² and “un vero inferno”.⁷³ It is a blighted urban waste-land for Rosselli: “la città che duole delle sue ferite” (*P* 263): “la città tradite [sic] con la fiera e il mercato” (*P* 313), and a putrid swamp for Sanguineti: “Palus Putredinis” (*P* 73). In this Neo-Capitalist environment, modern man is depicted as utterly alienated – alienated from his fellow man and from society as a whole, alienated from himself, and even alienated from language – he must live in “this hell (the naked / word) (or world)” (*S* 164), and speak in “l'alfabeto che non trovo” (*P* 261), as Rosselli puts it.

For both poets, the economic boom and conspicuous consumption of the period figures as a degrading force. For example in the *incipit* of a poem in Rosselli's *Variazioni belliche*, the corrupting power of capitalism is central:

Prendevo la spada e gridavo: fuori di quà cuorleone
che mi hai trafitto il cuore. Prendevo la spada e sbagliavo
o trovavo clientela? Corrotta la gioventù di oggi, corrotto
il mercato corrotta la gente che compra corrotto il mercato
e la mercantilizia. E se il mare geme e la mia fronte è
perlata di sudore? Lagrime in silenzio (*P* 69).

⁷¹ E. Risso, *Laborintus di Edoardo Sanguineti: Testo e Commento* (San Cesario di Lecce, 2006), p. 117. I will refer to this edition of the poem using the following notation in the body of the text from now on: (*L* 117). When I reference Risso's commentary, I will abbreviate as follows: Risso, *Laborintus*.

⁷² A. Rosselli, *Sleep: Poesie in inglese*, ed. E. Tanello (Milan, 1992), p. 10. I will refer to the poems in this collection using the following notation in the body of the text from now on: (*S* 10).

⁷³ A. Rosselli, *Le poesie*, ed. E. Tanello (Milan, 1997), p. 228. I will refer to the poems in this edition using the following notation in the body of the text from now on: (*P* 228).

Sanguineti expresses this degradation in the satirical apostrophe to “Moneybags”,
Marx's allegorical capitalist, in section 18 of *Laborintus*:

e ah perché non mi hai cercato
ieri sera? gridava ah ero in compagnia ah come vedi e del resto
non ci scriviamo quasi più e potrei aggiungere e Moneybags e vieni!
ricordi? lo storpio! e LEGGITOR cortese, hai qui una bella occasione (1781)
di esercitar la tua sofferenza e vieni dunque! E ascolta
ah
era il tentativo di imporre una determinata educazione morale!
e molto rapidamente... ah Moneybags! ora ricordo e ah tu sei
il mio repertorio ontologico ho gridato tu sei oh mio vateur colonial
(altra espressione equivalente) il mio Ruben! in trascrizione
ora soltanto ti riconosco vateur de rivière! la mia eresia verissima
la mia necessità e tutta la serietà della vita! e voglio incontrarti!
Adesso! (L 232).

This passage also demonstrates an example of Sanguineti's technique of *plurilinguismo* – the text has a clear *matrix language* of Italian, with fragments of English, and French functioning as *embedded languages*. And indeed it also exemplifies Sanguineti's *citazionismo*. Marx's *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* is evoked through the appearance of Moneybags, and the words “LEGGITOR cortese”, Sanguineti tells us, are from a poem by the obscure seventeenth century poet Francesco Redi, but they also strongly evoke the much more familiar words “Passator cortese” from Pascoli's poem “Romagna”.

The international political climate of the atomic age figures in both poets as a gripping terror. This features, obliquely yet unmistakably, in the following poem by Rosselli which, like many of her poems in this collection, embodies psychological conflict through its structuring word “contro”:

Sempre agonizzante egli traspariva fra dei suoi fratelli
con un velo in mano. Sempre lusingato e lusinghiero conduceva
per mano fanciulle. Con il coltello al cuore rimava. Dentro
della colonna degli abissi scombinava le preghiere. Contro
d'ogni tuo barbaglio, - m'incitava la pioggia. Retta combinavo
preghiere assurde e tutto il mondo crollava. Senza della
rete dei pesci non è possibile sollevarsi. Contro della spia
notturna non è chiaro perché cada la bomba (P 299).

And in Sanguineti, in this passage from section 2 of *Laborintus*, the nuclear threat seems to even precipitate the mutilation and atomisation of the poetic subject and of

language itself:

perché io sono al giusto confine organico sepolcro
complicato per godere e riuscirò dopo la fluida intromissione
una moltitudine riuscirò nella grammatica speculativa e simbolizzato in cifre
terribilmente armoniose di fronte all'eruzione di carbonizzanti passioni
infatti e alle distorsioni relative di fronte a lunghi funghi fumosi
che si gonfiano e indico l'ustione linguistica frammenti che costellano
il notturno giardino dei succubi sopra l'atollo delle labbra coralline
[...]
è finita è finita la perspicacia passiva primitiva è finita eppure
in uno stadio enunciatemente ricostruttivo di responsabile ricomposizione
è finita infine è atomizzata e io sono io sono una moltitudine
attraverso ritentate esperienze Mare Lacus accogliami (est proprie pollutio) (L 80).

Even sexual intercourse, for both poets, is far from the “free love” one might expect from this era of increasing permissiveness. In one of the poems in Rosselli's *Sleep*, sex is a farcical, frantic, embattled affair:

The King and Queen sat beheaded firmly
embraced, enlaced in a fit of action troublesome
to their fitsome senses. A fire to my dandy
lover! Responded the Queen to her lover's
embraces, a fire to the wine which scurries
in the veins of my beheaded head! The King
sat a-mused while he played with her hand,
dripping with the juice of his head. Her
head lay despondently on the rim of the
throne fit for a King to sit on, lest he
lose his Grace on the matrimonial day which
was granted by the Divinity on her losing
her socket which joined the bones of man
and woman as they sat firmly embraced under
the pine-tree a-pining for the tree of love
soul-less as an apple (S 70) .

This passage also exemplifies, in the coinage “scurries”, Rosselli's *portmanteau punning* technique, and, indeed, her *plurilinguismo*: “scurries” is a portmanteau formed out of a fusion of the English verb “to scurry” and the Italian verb “scorrere”. It also displays instances of her *pluristilismo*: the colloquial expression “fit for a king” is juxtaposed against the laboured archaism “lest”.

In *Laborintus*, sex is often associated with the literal fragmentation or cutting up of bodies (into *cadavres exquis*), with blocked senses, or physical or mental paralysis, as we see in section 5:

[...] per rigida paralisi belle donne voi siete spazio la bellezza
per cui si discorre velocemente non deve avere un senso

describes a *double bind*, and Rosselli's manipulation of the idiom enacts this cognitive experience. The idiom is exploded, and the the words “miele” and “mosca” are completely re-contextualised – the speaker is denied the luxury of desiring fly-free honey, because, in a Kafkaesque *coup*, she is actually transformed into a fly stuck in a jar of honey. And so, in Rosselli's hellish world, the reader, alongside the poem's characters and the poet herself, ends up “supina come una mosca imbrattata di miele”. The reader is in “twosome twiminds” - suspended in an aporetic state of double bind - wanting the honey, but without the flies.

But is the reader of Sanguineti and Rosselli's texts, then, simply condemned to a hellish readerly experience, characterised by a barrage of unmitigated “shock” effects, a perpetual state of cognitive dissonance or double bind? Or is there any potential for release from this dismal state that does not involve reverting to a passive mode of readership? Does the reader's new status as a reader-turned-activist allow him or her to inhabit this hell in a way that brings about any positive experiences? We shall see, throughout the course of Chapters III and IV that this is indeed the case, and in fact, that the mechanisms for enabling this are precisely those under consideration here – the linguistic techniques that Sanguineti and Rosselli appropriated from the English-language Modernists.

This question can be more easily addressed with recourse to a Barthesian concept from *Le plaisir du texte* (1973), that of the opposition between two kinds of reading experience which can be evoked by texts: *plaisir* and *jouissance*. A text that generates *plaisir* is one which “contente, emplit, donne de l'euphorie”, one that “vient de la culture, ne rompt pas avec elle”. A “texte de plaisir” embodies security, comfort, homeliness and predictability. It is typically read under circumstances like these: “lieu et temps de lecture: maison, province, repas proche, lampe, famille là où il faut”, and it brings about a state of “inconscient ouaté” in the reader: the reader's

mind is muffled; literally filled with cotton wool.⁷⁵

A text that generates *jouissance*, on the other hand, is a text which “met en état de perte, [...] déconforte, [...] fait vaciller les assises historiques, culturelles, psychologiques, du lecteur, la consistance de ses goûts, de ses valeurs et de ses souvenirs, met en crise son rapport au langage.”⁷⁶ A “texte de jouissance” is irredeemably and unrepentantly fragmented: “Le plaisir en pièces; la langue en pièces; la culture en pièces. [...] Aucun alibi ne tient, rien ne se reconstitue, rien ne se récupère”.⁷⁷ Clearly, then, it is the “texte de jouissance” rather than the “texte de plaisir” that represents the intertextual, polysemous text that Barthes described in “La mort de l'auteur”.⁷⁸

But, crucially, Barthes, promotes the “texte de jouissance” not as a text that is *hellish* to read, but as a *desirable* text. The “texte de jouissance” for Barthes is, in spite of the inevitable discomfort which it produces, “Babel heureuse”:

Le vieux mythe biblique se retourne, la confusion des langues n'est plus une punition, le sujet accède à la jouissance par la cohabitation des langages, *qui travaillent côte à côte*.⁷⁹

This is the kind of text that the modern reader-turned-activist should *want* to read, the kind of text they are now *equipped* to read – even the kind of text they can *enjoy* reading. The reader-turned-activist must, at all costs, shun the state of “incoscient ouaté”, must succeed in opposing the drive to resolve dissonance. This new reader can then learn not only to *inhabit*, but actually to *revel* in the cognitive dissonance and double binds brought about by radical linguistic ruptures. The “texte de jouissance”, at its sites of “shock”, momentarily but very intensely, shunts the reader into a state of exhilarated, ecstatic arousal. And it is these injections of ecstasy in the

⁷⁵ Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, IV, p. 251.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 251.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 251.

⁷⁸ We must note though that, in typical Barthesian fashion, the distinctions between *plaisir* and *jouissance* throughout the text are somewhat fluid.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 219.

midst of the *inferno* – the mechanics of which we will unpick in Chapters III and IV – that form the real legacy of English-language Modernism in Italian postwar experimentalism, as embodied here by Amelia Rosselli and Edoardo Sanguineti.

CHAPTER II: The Italian Postwar Reception of English-Language Modernism

There is a substantial body of criticism on the international reception of English-language Modernism,⁸⁰ and several works deal with the reception of individual English-language Modernist authors in Italy.⁸¹ A handful of Italian critics and authors – most notably Mario Praz and Eugenio Montale – discovered English-language Modernism in the twenties and thirties, but there was a dramatic increase in interest in the period following World War II. In the case of T. S. Eliot, for example, Italian editions of his works were very sparse until, between 1945 and 1961, there was a cascade of translations of his poetic, dramatic and critical works, as well as a surge in articles interpreting them. The critical reception of Eliot, Pound and Joyce was notably delayed in Italy as compared with other European countries; Italian translations of Joyce's *Ulysses* and of Eliot's complete poetry only appeared, respectively, in 1960 and 1961. It was not until the late fifties and sixties, then, that the Modernists finally “arrived” in Italy.

⁸⁰ Cf. K. L. Goodwin, *The Influence of Ezra Pound* (London, 1966), C. Beach, *ABC of Influence: Ezra Pound and the Remaking of American Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1992), *Ezra Pound and Poetic Influence*, ed. H. M. Dennis (Amsterdam, 2000), P. Nicholls, “Beyond *The Cantos*: Ezra Pound and Recent American Poetry” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 139-151, J. Rossa, *Ezra Pound in his Time and Beyond: the Influence of Ezra Pound on Twentieth-Century Poetry: a Catalog of an Exhibition* (Newark, 2006), D. Johnston, *Irish Poetry After Joyce* (Notre Dame, 1985), N. Corcoran, *After Yeats and Joyce: Reading Modern Irish Literature* (Oxford, 1997), R. M. Adams, *After Joyce: Studies in Fiction after Ulysses* (New York, 1977), V. Mercier, *The New Novel: From Queneau to Pinget* (New York, 1971), C. H. Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions: American Fiction Since James Joyce* (Urbana, 1982), *Transcultural Joyce*, ed. K. R. Lawrence (Cambridge, 1998), *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe*, eds. G. Lernout and W. Van Mierlo, (London, 2004), C. Altieri, “Eliot’s Impact on Twentieth-Century Anglo-American Poetry” in *The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot*, ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 189-209, G. Guzzetta, *Nation and Narration: British Modernism in Italy in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Ravenna, 2004).

⁸¹ G. Cianci, *La Fortuna di Joyce in Italia: Saggio e Bibliografia (1917-1972)* (Bari, 1974), S. Zanotti, “James Joyce Among the Italian Writers” in *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe*, eds. G. Lernout and W. Van Mierlo, (London, 2004), U. Eco, “Joyce’s Misfortunes in Italy”, in *Joyce in Progress Joyce: Proceedings of the 2008 James Joyce Graduate Conference in Rome*, eds. F. Ruggieri, J. McCourt and E. Terrinoni. (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), N. Zapponi, *L’Italia di Ezra Pound* (Rome, 1976), L. Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia: Saggio e bibliografia (1923-1965)* (Bari, 1968), and S. M. Casella, “By the Arena... Il Decaduto’: Eliot & in Italy”, in *The International Reception of T. S. Eliot*, eds. E. Däumer and S. Bagchee (London, 2007).

A number of outward-looking critics and experimental poets engaged with English-language Modernism after the war. They provided translations of, and wrote critical essays on, key Modernist works. In this way they helped to make primary works available to an Italian audience, and also played a part in providing the necessary body of critical literature for readers embarking on the project of tackling these complex texts. Two critics responsible for this corpus of Modernist exegesis were Luciano Anceschi and Umberto Eco. Through his essays and the founding of the journal *il verri*⁸² Luciano Anceschi “pioneered studies on Anglo-American Modernism in Italy” and actively encouraged young Italian poets to immerse themselves in the works of Eliot and Pound.⁸³ Anceschi championed Eliot and Pound as innovators, and lauded their approach to form and to the poetic tradition. Umberto Eco also wrote about Eliot and Pound, but it was James Joyce whom he championed more vociferously. Eco was instrumental in making Joyce a model for experimental poets in the sixties, focusing, like Anceschi did, on radical approaches to form. Luciano Anceschi and Umberto Eco also share a large part of the responsibility for positing these three Modernist figures, Eliot, Pound and Joyce, as the essential Modernist “triad” in postwar Italy.

At the centre of this belated dissemination of Eliot, Pound and Joyce was a group of young poets and critics known as the *neoavanguardia* or “Gruppo 63”, who, alongside Anceschi and Eco (and to some extent prompted by them), were among those who initiated a concerted project of importing, assessing and responding

⁸² *il verri* is a literary periodical with a “strong philosophical component, founded as a quarterly in Milan in 1956 by Luciano Anceschi. It attracted many of the writers and intellectuals who would be associated with the *Neoavanguardia* in the 1960s, such as Edoardo Sanguineti, Umberto Eco, and Alfredo Giuliani. Created in the spirit of phenomenology, it was highly intellectual, but also anti-dogmatic and pluralist from the start, questioning the certainties of contemporary idealism, the ideological fetters of Neorealism, and the obscurities of the hermetic movement, and exploring the possibilities of more experimental writing and psychoanalytic criticism. It remained a forum for discussing innovatory tendencies in literature and literary criticism” (*The Oxford Companion*, p. 620-21).

⁸³ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 17.

creatively to these Modernists' writings. The Italian receptions of Joyce, Eliot and Pound, particularly in the fifties and sixties, will be considered in this chapter. In this chapter, close attention will be paid to the writings of Luciano Anceschi and Umberto Eco, as well as to the central role played by the Neoavantgarde in this English-language Modernist *fortuna*.

Although the impact of Modernism on postwar Italian experimental poetics has been widely acknowledged, the critical appraisal of it has, thus far, been rather general and scanty. The Modernists generated not only theoretical responses, but also creative responses from Italian artists, and these have not received adequate critical attention. What is more, all of the existing criticism focuses on the legacy of just one of these Modernists rather than considering them as a triad, and the majority of existing criticism is now rather dated. It is clear, now that nearly fifty years have elapsed since the formation of the Neoavantgarde, that a thorough evaluation of the role of English-language Modernism is needed.

The Italian Reception of T. S. Eliot

Laura Caretti's work *T. S. Eliot in Italia: Saggio e bibliografia (1923-1965)* investigates the phenomenon of "[l]'eliotismo" in Italy until the year of the author's death, and presents Eliot variously as

poeta, critico e autore di teatro, [...] scrittore 'oscuro' o 'famoso', 'rivoluzionario' o 'reazionario', 'poeta della crisi' o 'poeta della fede', 'scrittore d'avanguardia' o 'classicista', 'voce aristocratica' o 'voce di un'epoca'.⁸⁴

Caretti's work is, to date, still the most comprehensive study of Eliot's *fortuna*. Caretti only covers the reception until 1965. While she does cover, albeit rather hastily, the period that concerns us, Caretti's exploration of Eliot's reception by the previous generation will prove useful. An article on Eliot's reception in Italy by Stefano Maria Casella was published much more recently, and it deals primarily with what he calls "the towering personalities" of Eugenio Montale and Mario Luzi.⁸⁵ But unfortunately Casella's article is very short and provides only occasional insights beyond what Caretti's book offers, and its focus on the years since 1965 is, for our purposes, disappointingly cursory.

Eliot was first received in Italy in the twenties, in the *Rondisti* circles, as a "critico di "classica limpidezza e rigore", but as yet, Caretti tells us, his poetry was little understood.⁸⁶ It was Mario Praz⁸⁷ who first reported more positively and knowledgeably on Eliot's poetry, aligning him with Joyce and the *poètes maudits*.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ L. Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia: Saggio e bibliografia (1923-1965)* (Bari, 1968), p. 7.

⁸⁵ S. M. Casella, "By the Arena... Il Decaduto': Eliot &/in Italy", in *The International Reception of T. S. Eliot*, eds. E. Däumer and S. Bagchee (London, 2007), p. 135.

⁸⁶ Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia*, p. 29.

⁸⁷ **Mario Praz** (1896-1992) was professor of Italian at Liverpool (1924-1932), Manchester (1932-1934) and Rome (1934-1966). He was "an internationally known prize-winning literary critic, [who] wrote many brilliant essays on Italian, English, and comparative literature", and was involved in the editing of journals such as *English Miscellany*, *Cultura*, *London Mercury*, and *T. S. Eliot's Criterion* (*The Oxford Companion*, p. 481.). He was an important mediator between the Anglo-American and Italian cultures. Praz translated Eliot's *The Waste Land*, *Fragment of an Agon*, and *Triumphal March*, which were originally published separately, and then together in book-form by Einaudi in 1949.

⁸⁸ Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia*, p. 43.

Praz produced numerous translations and essays including one on Eliot's debt to Dante (1936-1937) and one entitled "T. S. Eliot and Eugenio Montale" (1948). Praz introduced Eliot to the slightly younger poet Eugenio Montale, thereby initiating a fruitful and enduring two-way dialogue, and Praz recognised "affinities" between the two poets' works. Alongside Mario Praz, Eugenio Montale holds a crucial position in the reception history of Eliot in Italy, again both as translator and critic, but also as a poet. Montale translated "A Song for Simeon" (in 1929), "La figlia che piange" (in 1933), and "Animula" (in 1947), which were published together in his *Quaderno di traduzioni* (Milan, 1948), and he also wrote four important articles on Eliot which "caught [his] novelty".⁸⁹

The issue of Montale's stylistic debt to Eliot has been hotly debated. Mario Praz identified loose similarities between the *The Waste Land* and *Arsenio*.⁹⁰ Most importantly, perhaps, and certainly most critically discussed, is Montale's use of Eliot's theory of the "Objective Correlative".⁹¹ Laura Caretti summarises that:

è concesso concludere che se l'esempio di Eliot non è proprio all'origine della poetica di Montale, ad un certo momento ha indubbiamente contribuito a chiarire o rafforzare nella coscienza montaliana proprio quell'idea dell'arte "oggettiva" che presiede a tutta la composizione delle *Occasioni*.⁹²

Casella stresses that Montale himself was determined for his poetry to be released from Eliot's shadow, and in particular for his "poetics of evocative objects" to be disassociated from Eliot's "objective correlative".⁹³ But affinities between Eliot and

⁸⁹ Casella, "Eliot &/in Italy", p. 124. Montale's essays were: "T. S. Eliot" in *Circoli* (1933), "Eliot e noi" in *L'Immagine* (1947), "Il poeta T. S. Eliot premio Nobel 1948" in *Corriere della Sera* (1948), "Invito a T. S. Eliot" in *Lo Smeraldo* (1950).

⁹⁰ Cf. Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia*, pp. 54-67.

⁹¹ An "Objective Correlative", a term which was "given its vogue in modern criticism" by T.S. Eliot is "an external equivalent for an internal state of mind: thus any object, scene, event, or situation that may be said to stand for or evoke a given mood or emotion, as opposed to a direct subjective expression of it", C. Baldick, *Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford, 2001), p. 176. Eliot explained his theory of the "Objective Correlative" thus: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked", J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London, 1991), p. 647. Montale is one among many poets who have engaged with Eliot's theory.

⁹² Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia*, p. 80.

⁹³ Casella, "Eliot &/in Italy", p. 126-27.

Montale do nevertheless arise in their themes; most notably they seem to share a similar – pessimistic - attitude to the difficulties of communicating, encapsulating the Modernist crisis of language that we discussed in the Introduction. Both poets embody the crisis of modernity through imagery of desolation, sterility and wreckage, and they share a sceptical conception of “history”.⁹⁴ As Casella writes, “both poets acutely observed and precisely recorded the painful mechanical lives of modern individuals”.⁹⁵

Laura Caretti writes that until 1935 ‘l’eliotismo italiano’ had been in the hands of a few critics and poets, but that in the lead-up to World War II, and in the immediate post-war period, “esso è divenuto un fatto culturale di vasta risonanza e di importanza non più soltanto episodica e circoscritta”.⁹⁶ The expanded interest in Eliot occurred primarily in Florence, among Catholic intellectuals and *ermetisti*.

The poet who best exemplifies this is Mario Luzi who, like Montale, took up Eliot at a thematic level. But Luzi's Eliotic thematic affinities were very different to Montale's: Luzi echoes Eliot, for example, in his imagery of “spiritual experience as quest”, of purgatorial fire and of darkness and coldness.⁹⁷ Casella describes the difference between Montale and Luzi's relationships with Eliot in the following way:

Montale dedicated more time and space to critical analyses of Eliot's poetics, comparing them to his own with the intention of reaffirming his independence and originality. Luzi, by contrast, relatively free from anxieties and influence complexes, rewrote Eliot in a highly personal and original way.⁹⁸

But Luzi's was not the only Eliotic path taken in Italy in the fifties and sixties.

The critic Luciano Anceschi⁹⁹ made a concerted effort to help disseminate Eliot's

⁹⁴ Cf. Casella, “Eliot &/in Italy”, p. 128-31.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 131.

⁹⁶ Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia*, p. 81.

⁹⁷ Casella, “Eliot &/in Italy”, p. 131.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 135.

⁹⁹ **Luciano Anceschi** (1911-1995) studied under Antonio Banfi in Bologna, published his thesis, entitled *Autonomia et eteronomia dell'arte* in 1936, and went on to lecture in aesthetics. He contributed many works on philosophy (e.g.: on Kant, Hume, Bacon and Burke) and literature (e.g.: *Poetiche del Novecento in Italia* (1972)), and an important anthology entitled *I lirici nuovi* (1943). He was also an editor and promoter of various literary movements, including *ermetismo*

works and ideas in Italy, publishing six essays on Eliot between 1946 and 1949, and this had an impact on the Neoavantgarde.¹⁰⁰ Alfredo Giuliani, one of the Novissimi, translated Eliot's late essay collection *On Poetry and Poets* and published it in 1959, and in 1961 Eliot's complete poems were finally published in Italy, in a translation by Roberto Sanesi¹⁰¹, with a preface by Eliot himself.

Laura Caretti, whose monograph ends with a short section on the reception of Eliot in Neoavantgarde circles, argued that for these poets and critics (and she mentions Alfredo Giuliani, Edoardo Sanguineti and Elio Pagliarani in particular) it was the the Eliot of the “primo periodo” who had the most impact. This was the Eliot who, “insieme a Pound ha rappresentato un momento di coraggiosa rottura con una tradizione letteraria ormai esangue”.¹⁰² Caretti stresses yet again the “Poundian” dimension to Eliot's Italian *fortuna*:

L'Eliot a cui guardano i “novissimi” poeti italiani risulta essere, in definitiva, [...] quello cioè dei saggi del *Bosco sacro* e dei versi della *Terra desolata*, l'Eliot, insomma, ed è questo il punto più importante, degli anni del sodalizio londinese con Pound e del momento di maggiore vicinanza con le scelte critiche e con le tecniche poetiche poundiane. Anzi, questi nostri scrittori mi pare finiscano con il leggere Eliot ‘attraverso’ Pound; rifiutando per l'appunto dell'esperienza eliotiana tutto il ‘diverso’ e accogliendo, invece, ed apprezzando tutto ‘il ‘comune’ con Pound.¹⁰³

And this, indeed, was the “Eliot” that Anceschi had “di preferenza illustrato”, and so, Caretti argues, “è stato proprio Anceschi ad avviare in modo determinante questo capovolgimento, e a riproporre l'esempio poundiano che, negli anni precedenti, era stato in Italia sempre in posizione subordinata rispetto a quello eliotiano”.¹⁰⁴ Caretti concludes, again stressing the fact that it was the “early”, “experimental” and “avant-garde” Eliot who was most influential, and stressing the interconnectedness of the

and, crucially for our purposes, of the Neoavantgarde, and he was instrumental in promoting English-language Modernism in Neoavantgarde circles.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia*, p. 97.

¹⁰¹ **Roberto Sanesi** (1930-2001) was a “poet, translator and critic, with a special interest in British and American poetry, particularly those of T. S. Eliot.” (*The Oxford Companion*, p. 535)

¹⁰² Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia*, p. 109.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 109.

various elements of the English-language Modernist *fortuna*:

Eliot rest[a] ‘maestro di poesia’ anche per i poeti più giovani, questi hanno però operato una loro scelta precisa: l’Eliot congeniale è il ‘primo’ Eliot, partecipe con Pound, e Joyce, e la Woolf, di quel momento sperimentale e d’avanguardia a cui ci si intende rifare. In questo contesto vanno dunque visti i frequenti riferimenti al poeta di *The Waste Land* e misurata oggi la sua particolare incidenza sul corso e i sommovimenti della più recente poesia italiana.¹⁰⁵

Thus the Eliot that was taken up by the Novissimi was not the Classicist that his first Italian disciples had favoured, or the later religious Eliot, but rather the young iconoclastic Eliot who had participated, with Pound and Joyce, in the dramatic rupturing of poetic tradition in the early years of the twentieth century.

Niva Lorenzini published an article in 1989 entitled “Eliot e i 'Novissimi'” that goes much further than Caretti in assessing Eliot's reception by the Neoavanguardia. She writes that in the fifties Eliot represented “un'ancora di salvezza”.¹⁰⁶ Lorenzini suggests that Eliot was instrumental in the Novissimi's conceptualisation of language and of the poet's duty to mould it appropriately. For Eliot,

il poeta vero ha il dovere [...] di 'estendere la capacità d'espressione' della propria lingua, sino a renderla 'sottile' e 'precisa', ricavando in ogni caso dal parlato, dalla *lingua comune*, il proprio materiale verbale

and this, along with Pound's lesson, taught the Novissimi “l'arte di energizzare il linguaggio”.¹⁰⁷ This, for Eliot and Pound, and then for the Novissimi, involved treating common everyday language with the “stessa intensità” that poets would have previously given to the traditional language of poetry, and also finding in chaos new structural possibilities.¹⁰⁸ The Novissimi also looked to Eliot as a stimulus for their collective poetics of the “riduzione dell'io”.¹⁰⁹ Antonio Porta, for example, looked to

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁶ Lorenzini, “Eliot e i 'Novissimi'”, p. 102.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁹ The Novissimo project of “riduzione dell'io” refers to their attempts to undermine or banish the traditional poetic subject of lyric poetry, and to replace this *subjective* approach with an *objective* one. Picchione explains that this “bracketing of subjectivity does not simply express the rejection of the traditional lyrical and sentimental poetry. The 'I' (the empirical self) is bracketed inasmuch as it is considered the result of an alienated subjectivity, divorced from a genuine life of experience. The centrality of the 'I' and of the author is supplanted by the centrality of language and of the other – an assemblage of pre-existing linguistic fragments and voices of characters that speak through that of the poet” (Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 15).

Eliot's theory of the "Objective Correlative" in order to "reduce" the poetic subject.¹¹⁰

Lorenzini also mentions that Sanguineti, in *Laborintus*, consciously formulated an inverted *Waste Land*, a "*Terra desolata alla rovescia*", taking Eliot's citational method and turning it on its head, as we shall see in Chapter III.¹¹¹

Lorenzini also states that the Novissimi took Eliot up from an ethical point of view, learning from him that writing should not be used as a "rinvio o modulo consolatorio" but rather a "rigorosa attestazione di responsabilità".¹¹²

Lorenzini writes that in a sense "ciascuno, tra i Novissimi, abbia saputo gestire in modi autonomi il 'suo Eliot'", but she qualifies this by saying that he was, "in qualche modo, una figura distante, da 'semplice scheda di biblioteca'."¹¹³ The Novissimi were also aware of the need to move away from the Eliotic model. Porta, already in 1964, wrote that "la poesia nuova si faccia e si debba fare mettendo da parte Eliot".¹¹⁴ And Giuliani, although he claims to be the recipient of Eliot's "[immagine] brillantemente funeraria pluriculturale, tortuosamente allegorica della crisi", states after the dissolution of the Neoavantgarde, that "C'è qualcosa di mirabilmente truccato in tutta l'opera di Eliot". Lorenzini explains that with this Giuliani underlines "il carattere artificioso, inattuale, di una lezione che pare avere fatto il suo tempo".¹¹⁵

The fact that the Eliot that emerges for the Neoavantgarde is the "early" Eliot, the "experimental", "avant-garde", "Poundian" Eliot, is in keeping with findings on the reception of Eliot elsewhere in the world. In Shyamal Bagchee's introduction to *The International Reception of T. S. Eliot*, she writes

Out of the distillation process of reception and use of Eliot's writing in distant places a few particular works emerge as especially influential, and these are nearly

¹¹⁰ Lorenzini, "Eliot e i 'Novissimi'", p. 105-06.

¹¹¹ Lorenzini, "Eliot e i 'Novissimi'", p. 108.

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 113.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 112.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 102.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 112.

all early pieces: 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', *The Waste Land* of course, and "Tradition and the Individual Talent", though in a few quarters, mainly in western Europe, Eliot's cultural politics and religious imagination become productive sites of debate, dissent, and absorption. Mainly, then, it is the experimental, innovative, 'make it new' modernist poet and critic who has the most impact and achieves maximum circulation – though he has not always or uniformly been regarded with total admiration.¹¹⁶

Our discussions thus far do indeed confirm this. This portrait of the Neoavantgarde "Eliot" will be brought into sharper focus shortly, when we consider Luciano Anceschi's role in more detail. But first let us move on to Pound's *fortuna* in Italy.

¹¹⁶ S. Bagchee, *The International Reception of T. S. Eliot*, eds. E. Däumer and S. Bagchee (London, 2007), p. 1.

The Italian Reception of Ezra Pound

Niccolò Zapponi's *L'Italia di Ezra Pound* (1976), like Laura Caretti's book on Eliot, is still the most comprehensive account of Pound's Italian *fortuna*. The reception of Pound in Italy is more complex than that of Eliot, since Pound himself, resident in Italy between 1925 and 1945, launched a strategic programme for the diffusion of his own works and those of his peers in Italian literary circles. This was motivated not purely by a desire for self-promotion and nepotism, but also by a genuine belief that the renewal of Italian literature must begin with an awareness of the English and American avant-garde. Thus Pound made concerted efforts to carve out a space for his own works, as well as for those by or about his friends and acquaintances, Wyndham Lewis, Basil Bunting, Ford Madox Ford, Louis Zukofsky, Robert Mc Almon, William Carlos Williams, T. S. Eliot, e. e. cummings, and James Joyce.¹¹⁷ He brought about the publication of extracts of their creative writing and essays (and indeed often of their essays on his own works) in small provincial journals; in *L'Indice* (in 1930-31),¹¹⁸ *Il Mare* (in 1932-1939),¹¹⁹ and *Il Meridiano di Roma* (in 1939-1943).¹²⁰ In addition to these “piccol[e] battagli[e] letterari[e]”,¹²¹ in 1932 he aimed to set up a “Laboratorio o Centrale d'Arte” in order to provide a forum for young Italian artists to learn about non-Italian avant-gardes. In 1935 he made another attempt at starting an experimental forum, this time to include American

¹¹⁷ N. Zapponi, *L'Italia di Ezra Pound* (Rome, 1976), p. 93 and p. 96.

¹¹⁸ *L'Indice* was a Genoese periodical with a regional readership, edited by Gino Saviotti, a friend of Pound's.

¹¹⁹ *Il Mare* was a local weekly newspaper published in Rapallo, that had a literary supplement from 1932-1933 to which Pound contributed regularly. He continued to write for it after the literary supplement ceased to exist. It had a very small and primarily non-literary readership.

¹²⁰ *Meridiano di Roma* began as *La Fiera Letteraria* (1925-1936), and had as its purpose the creation of “a forum for the free exchange of literary and cultural ideas”, but in 1936 it changed its name to *Italia Letteraria*, and then to *Meridiano di Roma* “as it had become more and more involved with Fascist political culture”, but “in 1946 the journal returned to its original name and purpose” under the editorship of Enrico Falqui (*The Oxford Companion*, p. 228). It was in its Fascist incarnation that Pound was involved with it.

¹²¹ Zapponi, *L'Italia di Ezra Pound*, p. 105.

and English writers.¹²² These projects never materialised, and in spite of his efforts, Pound's works and those of his literary associates, for the most part, "continuavano a essere ignorate dagli uomini di cultura italiani".¹²³

According to Niccolò Zapponi, Pound's efforts were misguided and had no effect given "i tempi, i modi e i luoghi in cui il poeta si trovava a reclamare un ravvicinamento della cultura italiana alla letteratura anglosassone".¹²⁴ Yet although Pound's efforts were largely ineffective, his vision of Italian letters finding renewal through English-language avant-gardist writing was in fact to prove premonitory, although it was not until two decades later that this would take place. Indeed, Pound's aims, written in a letter in 1935 to Carlo Izzo, are remarkably close to the actual project of the Neoavantgarde and other experimentalists in the sixties:

- Desideriamo immettere nuova vita nel verso italiano
- Notiamo gli effetti di quelle che E. P. chiama iniezioni nella versificazione inglese.
- Rifiutiamo la cultura monolingue.
Nostra intenzione esaminare le possibilità degli stimoli multilingui.¹²⁵

Niccolò Zapponi marks 1953, the date of publication of Alfredo Rizzardi's translation of the *Pisan Cantos*, as the beginning of Pound's *fortuna* in Italy.¹²⁶ Prior to this, translations of his works had been partial and discontinuous, and the fragments had often appeared in inaccessible publications. Throughout the thirties and forties, there had been some criticism of Pound's works, but it had been relatively superficial, and written by a small number of specialists in *Anglistica*. Carlo Linati, who knew Pound (and Joyce) personally, was a key figure in this. He published *Scrittori anglo-americani d'oggi* in 1932, and his choice of authors reflects

¹²² Zapponi, *L'Italia di Ezra Pound*, p. 100-102, and p. 135.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 108. At a certain point this promotion of Anglo-American experimental texts fused with Pound's Fascist propagandistic aims, and he prescribed their works as a veritable "biblioteca fascista" (*ibid.*, p. 110), claiming, in spite of the fact that many of these authors were adverse to his politics, that they were the "nemici dei nostri nemici", and that their works forwarded the causes of Fascism.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 115.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 135.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 141.

Pound's tastes, indeed Zapponi states that "Linati cooperava" in Pound's "azione di propaganda letteraria".¹²⁷

Some of the critics who received Pound's works positively were Carlo Izzo¹²⁸ and Luigi Berti.¹²⁹ Many others were very critical of his works, most significantly Mario Praz, who, as we saw, was instrumental in Eliot's Italian *fortuna*, but who was "particolarmente ostile a Pound".¹³⁰ Although Praz appreciated Pound's early poetry, he attacked the *Cantos* and his critical and philological works, especially his Cavalcanti translations which he claimed, in *La Stampa* in 1932, could have been written by monkeys. Praz did however recognise "momenti di vera poesia nei strani *photomontages* dei *Cantos*", and he acknowledged Pound's important role in mentoring other poets.¹³¹ Praz also recognised that although his Cavalcanti translations were unsound, the Provençal poets and Dante were *alive* in Pound; he wrote: "Pound sapeva dare al suo Dante quel calore di vita vissuta che si cercherebbe invano nelle pagine di tanti studiosi ortodossi" but he was adamant that Eliot, the disciple, had "superato il maestro" Pound.¹³² Zapponi writes that Praz's ambivalent positions held considerable sway over the critics:

Le indicazioni interpretative fornite da Praz – svalutazione della cultura filologica poundiana; apprezzamento della poesia di Pound, limitato alle sue composizioni giovanili; riduzione della funzione superato dal discepolo Eliot – sono state accolte in questo dopoguerra da una parte autorevole della critica italiana.¹³³

Pound's collusion with Fascism, his arrest in 1945 and the controversy that

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 127.

¹²⁸ **Carlo Izzo** is a critic and translator of American literature, defined by James Woodress as "the dean of Americanists in Italy". He published a selection of his correspondence with Pound as: "Twenty-three unpublished letters and post cards of Ezra Pound", in *Italian Images of Ezra Pound: Twelve Critical Essays*, eds. trans. A. Jung and G. Palandri (Taipei, 1979), pp. 139-159, and he wrote on Pound in *Poesia americana del '900* (1963). He also translated Eliot's "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock", "The Hollow Men" and "Ash Wednesday", which he published in his *Poesia inglese contemporanea* (Parma, 1950).

¹²⁹ **Luigi Berti** translated Eliot's *Dante* in 1942, established *Inventario* in 1946, wrote two essays on Eliot in 1937 and 1942, for *Circoli* and *Prospettive*, translated Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" (1937), and wrote two essays on Pound, in 1946 and 1962.

¹³⁰ Zapponi, *L'Italia di Ezra Pound*, p. 151.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p. 153.

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 154.

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 155.

followed it, polarised critics in Italy just as it divided the literary establishment in the United States. Writers including Bo, Luzi, Montale, Moravia, Palazzeschi, Saba and Ungaretti signed a petition for his release. The publication of the Italian translation of the *Pisan Cantos* in 1953 sorted critics into those who chose to overlook the Fascist ideology due to the aesthetic qualities of the texts, and those who felt that it damaged the *Cantos* irremediably. Those in the first camp included Alfredo Rizzardi,¹³⁴ Giambattista Vicari,¹³⁵ and Vanni Scheiwiller.¹³⁶ Those who felt the actions of the “uomo politico” sullied the poet irredeemably included Franco Fortini,¹³⁷ and Salvatore Rosati.¹³⁸

The Italian critics were just as divided on the topic of the literary aspects of the *Cantos*, some defending the unintelligibility and discontinuity of the poem, and claiming that it possessed internal unity, and some accusing it of obscurity and gratuitous disorder.¹³⁹ More informed and professional criticism of Pound picked up pace in the fifties, beginning with Luciano Anceschi’s significant studies:

Gli studi di indirizzo prevalentemente storico-filologico sull’opera di Pound si sono evoluti in Italia con maggiore lentezza, che non le analisi critiche a carattere valutativo. A riaprire tali ricerche nel dopoguerra (precedentemente avviate da Praz), è stato Luciano Anceschi, nel 1950, con due saggi dedicati alla poetica di Pound.¹⁴⁰

As for Pound’s influence on Italian *poetry*, Zapponi considers that “sono state

¹³⁴ **Alfredo Rizzardi** translated Eliot’s “Four Quartets” (1952), “Gerontion” (1960), and a further selection published as *Le poesie scelte di Eliot* (1960), as well as two articles on Pound (1956 and 1959).

¹³⁵ **Giambattista Vicari** was one of Pound’s Italian publishers., who published Pound’s *Carta da visita* in 1944. Recently, a volume of his correspondence with Pound was published: E. Pound and G. Vicari, *Il fare aperto: lettere 1939-1971*, eds. A. B. Vicari and L. Cesari (Milan, 2000). He also wrote two articles on Pound (in 1949 and 1954).

¹³⁶ **Vanni Scheiwiller** (1889-1965) was a publisher specializing in contemporary art and poetry. He published Italian editions of many of Pound’s creative, critical and political/propagandistic works, Montale’s translations of Eliot (1958), and numerous texts by authors associated with the Neoavantgarde.

¹³⁷ **Franco Fortini** (1917-1994) was a poet, critic, journalist and translator (e.g. of Éluard, Brecht, Proust, Goethe), and a “dissident left intellectual and cultural critic” who was prominent in the periodical *Officina* (*Oxford Companion*, p. 238).

¹³⁸ **Salvatore Rosati** wrote an essay on Eliot 1951 and an essay on Pound in 1956, and he translated three of Eliot’s plays, which were published in 1962.

¹³⁹ Zapponi, *L’Italia di Ezra Pound*, p. 176.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 185.

nel complesso assai labili”, a judgement which, as we shall see, was utterly mistaken.¹⁴¹ This was, however, more or less true of poets writing before the sixties; Montale, for example, who we have seen was significantly impacted by Eliot, also engaged critically with Pound’s works, but his writings on Pound “sono apparsi improntati a una sostanziale perplessità”, and his poetry was not influenced in the slightest by Pound’s.¹⁴² Zapponi goes on to say that “Più rilevante e fecondo sembra essere stato, nel complesso, il rapporto fra Pound e le neoavanguardie poetiche degli anni 60”, and continues, attributing to Pound a role in their innovatory projects, stating that members of the Neoavantgarde “hanno riconosciuto a Pound una funzione largamente positiva, nel superamento dei modelli poetici tradizionali”, which helped Italians to overcome their former position on Pound of reducing him to the “semplice, parziale anticipo di aspetti della poetica eliottiana”.¹⁴³

And indeed Edoardo Sanguineti, one of the main figures of the Neoavantgarde, was, in 1954, “fra i primi a proporre una lettura della poesia di Pound” as being in “più stretto rapporto di affinità con gli orientamenti dell’avanguardia contemporanea, che non la poetica di Eliot”.¹⁴⁴ Sanguineti, in his 1954 review of the “Pisan Cantos” which we will discuss in Chapter III, lauds Pound’s technique of “montage” and aligns the *Cantos* with Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, putting both works forward as “summae” of modern life. Another central figure of the Neoavantgarde, Alfredo Giuliani, wrote a piece entitled “La forma del verso” in 1961 that dealt critically with Pound (and Eliot’s) metrics, and in 1962 he wrote an essay entitled “Il mestiere come ideologia” on Pound’s sense of tradition. Giuliani, in his review of Mary de Rachewiltz’s translation of some *Cantos* published in 1961, faults Pound’s “inguarabile estetismo”, yet places this in a context of general admiration for

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 189.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 190.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 191.

his achievement:

Il poeta dei *Cantos* ci appare, piuttosto che un “indagatore di cose”, un indagatore e artefice di immagini, spesso uno squisito traduttore di immagini; e ogni immagine essendo quasi una lingua del sublime, Pound è un cieco Tiresia che usa un mosaico di lincie estetica. Tutto ciò spiega perché la leggibilità dei *Cantos*-collages sia scarsa, sebbene la poesia vi lampeggi non di rado, e perché, in definitiva, i *Cantos* costituiscono il più rispettabile fallimento della poesia contemporanea.¹⁴⁵

Later in the same article Giuliani defines the *Cantos* as a “magnifico fallimento”.¹⁴⁶

Other critics associated with the movement, such as Renato Barilli¹⁴⁷ and Fausto Curi,¹⁴⁸ put forward “un recupero della poetica poundiana, come presupposto storico fondamentale dell’avanguardia contemporanea”.¹⁴⁹ In 1959 Renato Barilli “(in parte rifacendosi agli studi di Anceschi) manifestava il suo apprezzamento per la critica poundiana”.¹⁵⁰ Fausto Curi, in 1963, posited the *Cantos* as a paradigm for the avantgarde, and viewed it, as Sanguineti did above, as a “*summa del reale*”.¹⁵¹ The following year Fausto Curi placed Pound in a very central position:

fra “i maestri della moderna poesia europea” con i quali le neoavanguardie italiane avevano inteso stabilire “un’immediato confronto”, una volta riconosciuta la necessità dell’opposizione diretta a Montale e a Ungaretti”, e l’impossibilità “di procedere alla fondazione di una “letteratura nazional-popolare”.¹⁵²

Yet after detailing the critical responses to Pound by these members of the Neoavantgarde, Zapponi appears to balk at the task of actually determining the impact of Pound on these poets, stating that Pound’s impact will inevitably remain intertwined with other influences:

Tuttavia, gli elementi da cui si può indurre un rapporto di affinità fra la poetica

¹⁴⁵ A. Giuliani, “Ezra Pound: *I Cantos*, I, Trad. di Mary de Rachewiltz, 1961”, *Il verri*, 2 (1962), p. 83.

¹⁴⁶ Giuliani, “Ezra Pound”, p. 81-82.

¹⁴⁷ **Renato Barilli** (1935-) is a critic of literature and art and an aesthetic theorist. He was heavily involved with the Neoavanguardia and recently edited *Gruppo 63. Critica e teoria*, (2003) with Angelo Guglielmi. He published many important studies on nineteenth and twentieth Century literature, notably *La barriera del naturalismo* (1964). His anthology of what he termed “intraverbal” poetry, *Viaggio al termine della parola: la ricerca intraverbale* (Milano, 1981), propounded Joyce’s extreme linguistic experimentation as a model.

¹⁴⁸ **Fausto Curi** (1930-) is professor of contemporary literature in Bologna, and was one of the first collaborators of *il verri*. His collection of essays *Ordine e disordine* was particularly important for the Neoavantgarde, and he continues to produce important critical assessments of the movement.

¹⁴⁹ Zapponi, *L’Italia di Ezra Pound*, p. 195.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p. 197.

poundiana e il nuovo sperimentalismo poetico italiano, obbligano anche a riconoscere l'esistenza di altri legami di affinità, altrettanto sintomatici; in definitiva, non vi sono mezzi per dimostrare che l'influsso delle poetiche di avanguardie inglesi e americane sulle neoavanguardie italiane sia passato attraverso Pound, più che attraverso T. S. Eliot, o Charles Olson.¹⁵³

Zapponi does, however, ask a useful question, to which this thesis seeks to provide an answer: "Quali fatti, nella pratica poetica, si può dire abbiano corrisposto a tali riconoscimenti formali dell'importanza storica di Pound?".¹⁵⁴ Zapponi's response is brief and relatively non-committal, but it points us, at least, in the right direction:

Va certamente riconosciuto che alcune soluzioni stilistiche adottate dall'autore dei *Cantos* (ad esempio la valorizzazione della "quantità" nella metrica, cui accennava Giuliani, oppure l'uso delle citazioni in un montaggio "a collage") sono state riprese da esponenti della neoavanguardia: da Sanguineti e da Elio Pagliarani, in particolare.¹⁵⁵

This thesis does not attempt an assessment of the impact of Eliot and Pound's metrical innovations on the Novissimi, but rather focuses on the experimentations with language and style (which will include the analysis of the technique of "montage" mentioned by Zapponi). This question of Modernist metrical techniques impacting Italian poetry in the Sixties is, however, one that should be interrogated in future research, not only as embodied by the Novissimi poets' metrical experiments (Edoardo Sanguineti and Alfredo Giuliani in particular), but also by Amelia Rosselli's.

Before going on to present the Italian postwar reception of James Joyce, let us first supplement the above accounts of Eliot and Pound's *fortune* with a closer look at the role played by Luciano Anceschi who, alongside Umberto Eco, provided key documents on Modernism and explicitly prescribed them to young Italian poets, and in particular to the Novissimi.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 197.

Luciano Anceschi's Role in the English-Language Modernist "Fortuna"

Luciano Anceschi championed Eliot and Pound in Italy, and was an instrumental figure in the English-language Modernist education of the Neoavantgarde. As we have seen, in 1956 he founded *il verri*, a journal that had as one of its main aims the importation of foreign literature into Italian literary circles. By the beginning of the sixties its editorial board was composed almost exclusively of people associated with the Neoavantgarde. With his translation of Eliot's *Sacred Wood* in 1946, his essay collection *Poetica americana* in 1953, and his series of articles on Pound and Eliot throughout the sixties and seventies, Luciano Anceschi, as Picchione frames it, "pioneered in Italy studies on the American new poetics, and "his influence on the young Novissimi cannot be underestimated".¹⁵⁶

Anceschi teases out the key lessons from Eliot's critical works, digests them and presents them for an Italian audience. In his work *Le poetiche del novecento in Italia: Studio di fenomenologia e storia delle poetiche* (1961), he draws attention to the fact that Eliot formulated a "poetica", an elaborate and clearly theorised "philosophy of composition", to accompany his poetry:

È una poesia "fabbricata", una poesia che sorge molto di rado, ed in essa il procedimento stesso del poetare interessa come l'opera poetica in sé. Essa implica una filosofia della composizione e una sistematica della creazione: *vicino e dentro* al poeta – si pensi a Valéry, ad Eliot, ad Ungaretti, a Montale – c'è sempre un saggista.¹⁵⁷

Anceschi highlights the importance of Eliot's relationship to "tradition", the two-way relationship between living and dead poets, outlined in "Tradition and the Individual Talent", and he gives his own statement on the reciprocal and relational nature of intertextuality:

Si sa: nessun poeta, nessun artista di nessuna arte "ha da solo il suo pieno

¹⁵⁶ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Anceschi, *Le poetiche*, p. 114.

significato”. Anche il poeta vive nella relazione, è condizionato e condiziona; così si ha la relazione (di cui parla, per esempio, T. S. Eliot in *Tradizione e talento individuale*) del “poeta nuovo” con i “poeti morti”. La relazione del poeta nuovo con i poeti morti implica un’azione reciproca; il poeta nuovo non acquisterà significato (e, quindi, addirittura, “non esisterà”) se non potrà star vicino ai poeti morti, se dai poeti morti sarà rifiutato; d’altra parte, con la sua sola presenza, egli modifica l’“ordine esistente” tra i “poeti morti”, attraversa l’ordine esistente con una luce inattesa che crea prospettive diverse e imprevedute, rinnovando i significati. La vita della poesia è, dunque, un mondo unitario, tutto percorso da relazioni in movimento.¹⁵⁸

Anceschi also warns of the danger of literary provincialism, the danger of ignoring “il fatto che la poesia italiana del Novecento appartiene ad un mondo che va oltre la tradizione locale, e si muove tra Rimbaud e Eliot, Apollinaire e Pasternak, Benn e Lorca”, and draws attention to the fact that Eliot himself had understood the complementary nature of different national poetries: “non è possibile ignorare quella complementarità delle culture poetiche nazionali, di cui, una volta, trattò, con la sua acutezza di esperto, anche un uomo come T. S. Eliot”.¹⁵⁹

In “Orizzonte della poesia”, a famous essay that was first published in *Il verri* in 1962, Anceschi writes of the “closed” poetry of *ermetismo* that had reigned “fino alla seconda guerra mondiale”, and, echoing Eco, he describes the poetry in the “seconda metà del secolo” as “open”: “poesia come *accrescimento della vitalità*, e nuove tecniche, e volontà di forme aperte, e speranze di una maggior portata di comunicazione”.¹⁶⁰ He writes explicitly about the fact that this “new” poetry came through Eliot and Pound, whom he had put forward as innovators and models for renewal. He highlights Pound’s influence on these young poets’ *techniques*, and claims responsibility for the fact that they read Pound, and used him *structurally*:

La fortuna letteraria di Pound nel dopoguerra non è occasionale, non è dovuta a una esuberante propaganda, o a taluni scandali. La fortuna di Pound si colloca in realtà nella zona fertile delle tecniche letterarie. Si può considerare come un *test* intorno alla vera competenza nelle cose della poesia il modo con cui vien visto il rapporto tra Pound e i nostri giovani poeti; in ogni caso tale rapporto esiste, e opera, ed è significativo. L’opportunità della nostra proposta ai giovani poeti di leggere Pound – soprattutto il Pound teorico[...]. Un Pound tolto dai suoi miti,

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 199.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ L. Anceschi, *Il modello della poesia* (Milan, 1966), p. 221.

usato strumentalmente.¹⁶¹

Anceschi remarks that members of the new generation of postwar poets reacted to the Modernists in a variety of ways, but that all Italian poets had to face up to them one way or another:

Ci sono molte differenze. C'è chi in modi liberi recupera la lezione di Pound e di Eliot, e c'è chi la rifiuta polemicamente; c'è chi ritiene necessario recupero dalle avanguardie, e chi se ne astiene con intenzione.¹⁶²

He outlines some of the “lezioni” that were learned, such as that of privileging spoken forms of language, and of his *pluristilismo*:

Penso ora a Ezra Pound; egli fu letto soprattutto attraverso Eliot e la dedica “al miglior fabbro” e si dimenticò il suo modo di leggere Omero, il suo senso del linguaggio parlato della poesia, la sua forza di aprire la poesia – dopo tante rinuncie – alla possibilità di trattare *qualsiasi* argomento e di dare *qualsiasi* tono all'argomento scelto.¹⁶³

Anceschi also argues that it was Eliot and Pound who drew the new poets out of a predominantly Petrarchist culture (i.e. a monolingualistic, monostylistic one), and showed them the path back to Dante, encouraging them to re-read the *Commedia*. Indeed Eliot and Pound's adoption of Dante as their model had, according to Caretti, “una gran forza nel dopoguerra per proporre nel nostro paese ai giovani poeti una nuova lettura di Dante”.¹⁶⁴

In 1982, with more distance from the events of the fifties and sixties, Anceschi was called upon to write a postscript to a small volume entitled *Tra Pound e i novissimi*, which brought together two of his earlier essays on Pound.¹⁶⁵ In the preface the editor Alessandro Tesauro wrote that “In Italia Luciano Anceschi fu il primo a capir[e] l'importanza [di Pound] e le influenze letterarie e nobilmente demagogiche che avrebbero avuto negli anni successivi e sulle generazioni a venire”, and Tesauro continues, directly contradicting Zapponi's assertion that Pound's

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 222-23.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, p. 259.

¹⁶³ Anceschi, *Il modello*, p. 109.

¹⁶⁴ Caretti, *T. S. Eliot in Italia*, p. 265.

¹⁶⁵ “La poetica di Pound” from *Poetica Americana e altri studi di poetica* (Firenze, 1988) (written in 1949-50), and “Orizzonte della poesia” from *il verri* (1962).

influence on Italian authors had been “assai labil[e]”:

Credo sia veramente difficile rintracciare un poeta negli ultimi cinquanta anni che sia rimasto immune dall’esperienza poundiana, o che quest’ultima abbia lasciato del tutto indifferente.¹⁶⁶

Anceschi’s postscript, entitled “Una crota, un nesso”, which presents us with vital reminiscences and historical analysis, begins: “Una illustre stagione della nostra poesia declinava stanca; e Pound – questo straordinario *faber* barbaro, ma incitatore – fu una sorpresa per tutti, e uno stimolo per molti”, and, he specifies, in particular the Novissimi poets.¹⁶⁷

Anceschi explains that it was not his own, but Tesauro’s, idea to republish these two essays, and that Tesauro also chose the title *Tra Pound e i novissimi*, but he nevertheless states that “mi pare che possa intravedere come l’invito a percorrere un itinerario che non è stato ancora esplorato”.¹⁶⁸ He speaks of the value of such an enquiry (“essa merita certamente una analisi approfondita”), and of his (unfortunately unrealised) intention to tease out the intricacies of the relationship “tra” Pound and the Novissimi at a later date (“lo tenterò in un giorno più disteso”).

He reminisces:

veramente ho ricordi molto vivi della situazione che attraversammo in quegli anni in un fitto gioco di relazioni, rapporti, letture comuni, convegni, tensioni produttive o paralizzanti, incomprensioni talora stimolanti talora tetre, e, tra l’altro, [...] non poche appropriazioni indebite.¹⁶⁹

He speaks again about his own role in the appropriation of the Modernist authors by young Italian poets, and by the Novissimi in particular:

Nei suoi modi falsamente svagati Umberto Eco osservò una volta che le mie sollecitazioni avevano fatto “penetrare nella biblioteca di molti giovani le opere di Pound e di Eliot”, e io aggiungerei – ne sono personalmente testimone – che alcuni di questi giovani erano poeti, o lo divennero, e specie tra i novissimi.¹⁷⁰

Anceschi concludes by asking what functions Eliot and Pound performed for

¹⁶⁶ L. Anceschi, *Tra Pound e i novissimi*, ed. A. Tesauro (Rome, 1982), p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ Anceschi, *Tra Pound e i novissimi*, pp. 93-94.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 95.

these young poets, and states that “Eliot, ma soprattutto Pound ebbero una gran forza per i giovani di allora”. The “gran forza” operated, he says, “per molti motivi, per diverse strade” but invariably it offered “novità di procedure e di movimenti verbali”. Anceschi stresses that Pound “non fu seguito nei suoi errori” but that “la sua lezione letteraria operò profondamente”; in other words his literary achievements were disassociated from his political mistakes.¹⁷¹ In his conclusion to this piece, Anceschi calls once more on what he considers one of the key features of Eliot and Pound’s works, that of a “poetics” going hand in hand with poetry: “la forza, il peso della poetica, come sistema di idee del poeta sul fare anche in rapporto col fare concreto.” Eliot and Pound, then, and particularly Pound, forced later poets to take their task seriously. Pound, Anceschi writes, “fu veramente un maestro” in this sense, and his lesson became

per varie generazioni non solo anglosassoni, un momento incisivo di uno sviluppo senza il quale un giovane poeta che non volesse essere un predicatore, o un venditore di cianfrusaglie, o qualche cosa di simile a un incantatore di serpenti con i suoi gesti preordinati, non poteva non fare i suoi conti.¹⁷²

And one of these “generazioni” was the generation of young poets in Italy in the sixties who, “Senza Pound [...] non sarebbero stati quello che furono, e il loro orizzonte si sarebbe ristretto, e la forza della loro costruzione ridotta”.¹⁷³ But how did this urge to innovate which was mediated by Pound and the early, “Poundian” Eliot actually emerge in poetry in Italy in the sixties? What have previous critics identified as the poetic manifestations of this intertextual dialogue?

Luciano Anceschi describes how one of the Novissimi, Nanni Balestrini, encountered Eliot's and Pound's poetry. Balestrini, after writing some adolescent poetry, read these poets with the explicit aim of training himself as a poet:

Ma ben presto Balestrini iniziò un lavoro destinato a dar consistenza al suo fare. Lesse i poeti anglosassoni, da Pound e da Eliot in poi; e tradusse certi poeti

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*

¹⁷² *ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

tedeschi da Arp fino ai maggiori di questi anni, tra cui la Bachmann, e li presentò primamente sul “Verri” nel nostro paese. Eran letture e traduzioni da poeta in vista di una poesia da fare.¹⁷⁴

The critic John Picchione also identified one way in which English-language Modernism impacts Balestrini's poetry: the “concreteness of the objects and the immediacy of the images” in Balestrini’s “Osservazioni sul volo degli uccelli” “recalls Pound’s concept of “presentation”, and indeed, Picchione adds,

Pound’s ideogrammic method is well absorbed by Balestrini. The juxtaposition of objects and events follows paratactic or asyndetic constructions that try to capture the simultaneity of perceptions and discard discursive and descriptive modes of writing.¹⁷⁵

Alfredo Giuliani, another Novissimo, speaks about Eliot's place in his *own* formation as a poet in “La poesia è una cosa in più”, saying that after discovering Rimbaud as an adolescent, which provoked a literary “shock” for him:

Appena finita la guerra, assorbiti i *Lirici nuovi* di Luciano Anceschi, lette le prime poesie di Eliot apparse in italiano, provo un altro bellissimo *choc*; scopro Dylan Thomas. In quegli anni lì, '47-'48, devo essermi detto: è troppo stupendo, il riuscire a scrivere poesie così, bisogna tentare tutto, anche se il rischio di fallire è forte.¹⁷⁶

John Picchione states that in the mid-fifties Giuliani “paid close attention to poets like Eliot, Pound and Olson”,¹⁷⁷ and Gambaro explains that

le mediate letture di Pound e Eliot, del surrealismo e di Jarry arricchiscono lo spettro delle scelte poetiche, spingendo l'autore verso soluzioni più originali e radicali” in *Povera Juliet e altre poesie* (1965).¹⁷⁸

In his introduction to *I novissimi*, Giuliani speaks of the Eliotic and Poundian dimension to yet another Novissimo's poetic formation: “Pagliarani ha messo a frutto il suo Majakovskij e il suo Brecht, e perfino il suo Eliot e un Pound demistificato e il Sandburg di *Chicago*...”,¹⁷⁹ which, Fabio Gambaro explains, helped in Pagliarani’s process of freeing himself from his poetics of the forties and early fifties.¹⁸⁰ Fabio

¹⁷⁴ Anceschi, *Il modello*, p. 262.

¹⁷⁵ Picchione, *The New Avant-Garde in Italy*, p. 149.

¹⁷⁶ A. Giuliani, “La poesia è una cosa in più”, *il verri* 11-12 (1989), pp. 13-14.

¹⁷⁷ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 83.

¹⁷⁸ Gambaro, *Invito a conoscere la neoavanguardia*, pp. 194-5.

¹⁷⁹ A. Giuliani, “Prefazione”, in *I novissimi: poesie per gli anni '60*, ed. A. Giuliani (Turin, 1965), p. 24.

¹⁸⁰ Gambaro, *Invito a conoscere la neoavanguardia*, p. 178.

Gambaro writes that yet another Novissimo, Edoardo Sanguineti, learned “la sua lezione dell’informale, di Eliot e di Pound, sconquassando radicalmente le strutture del linguaggio grazie al radicale asintattismo e al plurilinguismo”,¹⁸¹ and also drew on their “lunghi versi atonali”.¹⁸²

But this impact of Eliot and Pound was not confined to the Novissimi poets. Other poets, who were much less directly involved with the Neoavantgarde, such as Giulia Niccolai and Amelia Rosselli, were also part of this generation described by Anceschi. Antonio Porta declared that Giulia Niccolai succeeded in “riprende[re] in chiave nuova, rispetto al patéthique di Sanguineti, la lezione continua di Pound”.¹⁸³ Amelia Rosselli listed “Pound, Eliot, Dickinson, Plath. E altri, altri...”¹⁸⁴ as central to her literary *formazione*, and also declared that her linguistic experimentations were “alla Joyce”.¹⁸⁵ Rosselli's critics, too, most notably Emmanuela Tandello and Chiara Carpita have emphasized the Poundian, Joycean and Eliotic derivation of various features of her poetry, as we shall see in Chapter IV.

Luciano Anceschi's analyses, both from the sixties and from 1982, are most valuable in that they supplement Caretti, Casella, Lorenzini and Zapponi's work on the legacy of Eliot and Pound in Italy, and they furnish preliminary bases on which to build an assessment of the influence of the Modernists, not only on the Novissimi poets, but on the whole panorama of postwar experimentalism in Italy. Anceschi is also distinctive in this list of critics in that he brings together the two perspectives of Eliot's impact and Pound's impact, which were, quite artificially, treated as more or less separate phenomena by these other critics. It is also very important to remember

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁸² *ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁸³ *Poesia degli anni Settanta*, ed. A. Porta (Milano, 1980), p. 83-4.

¹⁸⁴ E. Pecora, “Un incontro con Amelia Rosselli” in D. Attanasio and E. Tandello, eds., *Amelia Rosselli*. Special issue of *Galleria*, a. 48, n. 1/2 (January-August), (Caltanissetta, 1997), p. 152.

¹⁸⁵ M. Manera, “Devianze intralinguistiche nella poesia italiana di Amelia Rosselli”, in *Trasparenze*. Supplement to *Quaderni di poesia*, eds. G. Devoto and E. Tandello (Genoa, 2003), p. 249.

that for Anceschi, as Lorenzini states, it was Pound who functioned as the “ispiratore diretto” more than Eliot, and that Anceschi considered Pound as “il tramite involontario di un contatto stimolante con le avanguardie europee”.¹⁸⁶ But the picture of the English-language Modernist *fortuna* in Italy will not be complete until we consider the role played by James Joyce.

¹⁸⁶ Lorenzini, “Eliot e i 'Novissimi'”, p. 103.

The Italian Reception of James Joyce

Whereas the most recent thorough accounts of Eliot and Pound's Italian *fortune* date from 1968 and 1976 respectively, in the case of Joyce, the portrait in the original 1974 study, *La fortuna di Joyce in Italia* by Giovanni Cianci has recently been enriched by an excellent essay by Serenella Zanotti. Zanotti's piece, which is entitled "James Joyce among the Italian Authors" (2004) is only essay-length, but is much more comprehensive and insightful than Casella's recent article on Eliot's reception. Giovanni Cianci studied Joyce's reception among critics, but did not venture into the territory of Joyce's impact on literature and the arts. Caretti and Zapponi, as we have seen, did so only minimally and rather reluctantly, and these lacunae were only partially filled by the essays dating from the 1980s by Lorenzini and Anceschi. Serenella Zanotti, on the other hand, in the case of Joyce, faces these issues head on.

Zanotti declares that James Joyce's reception in Italy began in the 1920s, with the critic Carlo Linati, whose "translations, critical acumen and influence were central in Joyce's early literary promotion in Italy".¹⁸⁷ Linati translated extracts of *Ulysses* in 1926 which were "welcomed with great excitement" and which "attracted the attention of several young Italian writers, such as Eugenio Montale, Giovanni Comisso, Giovan Battista Angioletti and Sergio Solmi, who would become the zealous propagators of Joyce's work in Italy".¹⁸⁸ Montale particularly appreciated "i tronconi mutilati di questi pezzi di vita dublinese" depicted in *Dubliners*, and this early Joycean work was also "held in high regard by the group associated with *Solaria*".¹⁸⁹ This important "Europeanist" anti-fascist journal sought models in contemporary

¹⁸⁷ S. Zanotti, "James Joyce Among the Italian Writers" in L. Geert and W. Van Mierlo, eds, *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe* (London, 2004), p. 330.

¹⁸⁸ Zanotti, "James Joyce among the Italian Writers", p. 331.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 334.

European literatures (such as Joyce, Svevo, Proust, Kafka and Mann), and counted writers such as Elio Vittorini, Sergio Solmi, Giacomo Debenedetti, Carlo Emilio Gadda and Cesare Pavese among its contributors.¹⁹⁰

Zanotti writes that when the French translation of *Ulysses* was published in 1929, “Joyce really ‘arrived’ in *Solaria*” and, according to Moravia, “for most of the writers and intellectuals who lived under the fascist regime, Joyce [became], as a man and a writer, [‘l’incarnazione dell’Europa’]”.¹⁹¹ Yet throughout the twenties, thirties and forties, a number of plans to provide a complete Italian translation all failed; Linati, Pavese and Vittorini, for example, all refused the task,¹⁹² and the publication of *Finnegans Wake* in 1939 went “almost unnoticed”.¹⁹³ Joyce’s Italian self-translation of parts of the “Anna Livia Plurabelle” section of *Finnegans Wake* was published in *Prospettive* in 1940, and Joyce claimed that the translation caused “a great uproar” among Italian writers, but according to Zanotti, “in reality, the effect was quite limited”.¹⁹⁴ Contini blamed the *Rondisti* context for this lack of response,¹⁹⁵ and after World War II, the climate of *neorealismo* was just as hostile to Joyce’s experimentations.¹⁹⁶ Joyce therefore remained, “for a long time [...] clearly out of favour”.¹⁹⁷ Interest in Joyce began to revive, just as it did for Eliot and Pound, in the early fifties, and in Joyce’s case this was led by critics such as Glauco Cambon and Giorgio Melchiori.¹⁹⁸ Giulio de Angelis finished his translation of *Ulysses* in 1950, but

¹⁹⁰ U. Eco, “Joyce’s Misfortunes in Italy”, p. 251.

¹⁹¹ Zanotti, “James Joyce among the Italian Writers”, p. 335-336.

¹⁹² *ibid.*, p. 339.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 341.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ **La Ronda** (1919-1923) was a very influential journal that “proposed classical perfection in place of experimentation, pointing to Leopardi and Manzoni as stylistic models and advocating detachment from political realities” (*The Oxford Companion*, p. 523). The literary atmosphere bred by this journal was clearly not one that would accommodate a writer like Joyce.

¹⁹⁶ Zanotti, “James Joyce among the Italian Writers”, p. 341.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 334.

¹⁹⁸ **Giorgio Melchiori** (1920-2009) studied under Mario Praz, and was an influential professor of English Literature who worked on Shakespeare, Henry James, Yeats, and Joyce. Franca Ruggieri argued that it was Melchiori who “effectively introduced Joyce and his work to Italy” through his involvement in the translation of *Ulysses* in 1960, and his work as an editor and critic (F. Ruggieri, “Preface” to *Joyce in Progress Joyce: Proceedings of the 2008 James Joyce Graduate Conference*

another ten years elapsed before it was actually published.¹⁹⁹

Serenella Zanotti states that it is only “from the mid-1950s onwards that one can really speak of Joyce’s influence on Italian writers”.²⁰⁰ Joyce's impact, however, grew at a significant rate in this period, to the extent that Joyce became a veritable “model for the Italian writers of the sixties.”²⁰¹ *Ulysses*, published in Italian in 1960, was to some degree censored, its “subversive potential”, according to Carlo Bo, somewhat “neutralised” by the translator,²⁰² yet nevertheless its publication had significant impact on the writers of the time. Zanotti defines the event as the ‘watershed’ between “old fiction, where content had pride of place, and the new formalism”, with Umberto Eco’s formalistic interpretations of Joyce’s works playing a key role in this process, particularly in the “theoretical debate on the novel of the *Gruppo 63*”.²⁰³

Zanotti writes that *Ulysses* had “remained just a myth, celebrated but very little known” for many decades, but that with its 1960 translation “it contributed to supporting the phenomenon” of the Neoavantgarde, indeed she declares that “Joyce was received among the *Gruppo 63* as an innovator, a revolutionary, an avant-garde author”.²⁰⁴ The Neoavantgarde critic Renato Barilli asserted that: “Per noi, poi, l’esempio joyciano è particolarmente significativo”,²⁰⁵ and two of the Novissimi, Alfredo Giuliani and Edoardo Sanguineti, alongside another translator, J. Rodolfo Wilcock, translated Joyce’s complete poems in 1961. We must bear in mind, however, that Joyce’s poetry is very traditional. Joyce's more radical prose techniques did, however, have an impact, as attested to by Zanotti: “with surrealism and Pound,

in Rome, eds. F. Ruggieri, J. McCourt and E. Terrinoni. (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), p. xii).

¹⁹⁹ Zanotti, “James Joyce among the Italian Writers”, p. 345-46.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 346.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*

²⁰² *ibid.*, p. 349.

²⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 351.

²⁰⁴ Zanotti, “James Joyce among the Italian Writers”, p. 352.

²⁰⁵ R. Barilli, *Viaggio al termine della parola: la ricerca intraverbale* (Milano, 1981), p. 22.

Joyce's daring technique contributed to the language and style" of Italian writers in this period. And indeed Zanotti selects, in order to exemplify this, precisely the two authors that we will be considering in depth in this thesis: Edoardo Sanguineti and Amelia Rosselli.²⁰⁶

Regarding the reception of *Finnegans Wake*, Zanotti states that one can speak of "a direct influence" of Joyce's text on the writers involved with the Neoavantgarde from the mid-seventies on, and that in this they followed Joyce down a highly experimental path.²⁰⁷ Renato Barilli identified a tendency towards what he termed "ricerca intraverbale" or "intra-verbal experimentation", which consisted of creating disruptive effects by fragmenting and recomposing words. Barilli published an anthology of such works in 1981 entitled *Viaggio al termine della parola*, and in it he hailed *Finnegans Wake* as 'Il più grande monumento di tutti i tempi di ricerca intraverbale'.²⁰⁸ In 2003, Barilli explained that this phenomenon actually intensified in the eighties:

dopo l'80, la temperatura cominciò a risalire, e proprio la poesia conobbe una fase di intensa sperimentazione, capace di affacciarsi sugli abissi che mi capitò di definire della ricerca intraverbale: in sostanza, si scopriva la grande attualità della prospettiva aperta da Joyce col *Finnegans Wake*, ovvero di una letteratura fatta di vocaboli nuovi, creati dal poeta fondendo tra loro le radici verbali di varie parole.²⁰⁹

The main reason for the interest in *Finnegans Wake* at this time was the renewed awareness, due to the republication (in *Tel Quel* in 1976) of Joyce's Italian "Anna Livia Plurabelle". Serenella Zanotti states that this text "seemed to open up new possibilities to the Italian language and was to have a great influence on the writers who were experimenting with language". Jaqueline Risset has pointed out that from the late seventies onwards, Joyce was actually "perceived as a contemporary Italian

²⁰⁶ Zanotti, "James Joyce among the Italian Writers", p. 352. Zanotti also includes Emilio Villa in this.

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 353.

²⁰⁸ Barilli, *Viaggio al termine della parola*, p. 11.

²⁰⁹ P. Giuliani, "Intervista a Renato Barilli", 18/02/2003, <http://giulyars.net/barilli.htm> [accessed 20/08/2011].

poet”, and Zanotti adds that “this is certainly true for the writers who had belonged to the *Gruppo 63*”.²¹⁰

Renato Barilli draws attention to the Wakean derivations of features of the poetry of two members of the Neoavanguardia: Alfredo Giuliani’s “jabberwocky” punning in “Invetticogia” (1964), and Giuliano Gramigna’s neologicistic *Il gran trucco* (1978).²¹¹ And Fabio Gambaro refers to the importance of Joyce for another Neoavanguardia writer, Angelo Guglielmi²¹², in his development of an oneiric “interior monologue” technique: Gambaro reports that Guglielmi, at the meeting of the *Gruppo 63* in Palermo, called upon Joyce (alongside Gadda, Robbe-Grillet, Fautrier, Pollock, Céline, Borges) as an author who used “il tratto particolare del pastiche per demistificare un reale irriducibilmente caotico”.²¹³

In Chapter IV it will become clear that Joyce certainly did function as a model of revolutionary innovation for Italian poets in this period. For Amelia Rosselli (and indeed also for Alfredo Giuliani) this began in earnest not in the late seventies as Zanotti and Risset would have us think, but rather in the sixties. And just as Luciano Anceschi was instrumental in the Italian dissemination of Eliot and Pound’s core theories and poetic approaches, another major critic, Umberto Eco, was particularly captivated by James Joyce and interrogated his poetics in a series of studies which acquired central importance in postwar literary and cultural circles.

²¹⁰ Zanotti, “James Joyce among the Italian Writers”, p. 354.

²¹¹ R. Barilli, *Viaggio al termine della parola: la ricerca intraverbale* (Milano, 1981), p.30 and 34.

²¹² **Angelo Guglielmi** (1929-) is a literary critic and television broadcaster, and was an important member of the Gruppo 63. His work *Avanguardia e sperimentalismo* (1964) was particularly significant for the Neoavanguardia, and his critical anthology *Gruppo 63. Critica e teoria*, which he edited with Renato Barilli in 2003, has contributed to the recent evaluations of this movement.

²¹³ Gambaro, *Invito a conoscere la neoavanguardia*, p. 157 and p. 75.

Umberto Eco's Role in the English-Language Modernist *Fortuna*

Umberto Eco contributed very recently to the project of defining Joyce's reception in Italy, in his short essay of 2009 entitled "Joyce's Misfortunes in Italy".²¹⁴ This is an essay which aims to set out "some free and humorous explorations, albeit troubled ones", of the reception of Joyce in Italy. The "misfortune" and "trouble" he speaks of stem from, in the first instance, ignorance or misunderstanding, and in the second instance, Fascist ideology. Included in the first set is Mario Praz who, Eco argues, is "a reader whose taste was very refined but little inclined to avant-gardism", and who condemned Joyce's language as "delinquent and delinquent", clearly the result of Joyce having "allowed himself to be tempted by 'the demon of Esperanto'".²¹⁵ Praz's statements are, for Eco, an example of "the mental confusion that Joyce produced in [Italian] culture".²¹⁶

Joyce's works intersected with Fascism in a very different way to Pound's. Pound's fascist sympathies divided Italian critics along ideological lines, but the Italian fascist critics (such as Giuseppe Biondillo) feared Joyce's philo-semitism, which was apparent in his choice of Bloom, a Jew, as the protagonist of *Ulysses*, and in various declarations that this novel was the "epopea di due razze (Israele e Irlanda)".²¹⁷ Yet while Eco's "collection of anti-Joycean imbecility" is certainly interesting, and while it adds an enlightening facet to the more sober and academic portrait drawn by Cianci and Zanotti, it is Eco's *own* role in Joyce's *fortuna* that interests us in particular here.

Umberto Eco's *Opera aperta* (1962) was a major landmark in Italian postwar

²¹⁴ U. Eco, "Joyce's Misfortunes in Italy", in *Joyce in Progress*.

²¹⁵ Eco, "Joyce's Misfortunes", p. 253.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 252.

²¹⁷ Eco, "Joyce's Misfortunes", p. 255.

criticism. The common theme to the essays that compose its first half, as we have seen, is how contemporary art and artists react when confronted with “la provocazione del Caso, dell’Indeterminato, del Probabile, dell’Ambiguo, del Plurivalente”.²¹⁸ Eco defines a strategy of creating “open” texts as a means of dealing with this plurality. The second half of the book, which was subsequently published separately as *Le poetiche di Joyce* in 1966, applies this theory to the works of James Joyce. Eco states in the preface that “si è scelto Joyce perché si è creduto di poter individuare, nella storia del suo sviluppo, il modello di una vicenda più vasta che ha coinvolto la cultura occidentale moderna”.²¹⁹ Joyce is used as a paradigm, standing for a more general phenomenon in the arts; not just for literature but also for music and the visual arts. Plurality is a core factor of the “openness” that the book's title refers to. Eco, discussing the prospect of viewing a literary work as “continua possibilità di aperture, riserva indefinita di significati”, argues that:

È superfluo qui richiamare alla mente del lettore, come esemplare massimo di opera “aperta” – intesa proprio a dare una immagine di una precisa condizione esistenziale e ontologico del mondo contemporaneo – l’opera di James Joyce. In *Ulysses* un capitolo come quello dei *Wandering Rocks* costituisce un piccolo universo riguardabile da vari angoli prospettici, dove l’ultimo ricordo di una poetica di stampo aristotelico, e con essa di un decorso univoco del tempo in uno spazio omogeneo, è del tutto scomparso.²²⁰

This multiplicity of perspectives is a particularly important factor of Joyce’s works for Eco. But it is not only Joyce, but also Eliot and Pound who feature in Eco's discussions of this feature of his “openness”. For example Eco refers to Pound's exclamation in 1921 that “every one of the thousand angles of approach to a statue ought to be interesting, it ought to have a life”.²²¹ Eco mentions Eliot as a further exemplifier of a world of multiplying cultural perspectives and opposed to a Medieval world which had a “cultura unica”:

²¹⁸ U. Eco, *Opera aperta: Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* (Milan, 1962), p.

7.

²¹⁹ Eco, *Opera aperta*, p. 7.

²²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 35.

²²¹ E. Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot, (London, 1960), p. 443.

Eliot deve scrivere una serie di note al *The Waste Land*, citando Frazer, Miss Weston e i Tarocci – e neppure a questo punto ci si orienta agevolmente all'interno di questo suo messaggio delle chiavi insospettabili.²²²

In the second section of *Opera aperta*, that which deals primarily with Joyce, Eliot and Pound are referred to relatively often, mostly either as authorities on Joyce or in a context of English-language Modernism that includes all three authors. Eco refers to Eliot's famous essay on Joyce, "Ulysses, Order and Myth" stating:

L'interpretazione data a suo tempo da T. S. Eliot è ancora valida: Joyce rifiuta la sostanza dell'*ordo* scolastico e accetta il caos nel mondo contemporaneo ma tenta di ridurne le aporie incasellandolo proprio nelle forme dell'*ordo* posto in dubbio.²²³

Eco also refers to Pound's essay on Joyce in *Literary Essays*, a collection which had been translated into Italian and published by Garzanti in 1957. Analysing Joyce's intertwining of repeating motifs within a solid structure, Eco calls on Pound's words regarding *Ulysses*:

These correspondences are part of Joyce's mediaevalism and are chiefly his own affair, a scaffold, a means of construction, justified by the result, and justifiable by it only. The result is a triumph in form, in balance, a main schema, with continuous inweaving and arabesque.²²⁴

Joyce and Eliot are also compared yet again regarding the plurality of modern experience:

La metafisica del *Finnegans Wake* ha dunque molti punti di contatto con quella dei *Quartetti* eliotiani: "Time present and time past – are both perhaps present in time future – And time future contained time past..."²²⁵

Towards the end of the book, Eco again unites Joyce, Pound and Eliot, this time on the subject of literary innovation and daring. He cites Thornton Wilder's book *Joyce and the Modern Novel* (1957) which claimed that it is unwise to live in the twentieth century with a nineteenth century mentality, and argued for facing the new preoccupations of modern life head-on. Eco states: "Joyce, Pound e Eliot sono stati i pionieri di questa nuova terra; ci hanno mostrato come l'intelligenza riduce la

²²² Eco, *Opera aperta*, pp. 285-86.

²²³ *ibid.*, p. 288.

²²⁴ Pound, *Literary Essays*, p. 406.

²²⁵ Eco, *Opera aperta*, p. 320.

paura”.²²⁶ In other words, for Eco, it was the Joyce-Pound-Eliot triad who trained our new *reader-turned-activist* to confront the challenges of the text's polysemy or “openness”.

As we have seen, Eco's work puts Joyce forward as the model of open form, but it also brings together the poetics of Joyce, Eliot and Pound. In this way Eco provides, for his Italian audience, an experience of English-language Modernism as a whole embodied in this Joyce-Eliot-Pound triad. Eco's perspectives on English-language Modernism were crucial for the members of the Neoavantgarde, and were to inform their readings of the Modernist texts in significant ways. Giovanni Cianci writes that “la cosiddetta neo-avanguardia [...] ha tratto ispirazione e conferma per le sue operazioni” from Eco's criticism.²²⁷ Indeed this is confirmed by the fact that Renato Barilli lauded Eco's focus on form in his review of *Opera aperta* in *il verri* and propounded it as a useful model: “Gli studi di Eco rivolti in questo senso meritano un pieno consenso, e anzi offrono un buon modello per chiunque altro si metta su quella stessa strada”.²²⁸

In an earlier volume of *il verri* from 1962, the same year that he published *Opera aperta*, Eco, in his “Diario minimo”, wrote a most amusing parodic piece entitled “My Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination to Reduplication with Ridecolation of a Portrait of the Artist as Manzoni”. In it he poses as a reviewer of a fictional work by Joyce, allegedly written when Joyce was teaching Triestino in a Berlitz school in Como, and recently reconstituted from the Buffalo manuscripts. The work, which is actually Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*, is analysed in the context of Joyce's other works, and considered in relation to Joyce's overarching techniques and motifs; it is even slotted into a twenty-four hour time-scale and a

²²⁶ Eco, *Opera aperta*, p. 339.

²²⁷ G. Cianci, *La Fortuna di Joyce in Italia: Saggio e Bibliografia (1917-1972)* (Bari, 1974), p. 100.

²²⁸ R. Barilli, “Umberto Eco: *Opera aperta*, Bompiani, Milano 1962”, *il verri* 4 (1962), p. 100.

framework resembling the Linati Schema. This is a riotously funny parody of academic criticism, packed full of Joycean in-jokes, and ridiculous parallels. Towards the end Eco invokes Balestrini and the other poets of the Neoavantgarde, gently mocking their project as well as our task (as critics) of assessing the assimilation of Joyce by these young poets:

E non mancherà chi – ma quanto più legittimamente! – cercherà di collegare lo stile di questo libro con le più recenti esperienze dell'avanguardia poetica: e già sappiamo che l'Editorial Ballestriños, in Spagna ne sta preparando una traduzione col titolo de *Los Novios*, per sottolineare la parentela con la raccolta poetica *I Novissimi*.²²⁹

The essay ends with a witty parody of Pound, cleverly imitating Pound's brusque critical persona as well as his vision of poetic tradition that casually spans centuries:

Ezra Pound qualche anno fa ha commentato alcuni versi di un poemetto apparso per i tipi di *Faber & Faber, La Divina Commedia*: “Di rado la chiarezza è dote del poeta, e per un vorticista come Cavalcanti troveremo sempre dieci accademici gonfi di cultura come il Burchiello. Questo vuol dire che l'Usura si annida sempre tra di noi, ma c'è sempre la lucidità di un fanopea che può salvarci. Perché dunque spendere quattro complesse parole – “dolce colore d'oriental zaffiro” – là dove sarebbe stato tanto più immediato e comprensibile il corrispondente ideogramma cinese?”²³⁰

An irreverent piece like this, published at the height of the Neoavantgarde enthusiasm for English-language Modernism, has the important role of highlighting the *comedy*, which Eco was acutely aware of, that is interwoven with seriousness in Joyce's works and that so often gets overlooked due to the complexity of texts. This, then, was an invitation to the *Novissimi* to appreciate the humour and irony that enrich Joyce's works, which would have inevitably seemed technically daunting to a group of young non-Anglophone poets.

²²⁹ U. Eco, “My Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination to Reduplication with Ridecolation of a Portrait of the Artist as Manzoni” in “Diario minimo”, ed. U. Eco, *il verri* 2 (1962), p. 150.

²³⁰ Eco, “My Exagmination”, p. 151.

Joyce, Eliot and Pound: The Triad of Models for Postwar Italian Experimentalism

What has emerged in this chapter is a strong English-language Modernist “triad” composed of Eliot, Pound and Joyce being taken up in the fifties and sixties and put to the service of innovating Italian literature. This triad is given expression in the following statement made by Alfredo Giuliani about Sanguineti's *Laborintus*:

Prima di comporre il suo mosaico Sanguineti ha aperto una serie di scelte stilistiche sul terreno franoso di tutte le avanguardie, di tutti i decadentismi anarchici e borghesi di questo mezzo secolo. Dietro e nel 'labor' c'è il futurismo, c'è Breton, ci sono Pound, Joyce ed Eliot.²³¹

This assimilation of Joyce, Eliot and Pound was carried out along the lines of their experimentalism: they were taken up as representatives of the Modernist urge to “Make it New”. Lorenzini wrote about Eliot that his major lesson was “l'arte di energizzare il linguaggio”, to “revivify” language along the lines that we discussed in the Introduction; furthermore the accounts of Pound and Joyce's *fortune* suggest that the same could be said of them. Zanotti wrote that Joyce was adopted “as an innovator, a revolutionary, an avant-garde author”, which coheres with Anceschi's statements regarding the appropriation of Pound and the early Eliot. Pound, as Anceschi writes, but also Eliot and Joyce, was “usato strumentalmente”, at the very level of his “tecniche”. These three authors are also united by the fact that they are all put forward as models of the “open” work – Eliot and Pound by Anceschi, and Joyce by Eco. This Modernist “openness”, then, which demands an experimental approach to language and an overhaul of the approach to the role of the reader, is what was adopted by experimental artists in Italy in the fifties and sixties.

This phenomenon was prompted by critics such as Luciano Anceschi and Umberto Eco who recognised in the Neoavantgarde the capacity to bring about

²³¹ Giuliani, *I novissimi*, p. 83.

radical cultural change, and was observed by critics who were members of the Neoavantgarde, such as Renato Barilli and Fausto Curi. Joyce, Pound and the “primo” Eliot, then, became models – sometimes in isolation, sometimes in pairs, and sometimes as a triad – for the Novissimi poets Sanguineti, Giuliani, Balestrini, Pagliarani, and Porta, and also for poets in the wider Neoavantgarde group, such as Angelo Guglielmi and Giuliano Gramigna, as well as for poets with a much more peripheral and/or problematic relationship to the Neoavantgarde, such as Giulia Niccolai and Amelia Rosselli. The chapters which follow will consider how this phenomenon was modulated in the case of Edoardo Sanguineti (in Chapter III) and of Amelia Rosselli (in Chapter IV).

CHAPTER III: Edoardo Sanguineti and English-Language Modernism

Edoardo Sanguineti was one of the five Novissimi and a leading member of the Neoavanguardia, but whereas this group disbanded in the late sixties, and many of its members are now little remembered, “Sanguineti's star [...] kept on rising”²³² right up until his death in 2010. As well as being a poet, novelist, playwright, translator, essayist and professor, Sanguineti engaged in day-to-day politics in Italy, serving as a city councillor as well as as a member of parliament affiliated to the Italian Communist Party. He called himself “the last of the Marxists”, and his belief in the artist's duty to play a role in society never wavered. Indeed, in 1999, he compared a poet to someone in a demonstration:

Egli agita uno straccio di parole, ignaro e cortese, non importa, ma si trova poi alle spalle, a seguirlo, e a trasformare in azione il senso delle sue povere operazioni verbali, e a caricarlo di un valore collettivo, una turba di sconosciuti, che vogliono, come si dice da tanto, e come si sogna forse da sempre, modificare il mondo, e cambiare la vita.²³³

Inge Feltrinelli relates an anecdote which demonstrates the vitality of with English-language poetry. She spent a weekend in a country house in Monferrato, during the Neoavanguardia's heyday, with Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlofsky, Edoardo Sanguineti and some of their rather inebriated companions. Feltrinelli recalls that when Sanguineti arrived and saw Ginsberg and Orlovsky getting out of the swimming pool and walking around the garden in the nude, “non manifestò la minima sorpresa e senza perdere tempo cominciò a parlare con loro di poesia globale”.²³⁴ And, she recalls, Eliot was one of the poets that they discussed:

[Sanguineti] andò avanti così tutto il giorno, passando da Dylan Thomas a Walt Whitman, da T.S. Eliot a W.H. Auden a Hölderlin. E anche quando Allen cominciò

²³² D. Sassoon, “Edoardo Sanguineti”, p. 43.

²³³ E. Sanguineti, “I santi anarchici”, in E. Sanguineti, *Cose* (Naples, 1999) p. 16.

²³⁴ I. Feltrinelli, “Edoardo Sanguineti l'impeccabile”, in *Album Sanguineti*, eds. N. Lorenzini and E. Risso, p. 88-89

a suonare il sitar, Edoardo non smise di parlare dell'importanza della poesia.²³⁵

As we have already seen, in 1957, shortly after the publication of *Laborintus*, Alfredo Giuliani wrote

Prima di comporre il suo mosaico Sanguineti ha aperto una serie di scelte stilistiche sul terreno franoso di tutte le avanguardie, di tutti i decadentismi anarchici e borghesi di questo mezzo secolo. Dietro e nel 'labor' c'è il futurismo, c'è Breton, ci sono Pound, Joyce ed Eliot.²³⁶

Much more recently, Erminio Risso made a similar declaration regarding the importance of English-language Modernism for Sanguineti's development as a poet:

Da Pound ad Eliot, da Lautréamont a Breton, da Benjamin a Gramsci – solo per fare i nomi piú noti e ricorrenti –, sono innumerevoli, ormai, gli autori messi in causa per definire, illuminandolo, il percorso artistico e critico di Edoardo Sanguineti.²³⁷

In the fifty years which separate these two statements, the importance of Eliot, Joyce and Pound for Sanguineti has almost become a critical commonplace, and yet much of the criticism in the intervening period has not been particularly thorough or far-reaching. One critical statement is particularly apt, that of David Osmond-Smith, who writes, in his monograph on Luciano Berio, that Sanguineti

spent the fifties assimilating and bringing new life to a radical (and mainly Anglo-Saxon) tradition that had found little chance to take root in Italy during the previous decades. He took his inspiration from the experiments of Ezra Pound and the early Eliot, employing a continuous flux of tense and person, or literary and colloquial styles, and of different languages to create a counterpoint of images made all the more vivid by the layout of the text, and a highly distinctive style of punctuation.²³⁸

Edoardo Sanguineti's *Laborintus* is a major landmark of the Neoavantgarde, and also of the entire canon of twentieth century Italian poetry. Sanguineti began writing it in 1951, when he was just 21 years old, completed it in 1954, and published it in 1956. Its 27 sections register a Dantean descent into what was defined in the Introduction as the *inferno* of Neo-Capitalist Italy. The societal and existential quagmire that Sanguineti perceived in an Italy beset by rapid postwar

²³⁵ Feltrinelli, "Edoardo Sanguineti l'impeccabile", p. 89.

²³⁶ Alfredo Giuliani, ref. p. 83.

²³⁷ E. Risso, "Edoardo Sanguineti, per un travestimento crudele e irriverente", in *Album Sanguineti*, ed. N. Lorenzini and E. Risso (Lecce, 2002).

²³⁸ D. Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford, 1991), p. 70. He says this is a similar position to that occupied by Berio or Maderna.

industrialisation, culture commodification, and the apocalyptic paranoia of the atomic age is figured as a “Palus Putredinis”, a putrid swamp into which the reader is plunged. The swamp embodies the state of “alienation” in society (brought about by Modernity, as explained in the Introduction), and also brings about a state of “alienation” (along the lines of that defined by Brecht/Benjamin) in the reader. Sanguineti explains the nuances of this in “Poesia informale?”, an essay published as part of the *I novissimi* anthology when he states that

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 ('Veräusserung'), sia quello derivatamente estetico ('straniamento') di marca brechtiana (mirabilmente poi ripreso, a non dire di altri, da Adorno).²³⁹

This state of psychological and societal alienation is embodied in a programme of alienation – an aesthetic of formal, syntactic, stylistic and linguistic disorder which launched a direct and explicit attack not only on the Italian lyrical tradition, but on the institution of poetry as a whole.

And indeed even just by glancing at, say, section 23 of *Laborintus*, we notice features that are very reminiscent of *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos*:

s.d. ma 1951 (unruhig) και κρινουσίv e socchiudo gli occhi
 οι πολλοί e mi domanda (L): fai il giuoco delle luci?
 και τά της μουσικής έργα ah quale continuità! andante K. 467
 qui è bella la regione (lago di Sompunt) e tu sei l'inverno Laszo veramente
 et j'y mis du raisonnement e non basta et du pathétique e non basta
 ancora και τά των ποιητών and CAPITAL LETTERS
 et ce mélange de comique ah sono avvilito adesso et de pathétique
 una tristezza ah in me contengo qui devoit plaire
 sono dimesso et devoit même sono dimesso, non umile
 surprendre! ma distratto da futilità ma immerso in qualche cosa
 and CREATURES gli amori OF THE MIND di spiacevole realmente
 très-intéressant mi è accaduto dans le pathétique un incidente
 che dans le comique mi autorizza très-agréable
 a soffrire!
 e qui convien ricordarsi che Aristotile
 sí c'è la tristezza mi dice c'è anche questo ma non questo
 soltanto, io ho capito and REPRESENTATIONS non si vale mai
 OF THE THINGS delle parole passioni o patetico per significar
 le perturbazioni and SEMINAL PRINCIPLES dell'animo; et πάθη
 tragicam scaenam fecit πάθημα e L ma leggi lambda: in quel momento

²³⁹ E. Sanguineti, “Poesia informale?”, in *Gruppo 63. Critica e teoria*, eds. R. Barilli and A. Guglielmi (Turin, 2003), p. 52.

ho capito καὶ κρίνουσιν ἄμεινον egli intende
 sempre di significar le fisiche and ALPHABETICAL NOTIONS affezioni
 del corpo: come sono i colpi
 i tormenti è come se io mi spogliassi le ferite le morti
 di fronte a te
 et de ea commentarium reliquit
 (de λ) ecc. de morte ho capito
 che non avevo (coloro che non sono trascurati!) mai
 RADICAL IRRADIATIONS ecco: avuto niente
 e ho trovato (in quel momento); che cosa può trovare
 chi non ha mai avuto niente?
 TUTTO; and ARCHETYPAL IDEAS!
 this immensely varied subject-matter is expressed!
 et j'avois satisfait le goût baroque de mes compatriotes!

The *matrix language* here is Italian, and English, French, Latin and Greek feature as *embedded languages*, displaying a *plurilinguismo* which we will see later in the chapter was inspired by the English-language Modernists' technique. The theme of suffering is embodied here as a plurilingual *leitmotif* in the French, Italian, Latin and Greek words “pathétique”, “patetico”, “tragicam scaenam” and “παθη” (and two other derivatives of this Greek word for suffering beginning with this sound “path”).

This text also displays *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* that resemble those foregrounded by the Modernists: linguistic fragments from a variety of semantic fields and sources are juxtaposed against one another; specialist terminology (e.g. from music: “andante K. 467”, from mathematics: “L ma leggi lambda”, from philosophy: “RADICAL IRRADIATIONS”²⁴⁰ and from geography: “lago di Sompunt”) and learned citations (from Metastasio, Goethe, Goldoni and a Cambridge Neo-platonist) rub shoulders with more colloquial passages (e.g. “sí c'è la tristezza mi dice c'è anche questo ma non questo soltanto, io ho capito”). And, of course, the *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* are all interconnected elements of one strategy, since very often it is the citations that introduce the foreign-language fragments as well as much of the stylistic heterogeneity.

The English-language Modernists were certainly fundamental to Sanguineti's

²⁴⁰ “Radical irradiations” was a term used by the Cambridge Neo-Platonists (cf. Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 286.).

literary and cultural formation, and were central in his development of this radical aesthetic programme. This chapter will investigate with the English-language Modernists, both in the ways in which he approached them critically in his essays, reviews and interviews, and the ways in which they figure in his creative works, particularly in his first poetry collection *Laborintus* (1956) and his collaboration with Luciano Berio, *Laborintus II* (1965). We will see that the ways in which the Modernists manifest in Sanguineti's criticism will inform our assessment of how they figure in his poetry, and vice versa. We will also see that Joyce figures less in Sanguineti's poetry than his critical engagement might suggest, that Eliot features very prominently in both his criticism and his poetry, and that Pound, whose impact Sanguineti publically side-lined, emerges, paradoxically, as the most significant presence of the three. Sanguineti himself, and indeed most critics, have stressed that it was Eliot who played the most central role in Sanguineti's poetic career, but Pound and Joyce certainly also played their part, as we shall see. Let us begin by considering the case of Joyce.

Sanguineti's Joyce

Edoardo Sanguineti: Translator of Joyce's Poetry

Edoardo Sanguineti's first public excursion into the Joycean domain was his publication of translations of three of Joyce's poems in 1961, for the Mondadori edition of Joyce's *Poesie*. This volume was a collaborative project carried out by various translators. Alfredo Giuliani, also a Novissimo, translated "Chamber Music", Alberto Rossi translated "Pomes Penyeach" and J. Rodolfo Wilcock translated the very early poems and most of the occasional poems. Sanguineti translated "The Holy Office", "Gas from a Burner" and "Ecce Puer".²⁴¹

It is well-known that Joyce's poetry is comparatively conventional, and that his linguistic and stylistic innovations reside in his prose works rather than in his poetry. Vicki Mahaffey describes the poetry as "sparse, denuded of the variable styles and elaborate contexts" of his later prose works.²⁴² She explains that Joyce's poetry represents

a wide variety of moods, from anguished nihilism or stung pride to lyrical wooing, but the range of emotion is not matched by a comparable flexibility in poetic technique. Joyce's verses are deliberately constructed, like everything he wrote, and they do manage to create some unusual local effects, many of which gather around Joyce's use of one particular word to magnetize the meaning of an entire poem, but his poems lack formal complexity or variation.²⁴³

"Ecce Puer", a late short sentimental lyric poem in four quatrains, is typically "denuded". Sanguineti does an admirable job of translating it, maintaining much of the tone, rhyme scheme and rhythm. The final stanza, for example, in Joyce's original, reads

A child is sleeping:
An old man gone.

²⁴¹ This volume was later republished as *Poesie e prose* (1992), with a new introduction by Franca Ruggieri.

²⁴² V. Mahaffey, "Joyce's Shorter Works", in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. D. Attridge (Cambridge, 2004, p. 172.

²⁴³ Mahaffey, "Joyce's Shorter Works", p.180.

O, father forsaken,
Forgive your son!²⁴⁴

This stanza, in Sanguineti's version, runs thus:

Un bimbo dorme:
un vecchio è mancato.
Perdona tuo figlio,
o padre abbandonato!²⁴⁵

Sanguineti's version is appropriately melancholic, evoking the sense of loss and melodramatic pathos that are present in the original poem. Sanguineti also conveys the alliterative effect of the last two lines, replacing Joyce's "f"s with "p"s.

The other two Joycean poems which Sanguineti translated are very different in tone and much longer than "Ecce Puer". Alberto Rossi, in his essay "James Joyce e la poesia" (1949) which was re-published as the introduction to the 1961 volume in which Sanguineti's translations appeared, describes them as

un paio di composizioni violentemente satiriche in versi sciolti, composte in occasione di brevi ritorni alla città nativa [...], che stanno a testimoniare dell'acredine del risentimento del poeta verso l'ingrata patria, e l'esuberanza verbale della sua vena vituperativa.²⁴⁶

"The Holy Office" (1904) is a defence of Joyce's artistic project, and a satirical attack directed at the Irish poets of the Celtic Revival who spurned him. Let us consider the opening passage:

Myself *unto* myself will give
This name, Katharsis-Purgative.
I, who dishevelled ways *forsook*
To hold the poet's grammar-book,
Bringing to tavern and to brothel
The mind of witty Aristotle,
Lest bards in the attempt *should err*
Must here be my interpreter:
Wherefore receive now from my lip
Peripatetic scholarship.²⁴⁷

Joyce's tongue-in-cheek and overstated archaic formulations are nowhere to be seen in Sanguineti's rather flat opening:

Io voglio dare questo appellativo

²⁴⁴ J. Joyce, *Poesie* (Milan, 1961), p. 276 and p. 278.

²⁴⁵ Joyce, *Poesie*, p. 277 and p. 279.

²⁴⁶ A. Rossi, "James Joyce e la poesia", in Joyce, *Poesie*, p. 10.

²⁴⁷ Joyce, *Poesie*, p. 260, italics mine.

a me stesso, Catarsi-Purgativo.
Ho abbandonato ogni intricata via
per tenere il manuale di poesia,
portandomi alla bettola e al casino
di Aristotele arguto il sale fino,
e perché i bardi non sbaglino adesso
io devo qui interpretare me stesso:
ora dalle mie labbra esce, attenzione,
una peripatetica lezione.²⁴⁸

Joyce uses intentionally amateurish, forced rhymes regularly throughout the poem, for example in “Like him who finds a joy at table / Pondering the uncomfortable”, which Sanguineti upgrades to a more “acceptable” rhyme: “come chi a tavola trova piaceri / rivolgendosi tra sé neri pensieri”.²⁴⁹ The farcical rhyme in “Those souls that hate the strength that mine has / Steeled in the school of old Aquinas” is stripped of its humour and becomes the banal “detestano le forze che ho acquistate / alla scuola del gran vecchio Aquinate”, and similarly in “Thus I relieve their timid arses, / Perform my office of Katharsis”, Sanguineti gives us a disappointingly neutralised version: “Catarsi esercitante uffizi ingrati / così socorro i culi timorati”.²⁵⁰

At certain points, however, Sanguineti does capture Joyce's satirical vein. One passage is particularly successful:

Or him who once was snug abed
Saw Jesus Christ without his head
And tried so hard to win for us
The long-lost works of Æschylus.
But all these men of whom I speak
Make me the sewer of their clique.

Chi nel suo letto, accucciato con gusto,
vide Gesù senza testa sul busto:
sudò non poco per restituirci ora
le opere di Eschilo andate in malora.
Ma tutti questi a cui gratto la rogna
di questa cricca mi fanno la fogna.²⁵¹

Although Sanguineti discards the faux-archaic ring contained in “snug abed”, his meter captures the spirit of the lines very well, and he displays some initiative in his

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 261.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 262 and p. 263.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 264 and p. 265.

²⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 262-65.

use of the colloquial idiomatic expressions “sudò non poco” and “andate in malora”. The final couplet here is particularly accomplished – Sanguineti inserts a deliberate Dantescan echo from Cacciaguida's prophecy about Dante's future in *Paradiso* XVII 127-129: “Ma nondimen, riscossa ogni menzogna, / tutta la tua vision fa manifesta; / e lascia pur grattar dov'è la rogna”.²⁵² The invocation of this passage from Dante is particularly fitting, as, just like Joyce's poem, this part of Cacciaguida's oration concerns the role of poetry and the stylistic choices facing a poet.

The other poem that Sanguineti translated is “Gas from a Burner” (1912), which becomes “Becco a gas”. This poem expresses what Vicki Mahaffey describes as Joyce's “pained defiance” in the face of Dublin's conservative publishers and printers who refused to print his works.²⁵³ And here, too, in much of the poem, the lightness of touch is lost in Sanguineti's at times laboured version. And so too, perhaps inevitably, is the Dublin-specific humour. The Dublin slang “I'm damned to blazes!” becomes the neutral “dannato io sia su un rogo!”.²⁵⁴ The lines: “And the foreigner learns the gift of the gab / From the drunken draggletail Dublin drab” are translated rather unimaginatively too, losing all of the local flavour as well as the alliterative effects of the “g”s and “d”s in Sanguineti's version: “e il forestiero impara l'arte di parlar fino / dalla sbronza e infangata puttana di Dublino”.²⁵⁵ But, as we found in the case of “The Holy Office”, parts of this translation, such as the poem's final lines, are rendered more successfully:

This very next lent I will unbare
My penitent buttocks to the air
And sobbing beside my printing press
My awful sin I will confess.
My Irish foreman from Bannockburn
Shall dip his right hand in the urn
And sign crisscross with reverent thumb

²⁵² D. Alighieri, *La divina commedia: Paradiso*, eds. U. Bosco and G. Reggio (Florence, 2002), p. 316-17.

²⁵³ Mahaffey, “Joyce's Shorter Works”, p. 172.

²⁵⁴ Joyce, *Poesie*, p. 272 and p. 273.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 274 and p. 275.

Memento homo upon my bum.

La prossima quaresima terrò poi squadernate
all'aria le mie natiche contrite e macerate;
presso le rotative, gemendo e singhiozzando,
il mio atroce peccato io verrò confessando.
Il mio proto irlandese di Bannockburn dovrà
immerger la sua destra nell'urna
con un segno di croce, e con pollice pio,
Memento homo di cenere sopra il sedere mio.²⁵⁶

Although Sanguineti discards the impulse for wordplay that prompted Joyce's “unbare” and “crisscross”, and he does not quite achieve Joyce's carefree tone, Sanguineti's translation of these concluding lines flows well and is witty. We also find in this passage another unmistakable Dantean nod in the use of the verb “squadernare”, which was immortalised in *Paradiso* XXXIII 85-87: “Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna, / legato con amore in un volume, / ciò che per l'universo si squaderna”.²⁵⁷

These two poems, satirising what Joyce considered the stagnant Dublin literary scene, reveal what sent Joyce into exile. As we saw above, Alberto Rossi referred to the “esuberanza verbale” of Joyce's “vena vituperativa” in these poems, which he defined as “violentemente satiriche”. Sanguineti's translations do not by any means attain comparable levels of verbal exuberance or vituperation, nor do they communicate the bitterness and comedy of his satire. The two satirical pieces present us with an overly-cautious translator who seems afraid to write “bad poetry”, and who misses the point that *intentionally bad* writing is precisely what is called for in some instances here: Sanguineti's concern to render the sense faithfully has meant that he has sacrificed much of the humour of the poem.

But Sanguineti's translations do, at times, reveal glimpses of a poet at work – and in particular they reveal his Dantescan background, and show that Sanguineti's assimilation of Joyce occurred through a Dantescan mediation, which we will

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷ Alighieri, *Paradiso*, p. 594.

discover was also the case for his absorption of Eliot and Pound. Indeed later on we will construct a veritable “triangulation” of intertextuality, featuring Dante at one point, the Modernists at another, and Sanguineti, Rosselli and their peers at a third. But these Joycean translations, despite being interesting, are relatively incidental both in Sanguineti's oeuvre as a whole, and indeed even in his engagement with English-language Modernism. And this is mainly due to the fact that the Joyce of these poems is not the Joyce that was taken up by the Neoavantgarde as a stimulus for experimentation. It was not Joyce's *poems* that were to impact Sanguineti and his peers, but rather the *poetry* contained within his late prose texts, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Sanguineti reviews Ellmann's biography of Joyce

In 1964, Sanguineti published a review of Richard Ellmann's biography of James Joyce, entitled “Il Joyce di Ellmann”,²⁵⁸ which applauds Ellmann's rich, confident and thorough account and interpretation of Joyce's life and works. Ellmann's book explicates, with great clarity, Sanguineti tells us,

il concreto contesto storico della formazione intellettuale e ideologica dello scrittore, riproponendo i termini esatti della sua prospettiva culturale, artistica e politica”,

and in so doing, he presents us with “un Joyce autentico”.²⁵⁹ This review gives us some insight not only into Ellmann's Joyce, but also into *Sanguineti's* Joyce, particularly in the opening paragraph, in which Sanguineti presents Joyce as a collector and exhibitor of the minutiae of life:

James Joyce ha assorbito nella propria opera, con fanatica minuzia, una quantità immensa della sua esperienza vissuta, trasportando di peso, o, più sovente, accortamente trasponendo in cifra, meglio che in elaborazione o in trasfigurazione,

²⁵⁸ E. Sanguineti, “Il Joyce di Ellmann”, in *Marcatré* 4-5, 1964.

²⁵⁹ Sanguineti, “Il Joyce di Ellmann”, p. 42.

dati e immagini della sua cronaca esistenziale.²⁶⁰

Sanguineti refers to the well-known anecdote of Joyce writing to his brother Stanislaus asking him to check precise details about Dublin life - the exact workings, for example, of the hospitals, the police force, and of local elections. But Sanguineti states that this information was used in Joyce's works as a springboard to move *beyond* naturalism:

L'orizzonte naturalistico, si sa, è superato da Joyce, non soltanto innalzando a complesso simbolo (o almeno a *idée-mère*, e cioè a leitmotiv) il dato immediato dell'esperienza, ma anche portando lo scrupolo al vero a un grado iperbolicamente esplosivo.²⁶¹

And this is not just “Sanguineti's Joyce”, but a more general Neoavantgarde Joyce - the one that we saw in Chapter II; the Joyce who informed the theoretical discussions about the novel at the “Gruppo 63” meeting in Palermo; the Joyce who functioned, in Italy in the sixties, as a “watershed” between old and new fiction, and the Joyce who acted as a model of “openness” not just in novels but in all artistic genres.

Sanguineti on Joyce

Various interviews provide insights into how Sanguineti considered Joyce's influence to have operated, not only on his own works, but also in the wider cultural and historical context of postwar Italy. In 1993, Fabio Gambaro asked him about his early literary discoveries, and Sanguineti described the “climate” of foreign literary imports in Italy in the fifties and sixties, in which Joyce featured prominently:

il clima generale era di attenzione a ciò che accadeva oltre frontiera: per rendersi conto di questo clima, basta guardare “il Politecnico”. Così, in quel periodo emergeva tutto un mondo letterario che era da perlustrare. C'erano da scoprire Kafka, Joyce e Proust, i quali, sebbene già in parte circolanti, non avevano ancora operato davvero, qui da noi.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 41.

²⁶¹ Sanguineti, “Il Joyce di Ellmann”, p. 42.

²⁶² F. Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti: quarant'anni di cultura italiana attraverso i ricordi di un poeta intellettuale* (Milano, 1993), p. 12.

Here we find that when Joyce was “discovered” in postwar Italy, he was considered alongside Kafka and Proust, and none of these authors, according to Sanguineti, had yet truly impacted Italian culture at that time. Sanguineti goes on to explain that in Turin these seminal foreign works often became available first in French editions, so he, for example, first read Joyce's *Ulysses* in Valery Larbaud's French translation.²⁶³ In conversation with Giuliano Galletta in 2005, Sanguineti, looking back over the twentieth century, asks:

Se noi oggi parliamo di narrazione, di romanzo, come possiamo parlare ancora di una forma ben fatta, organicamente pensata, secondo modelli consolidati, dopo Proust, Joyce, Kafka?.²⁶⁴

Joyce, then, for Sanguineti, formed part of a triad with Kafka and Proust, and was one of the key figures in the overturning of the novel genre in the twentieth century.

Fabio Gambaro mentions the “detrattori” of the Neoavantgarde, who contested the fact that the Novissimi had played a significant role in the “spvincializzazione” of Italian culture, declaring that “non c’era stato bisogno di voi per scoprire Joyce, Kafka e Proust”.²⁶⁵ Sanguineti agrees that “in fondo, ciò è in parte vero” - the Neoavantgarde actually *discovered* “pochissimo”; but, he says, it was they who had the skills and inclination to “ricavare le conseguenze di molti stimoli che, pur essendo già disponibili in Italia, non erano stati ancora meditati a fondo e utilizzati”.²⁶⁶

And here, to reinforce his point, Sanguineti discusses Moravia's own Joycean influence. Moravia, who, as we saw in Chapter II, looked to Joyce as an “incarnation of Europe”, maintained that Joyce had informed his *Indifferenti*, particularly in the use of time (“sul piano della concentrazione temporale dell'azione”). But, for Sanguineti, Moravia's limited reading of Joyce's works “gli ha [...] consentito

²⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁶⁴ G, Galletta, *Novecento: Conversazioni sulla cultura del ventesimo secolo* (Genoa, 2005), p. 49-50.

²⁶⁵ Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 99.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*

solamente una determinata fruizione dell'*Ulisse* ridotta entro una certa idea di romanzo”, and that he had lost sight of all of the other “aspetti essenziali” of *Ulysses*, such as the use of the interior monologue technique, and linguistic innovation.²⁶⁷ Sanguineti goes on to say that it only became possible to “cogliere in pieno la portata del lavoro di Joyce, utilizzandolo quindi come possibile maestro” when the “codici” and “strutture di percezione costruttiva” of the novel had changed.

A veritable “trasformazione delle strutture mentali” was what was required in order for a writer or a society to be significantly impacted by Joyce, and this was something, according to Sanguineti, that was unattainable for Moravia, but that was achieved by the Neoavantgarde.²⁶⁸ Indeed the conditions that brought about this paradigm shift in the collective unconscious are those described in the Introduction, which came about through new, radicalised (and often politicised) modes of seeing, as encapsulated by theorists such as Benjamin, Barthes and Eco. And so the “bourgeois culture”, as Derek Attridge states, that was “so effectively dismantled” by Joyce was left unscathed by Moravia, but was subjected to even more extreme processes of dismantling by Sanguineti and his peers.²⁶⁹

There was, then, a time-lag between the moment when key Modernist works were made available and the moment when they were properly absorbed by a culture that was appropriately primed. And Sanguineti explains that this phenomenon also held true for the works of Proust and Kafka. And this, again, is in keeping with what we considered in the Introduction, with Modernism acting as a *stimulus* for radical cultural theory and innovative works of art in the fifties and sixties. In France, Sanguineti explains, Proust “aveva già rotto con il romanzo naturalista ottocentesco, ma chi è stato capace di trarne veramente tutte le conseguenze è stato, molti anni

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*

²⁶⁹ D. Attridge, “Introduction” in *Joyce in Progress*, p. xix.

dopo, Robbe-Grillet.” And in Italy, although “Proust poteva servire da modello anche a Bassani e Cassola”, and Kafka “poteva agire su Buzzati o Landolfi”, it was the Neoavanguardia who took these authors and carried out a “lettura diversa e radicale, traendone tutte le conseguenze sul piano delle poetiche e dell’interpretazione”, and, he repeats, “ciò è stato possibile perché erano cambiate quelle strutture mentali e percettive di cui dicevo prima”.²⁷⁰ So, according to Sanguineti, this “lettura diversa e radicale” of the Joyce-Proust-Kafka triad which took place in the late fifties and sixties in Italy was initiated by the Neoavanguardia, and this coheres with the overall pattern of the *fortuna* of Modernist texts that emerged in Chapter II.

In an interview with Luigi Pestalozza, Sanguineti speaks of the composer Luciano Berio, with whom he had a sustained and productive collaboration over three decades, which manifested in *Passaggio* (1961-62), *Laborintus II* (1965), *A-Ronne* (1974) and *Canticum Novissimi Testamenti* (1989-90). One of the axes around which the relationship between Sanguineti and Berio revolved was their mutual regard for James Joyce. Sanguineti relates that Berio found it a struggle to develop fruitful collaborative relationships with most of the writers in Italy during the fifties and sixties: “Per Berio era impossibile trovare in poeti della tradizione, vuoi postermetica vuoi neorealistica, una possibilità di incontro che non fosse in qualche modo sfasata.” Berio, even before he met Sanguineti, “lavora[va] infatti utilizzando Joyce o Cummings” and also Eliot, Pound and Beckett, in his compositions, developing “un tipo di ricerca e un tipo di rapporto con il linguaggio” that chimed with Sanguineti’s own methods and poetics.

According to Sanguineti, Berio relished his encounter with a like-minded Italian poet:

da parte di Berio [c’è] stata una vera soddisfazione nel trovare qualcuno che poteva lavorare sul terreno del linguaggio in maniera omogenea, armonica rispetto alla

²⁷⁰ Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 99.

sua ricerca sonora.²⁷¹

Berio, in an interview, states that he met Sanguineti in 1962 “and it was 'love' at first sight.”²⁷² In another piece Berio reiterates this sentiment:

Ho sempre amato Edoardo Sanguineti di vero amore [...]. Lo amo perché è scomodo [...] È scomodo perché è graniticamente fedele alla sua vasta, antica, moderna, paradossale, ironica e realistica visione del mondo. [...] Lo amo perché la sua poesia non è poetica, non è traducibile e reca profondi segni (o le ferite) di una sacrosanta memoria individuale che è però collettiva.²⁷³

It was Umberto Eco, whom Berio “met in Milan in the mid-fifties”,²⁷⁴ who introduced Berio to Sanguineti (in the flesh) as well as to Joyce (through *Ulysses*), and it was Berio who “set Eco on the track of de Saussure's linguistics”.²⁷⁵ Eco collaborated with Berio in the composition of *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)*, which arose from their mutual interest in onomatopoeia.²⁷⁶

Sanguineti and Joyce: The Critics

What has already been written about Joyce's influence on Sanguineti? Not much, it seems. We find the occasional passing reference to Joyce, and some discussion of allusions or echoes, but no probing analysis of the impact that he had on Sanguineti's works. Pietropaoli, for example, in his book *Unità e trinità*, mentions Joyce while discussing the temporal dimension in Sanguineti's *Erotopaegnia*. Pietropaoli considers that from section seven onwards,

domina in filigrana una nozione di tempo interiore prismatico, nei cui riflessi è forse dato rivedere il modello della giornata unica dell' *Ulisse* di Joyce (al quale difatti rimanderebbe il “tramonto” finale).²⁷⁷

Joyce's use of time is indeed one of the elements of his works that has influenced

²⁷¹ L. Pestalozza, “Critica spettacolare della spettacolarità: Conversazione con Edoardo Sanguineti”, in *Edoardo Sanguineti: per musica*, ed. L. Pestalozza (Modena, 1993), p. 12.

²⁷² *Luciano Berio: Two Interviews*, eds. R. Dalmonte, B.A. Varga and D. Osmond-Smith (London, 1985), p. 159.

²⁷³ L. Berio, “Pagina di diario”, in *Album Sanguineti*, eds. N. Lorenzini and E. Risso (Lecce, 2002), p. 20.

²⁷⁴ *Two Interviews*, p. 142.

²⁷⁵ D. Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford, 1991), p. 61.

²⁷⁶ *Two Interviews*, p. 142-43.

²⁷⁷ A. Pietropaoli, *Unità e trinità di Edoardo Sanguineti: Poesia e Poetica* (Naples, 1991), p. 31.

many writers - various novelists have been said to have emulated Joyce's "modello della giornata unica": Virginia Woolf, Robbe-Grillet, Butor, Mauriac and Pinget, for example.²⁷⁸ But this passing reference to Joyce by Pietropaoli is not very useful here, and it is not fleshed out beyond this citation. There seems to be no real synthesis between *Erotopaegnia* and *Ulysses*, even in their use of time. And the "tramonto finale", with its blurring of figures and fragmenting conversation in the "luce obliqua", if it does owe anything to Joyce, would seem to owe much more to the closing section of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* in *Finnegans Wake* than to Gerty and Bloom's gushing experience of dusk in the "Nausicaa" episode of *Ulysses*.

Another Sanguinetian critic, Gabriella Sica, also mentions Joyce in her monograph, reinforcing our depiction of him as a figure at the forefront of the overturning of nineteenth century literary norms. She writes that

tutto il 900 letterario, del resto, e Joyce, Musil e Proust in prima linea, hanno centralizzato le proprie operazioni di ribaltamento delle strutture naturalistiche e rigidamente verticali del 800 per la riformulazione di una realtà paritaria nella quale tutti gli elementi trovano legittima cittadinanza.²⁷⁹

The majority of the other references to Joyce's influence on Sanguineti in the critical literature, however, occur in contexts which also include Eliot and/or Pound. This suggests that although Joyce was often considered *by Sanguineti* to be part of a Joyce-Kafka-Proust triad (or, similarly, by Sica as part of a Joyce-Musil-Proust triad), he seems to have been considered more often *by Sanguineti's critics* as part of a Joyce-Eliot-Pound triad.²⁸⁰ This began, as we saw, with Giuliani's statement just after the publication of *Laborintus* that "Dietro e nel "labor" c'è il futurismo, c'è Breton, ci sono Pound, Joyce ed Eliot, Dylan Thomas e la prosa sperimentale di Kenneth Patchen".²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Regarding Woolf, cf. R. M. Adams, *After Joyce: Studies in Fiction after Ulysses* (New York, 1977). Regarding Robbe-Grillet, Butor, Mauriac and Pinget, cf. V. Mercier, *The New Novel: From Queneau to Pinget* (New York, 1971).

²⁷⁹ Sica, *Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 26.

²⁸⁰ Both of these Modernist "triads" are, of course, common in critical literature.

²⁸¹ Giuliani, *I novissimi*, p. 83.

In general, however, the critical literature on Sanguineti focuses on Eliot and/or Pound's influence rather than on Joyce's. This balance is appropriate, and reflects the fact that Eliot and Pound undoubtedly engendered a more direct, profound and lasting impact on Sanguineti's works than did Joyce. But Joyce certainly contributed to Sanguineti's radical, experimental, and antagonistic stance *vis à vis* form, genre and language. He lurked “come possibile maestro” behind the innovations of Sanguineti and many of the other experimentalists of his day, a figure-head for the possibilities beyond naturalistic approaches to literary expression.

Some of Sanguineti's peers actually had more direct recourse to Joyce, and played a role in making Joyce's “innovazione linguistica”, which had been overlooked by Moravia, finally digestible to Italian artists. We shall see in Chapter IV how Amelia Rosselli drew on Joyce's linguistic experimentalism in her development of a programme of plurilingual portmanteau punning and idiomatic manipulation. Alfredo Giuliani, too, had much more direct recourse to Joyce's “innovazione linguistica” than did Sanguineti, in his creation of a Neoavantgarde form of *Wake*, as did Luciano Berio in his Joycean electro-acoustic sampling project “Omaggio a Joyce”. Yet although Joyce was fundamental to Sanguineti's questioning of the long-standing norms which propped up a decaying attitude to language, form and genre, nevertheless he did not provide any significant direct input into his creative writings.

Dante, Eliot, Pound: Models and Mediators

In this section we will begin to interrogate Eliot and Pound's roles as models for Sanguineti. To start with, we must discuss the fact that Eliot and Pound had a model themselves: Dante. As we shall see, Sanguineti's adoption of Eliot and Pound as models also mediates the model of Dante. Indeed this phenomenon was not only restricted to Sanguineti; many of his peers in Italy in the fifties and sixties, perhaps paradoxically, required the mediation of English-language Modernism to enable them to engage in new and interesting ways with the founder of the Italian language. In fact this Italian experience was just one instance in a wider international phenomenon, for, as Nick Havely writes, it was Eliot and Pound who "set the Dantean agenda" in the twentieth century.²⁸² David Wallace concurs, arguing that Eliot and Pound "(until very recently) defined the possibilities of artistic response to Dante on both sides of the Atlantic".²⁸³ Havely mentions Louis MacNiece, Derek Walcott and Seamus Heaney as examples of modern writers who have "read Dante through or against Eliot", and we will discover that Sanguineti can be added to this list.²⁸⁴

²⁸² N. Havely, "Dante's Afterlife, 1321-1997" in N. Havely *Dante's Modern Afterlife: Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 4.

²⁸³ D. Wallace, "Dante in English", *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. R. Jacoff (Cambridge, 1993), p. 249.

²⁸⁴ Havely, "Dante's Afterlife", p. 5. There is, of course, an extensive bibliography on the impact of Dante on the Modernists; on the Modernists' roles in the re-evaluation of Dante, and on their mediation of Dante to later authors. For overviews of the English-language reception of Dante, see *Dante in English*, eds. E. Griffiths and M. Reynolds (London, 2005) (which contains a substantial bibliography), N. Havely, *Dante's Modern Afterlife: Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney* (Basingstoke, 1998), D. Wallace, "Dante in English", *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. R. Jacoff (Cambridge, 1993). For studies of the Modernist reception of Dante, see *Dante and Modernism*, eds. D.T. Benediktson and C. del Greco Lobner, eds. *Lectura Dantis* 12, 1993, *Dante Among the Moderns*, ed. S. Y. McDougal (Chapel Hill, 1985). On Ezra Pound and Dante, see Pound's own essay "Dante" in *The Spirit of Romance* (New York, 1910), *Dante, Ezra Pound and the Contemporary Poet*, *Agenda* 34, 3-4, 1996, G. Giovannini, *Ezra Pound and Dante* (Utrecht, 1961) and S. Y. McDougal, "Dreaming a Renaissance: Pound's Dantean Inheritance" in *Ezra Pound Among the Poets*, ed. G. Borstein (Chicago, 1985). On Eliot and Dante, see T.S. Eliot's own essays "Dante" in *The Sacred Wood* (London, 1920) and "What Dante Means to Me" in *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings*, (London, 1965), D. Manganiello, *T. S. Eliot and Dante* (London, 1989), A. C. Charity, "T.S. Eliot: The Dantean Recognitions" in *The Waste Land in Different Voices*, ed. A. D. Moody (London, 1974) and S. Ellis, *Dante and English Poetry: Shelley to T. S. Eliot*

Dante as a model for Eliot and Pound

Sanguineti's earliest references to Eliot and Pound in his critical writings occur in his university thesis on Dante which he finished in 1956, the year that he published *Laborintus*, which was published as *Interpretazione di Malebolge* in 1961.²⁸⁵ One of these references in particular reveals a great deal about Sanguineti's relationship to Anglo-American Modernism - as it was in the early fifties when he wrote this thesis, and indeed as it was to endure throughout his career.

There are two passing references to Eliot, in which Sanguineti invokes him not as a poet but as a critic of Dante's works,²⁸⁶ but it is in the third and final reference to Eliot in *Interpretazione di Malebolge*, in which he also mentions Pound, that Sanguineti gives us real insight into the place of these Modernists in his literary imagination. Here, tucked away in a footnote, the young Sanguineti calls on Eliot and Pound not as critics but as poets in their own right. He writes (and this is worth citing in its entirety) that:

(Cambridge, 1983). On Joyce, see M. T. Reynolds *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination* (Princeton, 1981), J. J. Wilhelm, *Dante and Pound: The Epic of Judgement* (Maine, 1974), S. Beckett, "Dante... Bruno, Vico... Joyce" in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. R. Cohn (London, 1983), L. Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations* (Cambridge, 2001) and D. Lalor, "A Daintical Pair of Accomplishes: Joyce and Dante in the Assault on Language", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 95: 397, 2006.

There is of course also an extensive bibliography on the reception of Dante in twentieth century Italian literature. See, for example, *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, eds. M. Gragnolati, F. Camilletti, F. Lampart (Vienna, 2011), *Dante nella letteratura italiana del Novecento*, ed. S. Zennaro (Roma, 1979), Z. Baranski, "The Power of Influence: Aspects of Dante's Presence in Twentieth-Century Italian Culture", *Strumenti Critici*, I, 3 (1986), P. Kuon, *Lo mio maestro e'l mio autore. Die produktive Rezeption der 'Divina Commedia' in der Erzählliteratur der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), L. Scorrano, *Presenza verbale di Dante nella letteratura italiana del Novecento* (Ravenna, 1994), and A. Dolfi, "Dante e i poeti del Novecento", *Studi danteschi*, Vol. 58 (1986).

²⁸⁵ Sanguineti's other publications on Dante are: "Tre studi danteschi" (1961), "Lettura della Vita Nuova" (1965), *Dante reazionario* in 1992 (which includes his older criticism). For critical assessments of Sanguineti's intertextual dialogue with Dante, see C. Chirico, "Sanguineti 'Dantista'" *Per Edoardo Sanguineti: "good luck (and look)"*, ed. A. Pietropaoli (Naples, 2002), L. Bertolini, "Memoria del viaggio dantesco agl'Inferi in Pasolini e in Sanguineti" in *Letteratura Italiana Contemporanea*, IX, 23, ed. G. Petrocchi and M. Petrucciani (Rome, 1988) and R. Sperandio, *Dantean Reverberations: Four Readers of Dante in the Twentieth Century. A Study on the Dantes of Primo Levi, Edoardo Sanguineti, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney*, PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham, 2009.

²⁸⁶ E. Sanguineti, *Interpretazione di Malebolge* (Florence, 1961), p. 36 and p. 236.

converrà annotare che non piccola lezione è derivata alla contemporanea poesia in lingua inglese, pensiamo in particolare a Pound e ad Eliot, proprio dalla assidua frequentazione dei testi danteschi, in funzione della ricca varietà dello stile, di uno stile insomma che agisce non per forza di tono, con una tensione ed un livello costanti, ma che agisce in forma riflessa e punta sopra una grandissima ricchezza di scarti tonali: il che non vorremmo qui osservare, se davvero la notizia dovesse limitarsi a significare una nuova, e sia pur suggestiva, incarnazione moderna della `fortuna` di Dante; ciò che a noi importa è il vero peso critico ed interpretativo della notizia, è la misura in cui essa può riflettersi come inedito principio esegetico sopra le pagine stesse della *Commedia*, per le quali, e non sembri paradossale, sono molte volte miglior commento taluni tratti dei `Cantos` o di `The Waste Land`, che non tante pagine di psicologistiche variazioni marginali.²⁸⁷

This really is quite an extraordinary series of courageous declarations, which demonstrates that Sanguineti was not afraid to have recourse to these experimental American poets in spite of what must have been a relatively sober and traditionalist academic context. He states here that Pound and Eliot were assiduous readers of Dante and that they had recourse to Dante in particular for his “scarti tonali”, and he draws from this that they are a new, modern incarnation of Dante's *fortuna*. He concludes by making the audacious comment that their poetic works, the *Cantos* and *The Waste Land*, can in themselves be read as pieces of commentary on the *Divine Comedy*. Much later, in 1989, Sanguineti glossed this earlier statement, confirming that when he wrote this: “non pensavo primariamente, dunque, a Eliot (e a Pound) come saggista, ma come poeta, proprio”.²⁸⁸ So, not only does Sanguineti turn to Eliot as a *critic* of Dante in *Interpretazione di Malebolge*, but he also launches the creative works of Eliot and Pound as Dante criticism *in themselves*. The fact that Eliot and Pound appear so early in Sanguineti's critical writings is important, and it is also most telling that they are, at this very early stage, intertwined and inextricably linked with Dante.

²⁸⁷ Sanguineti, *Interpretazione di Malebolge*, p. 264-65.

²⁸⁸ E. Sanguineti, “Testimonianza su Eliot e Pound” in E. Sanguineti, *Cultura e realtà*, ed. E. Risso (Milan, 2010), p. 145.

A Triangulation: Dante, the Modernists and Sanguineti

In two relatively recent interviews Sanguineti confirmed his awareness of this strong link between Dante and English-language Modernism, and moreover he acknowledged the impact of the Modernist mediation of Dante on his own literary development. In the aforementioned interview with Fabio Gambaro,²⁸⁹ Sanguineti declares: "Non è un caso che io abbia amato Eliot e contemporaneamente abbia fatto una tesi su Dante",²⁸⁹ and he tells Antonio Gnoli that "Quando iniziò [...] *Laborintus* avevo al più letto il Lorca surrealista, adoravo Apollinaire, mentre Eliot mi conduceva a Dante".²⁹⁰ This makes explicit the fact that Eliot fulfilled the role of leading the young poet to Eliot's own model, Dante. This connection was to persist for Sanguineti throughout his career: Eliot and Pound remained instrumental for Sanguineti, both in their own rights and as mediators of Dante.

The interview with Fabio Gambaro contains another most illustrative passage on this topic. It occurs after Gambaro suggests to Sanguineti that the "modello anglosassone di Eliot e Pound" emerges clearly in *Laborintus*. Sanguineti's response (which ignores Pound completely) is as follows:

Eliot ebbe certamente molta importanza, e tra l'altro la sua figura depona a favore di un tipo comportamentale estremamente sobrio, dove la scrittura energica e innovativa poteva conciliarsi con un'esistenza per niente tempestosa. Ma il grande rilievo di Eliot era la sua **utilizzabilità** in rapporto alla tradizione culturale italiana: rappresentava infatti colui che **mediava Dante** nei confronti della modernità. Egli restituiva a una tradizione culturale che l'aveva perduta la grande **libertà di scrittura** offerta da Dante. Non è un caso che io abbia amato Eliot e contemporaneamente abbia fatto una tesi su Dante. Eliot **offriva un modello** che consentiva di recuperare la linea espressionistica della cultura italiana e il **plurilinguismo** messo in evidenza da Contini.²⁹¹

The key words here sum up what we have been discussing thus far, are: 1) "**utilizzabilità** in rapporto alla tradizione culturale italiana": Eliot provided an actual stimulus where the majority of Italian culture was stagnant, 2) "**mediava**

²⁸⁹ Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 24.

²⁹⁰ Gnoli, *Sanguineti's Song*, p. 168.

²⁹¹ Sanguineti, "Testimonianza su Eliot e Pound", p. 24, emphasis mine.

Dante nei confronti della modernità”: Eliot “mediated” Dante to twentieth century writers, 3) “restituiva [...] la grande **libertà di scrittura** offerta da Dante”: Eliot demonstrated the freedom with language and style that Dante had shown was possible, and 4) “offriva un **modello**”: Eliot provided a model that would lead them back to the “linea espressionistica” in Italian culture, and, in particular, to the technique of 5) “**plurilinguismo**”, which was delineated in the Introduction as one of the axes along which we will assess the Modernist impact on Sanguineti and Rosselli.

On the topic of “utilizzabilità”, Sanguineti speaks, in his 1989 essay “Testimonianza su Eliot e Pound”, of

quella via che Eliot aveva aperto per condurci, come nessun altro, a ritrovate [sic] un Dante nostro contemporaneo – e non soltanto a livello esegetico, ma a livello, anche, e forse soprattutto, direttamente operativo.²⁹²

He then goes on to say, and in this instance he includes Pound – albeit parenthetically – in the discussion:

attraverso Eliot (e Pound), Dante ritornava in modi assolutamente nuovi, a presentarsi come un grande esempio praticabile di scrittura, come un *auctor* sperimentabile e, *encore un effort*, come un autorizzatore di scrittura pluristilisticamente sperimentale (Spitzer e Contini all'occasione aiutando, la loro parte).²⁹³

And here Sanguineti mentions another of the axes of our investigations that we discussed in the Introduction, that of *pluristilismo*.

Sanguineti's claim here - that Dante was only taken up effectively by Italian poets in the fifties and sixties - coheres with what he stated about the changes in the "strutture mentali" during that period which allowed Modernism to be assimilated in a new way. For Sanguineti, Italy was only really "ready" to learn from Dante and the Modernists after World War II. Others would, of course, argue with Sanguineti's

²⁹² *ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁹³ *ibid.*, It was not only the critics Gianfranco Contini and Leo Spitzer who facilitated a renewed engagement with Dante in the twentieth century, alongside Eliot and Pound. Erich Auerbach and Ernst Robert Curtius also contributed to the re-evaluation of Dante at this time, and they too were instrumental in forging this new Dante whose “utilizzabilità” was recognised by successive generations of poets.

dismissal of pre-World War II Dante-inspired literature in Italy, but he is right, at least, to say that with the Neoavantgarde there was a decisive turning point in both the *intensity* and in the *mode* of engagement with Dante. And so, in the fifties and sixties, Eliot's declaration that "the poetry of Dante is the one universal school of style for the writing of poetry in any language" and that "there is no poet in any tongue - not even Latin or Greek - who stands so firmly as a model for all poets", was to have particular resonance among Italian authors.

Dante, then, served as a model for Eliot (and for Pound, although he was somewhat side-lined by Sanguineti in these statements). These two, in turn, through their resuscitations of Dante, acted as models for Italian poets in the second half of the twentieth century, mediating their *own* Dantescan model to them, and so, together, Dante and the Modernists instigated a linguistic and stylistic resuscitation in literature. This re-evaluated Dante was mediated to a whole generation of modern poets via Eliot, not only to the Novissimi and to the poets and artists (directly or peripherally) associated with the Neoavantgarde, but also to artists who do not fit into this experimental tradition at all, such as Mario Luzi (with his staging of the *Commedia*). It is fascinating, and also, perhaps, somewhat ironic, that it took a foreigner to free the Italian poetic language and to lead Italian poetry back to Dante, who is at the very root of their literary heritage. Let us now move on to the main locus of Sanguineti's intertwining influences from Eliot, Pound and Dante – *plurilinguismo*, after which we will consider *pluristilismo*.

Sanguineti and Plurilinguismo

*I shall have to learn a little greek to keep up with this
but so will you, drratt you.*²⁹⁴

Gabriella Sica perceives, in Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo*, “mezzo secolo di avanguardia, ma [...] soprattutto, Pound, Eliot, e anche Dante (di cui, non a caso, Sanguineti è attento critico) e Folengo”.²⁹⁵ In order to evaluate the impact of Eliot and Pound on Sanguineti's development of a plurilingual mode, we must first discuss *plurilinguismo* in Dante, where the twentieth century concept of *plurilinguismo* finds its origin. We will then look at Eliot and Pound's own plurilingual techniques, before turning to Sanguineti himself. In this way we will be better equipped to examine Sanguineti's approach to *plurilinguismo* – first his critical statements on the plurilingual mode, and then how he applies it in his literary works.

Dante's *Divina Commedia* is famous for its *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*. Zygmunt Barański, in a very recent essay, describes the *Commedia's plurilinguismo* as “the most evident formal hallmark of its outstanding *novitas*.”²⁹⁶ The term *plurilinguismo* was first used to describe Dante's poetry by Contini in 1951. The *plurilinguismo* of the *Commedia*, for Contini, was pitted aggressively against Petrarch's *monolinguisimo* in his famous tract *Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca*. Alfonso Berardinelli describes these as two Continian *models*. The “modello-Dante” consists of “plurilinguismo, pluralità di toni, interesse teorico, sperimentaltà” and is governed by “il principio della commistione, dell'espansione, il dinamismo narrativo, la mimesi realistica, l'architettura strutturante”.²⁹⁷ The “modello-Petrarca” is “tutto il

²⁹⁴ E. Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, (New York, 1996), p. 770. I will refer to this edition parenthetically in the body of the text from now on using the following notation: (C 770).

²⁹⁵ G. Sica, *Edoardo Sanguineti* (Florence, 1974), p. 37.

²⁹⁶ Z. Barański, “The Roots of Dante's Plurilingualism: 'Hybridity' and Language in the *Vita Nuova*”, in *Dante's Plurilingualism: Authority, Knowledge, Subjectivity*, eds. S. Fortuna, Sara, M. Gragnolati, J. Trabant (London, 2010), p. 101.

²⁹⁷ Alfonso Berardinelli, “Il fantasma di Petrarca” in *Un'altra storia: Petrarca nel Novecento italiano*,

contrario”: “unilinguismo e unità di tono, assenza di terminologia teorica, nessun esperimento”, and is governed by

il principio della riduzione, della selezione, il circoscrivere la tematica, il depurare la lingua, la specializzazione moderna del genere lirico (l'io monologante, l'assoluto emotivo-melodico, un mondo visibile che è proiezione diretta degli stati psichici, ecc)²⁹⁸

and Nicola Gardini adds that Contini's Petrarch was “idealistico”, whereas his Dante was “realistico”. Andrea Cortellessa has called these “due sistemi linguistici e poetici”, and sees that as a result of Contini's writings, Dante and Petrarch have been perceived as dramatically “antitetici” by the majority of readers and writers since 1951.²⁹⁹ Contini's oppositional definitions of Dante's *plurilinguismo* and Petrarch's *monolinguismo* dictated and shaped much of the criticism on these two poets and on their legacies among poets for many decades, and have only recently begun to be re-evaluated in earnest, as we shall see in due course.

Barański, in his recent essay cited above, describes Dante's *plurilinguismo* as

the experimental, theoretically self-reflective, and stylistically, structurally, and linguistically eclectic character of the *Commedia*, in which the highest forms of classical oratory merge with the incomprehensible splutterings of demons.³⁰⁰

This definition includes what we will define in a subsequent section of this chapter as *pluristilismo* (i.e. the mingling of *styles* rather than of *languages per se*). And, Barański explains, the term is also sometimes applied even

more loosely to Dante, as it has been to medieval literature in general, to highlight the problems and tensions arising from the contacts between Latin and vernacular, as well as those stemming from the relations between the different vernaculars.³⁰¹

But, as we explained in the Introduction, the term *plurilinguismo* is used in this thesis to refer more specifically to the co-existence of different *languages* (whether national or regional) in one text.

atti del convegno di Roma, ed. A. Cortellessa (Rome, 2004), p. 37-38.

²⁹⁸ N. Gardini, “Un Petrarca che non c'è”, in *Un'altra storia*, p. 37.

²⁹⁹ A. Cortellessa: “Petrarca è di nuovo in vista”, in Cortellessa, *Un'altra storia*, p. iv.

³⁰⁰ Barański, “The Roots of Dante's Plurilingualism”, p. 101.

³⁰¹ *ibid.*, See p.11 of Baranski's essay for a bibliography on *plurilinguismo* in the middle ages, and the extensive general bibliography about Dante and *plurilinguismo* at the end of this book (i.e. *Dante's Plurilingualism*).

Dante made the bold decision to write in the vernacular rather than in Latin, and onto the base of his Florentine mother-tongue (the *matrix language*) he grafted many other linguistic features (the *embedded languages*). The language of the *Commedia*, with its matrix of Dante's contemporary Florentine, is, as Barański explains, "enriched by and blended with Latinisms, Gallicisms, neologisms, regionalisms, [and] other foreign words."³⁰² Barański wrote in an earlier essay that Dante "struggled against the constraints of the Babelic diaspora",³⁰³ and felt "trapped" both by "the 'vertical' dialectic between Latin and vernacular" and by the "'horizontal' opposition[s]" between the different Romance languages and between the many "discrete regional" vernaculars within them.³⁰⁴ He goes on to surmise that Dante's wish "to transcend Italy's regional plurilingualism was born from the experience of his exile, and was expressed as a desire for linguistic unity to counter the surrounding political factionalism", an approach that could be said to be paradoxical. This embedding of regionalisms and foreign words onto his mother-tongue *matrix language* was, as we shall see, a technique which was taken up (with consciousness of its Dantescan inheritance) by Eliot and Pound (and indeed by Joyce), and also, in turn, by Sanguineti. But the role of *plurilinguismo*, and the mechanics of its use, was modulated in different ways by each poet.

English-Language Modernist Plurilinguismo

Many of the anglophone Modernists engaged in intratextual code-switching,³⁰⁵ creating poems and novels that were in many ways akin to what Bakhtin has termed (regarding the Medieval macaronic tradition) "intentional hybrid" texts.³⁰⁶ Steven

³⁰² Barański, "The Roots of Dante's Plurilingualism", p. 101.

³⁰³ Baranski, "'Significar *per verba*': Notes on Dante and plurilingualism", in *The Italianist* 6 1986, p. 5.

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁰⁵ "Code-switching" is a socio-linguistic term for moving between languages within the same discourse.

³⁰⁶ T. Hoenselaars, "An Introduction" to *English Literature and the Other Languages*, eds. A. J.

Kellman speaks of Hilda Doolittle, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound “plait[ing] their texts with swathes of Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, Gaelic, Chinese and Sanskrit”.³⁰⁷ Eliot's *The Waste Land* is an extreme example of this technique; the densely polyglot concluding lines of the poem, for example, move between Italian, Provençal, French, Sanskrit:

I sat upon the shore
 Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
 Shall I at least set my lands in order?
 London Bridge is falling down falling down
 Poi s`ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon – O swallow swallow
Le prince d`Aquitaine à la tour abolie
 These fragments I have shored against my ruins
 Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
 Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
 Shantih shantih shantih

Marjorie Perloff is one of the foremost critics on this aspect of Modernism. In *Unoriginal Genius*, which we mentioned in the Introduction, she speaks of the “network of foreign allusions in Eliot's *The Waste Land*” and identifies the role of the “foreignness” as being to “heighten the authenticity, as well as the exoticism, of the allusion in question”.³⁰⁸ Perloff, referring to the section of the poem just cited, writes:

When, for example, Eliot cites, near the end of *The Waste Land*, Gerald de Nerval's sonnet “El desdichado,” “Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie” (The prince of Aquitaine at his broken tower), as an analogue to the poet's own sense of dispossession, the French original is designed to give the reference a mysterious aura as well as a certain distance, as if to say, my immediate feelings can best be expressed in the words of this remarkable and enigmatic nineteenth-century French poet.³⁰⁹

And Perloff cites Craig Raine, who says: “Aurally the range of registers here introduces us to the auditory equivalent of the Silk Road and the spice trail. The exotic is in our mouths and in our ears”.³¹⁰ Some of the foreign lines, in fact, continues Perloff, are “more epideictic than integral to the poem's meaning”, in that not the *meaning* of the passage but rather its “foreign aura” (which contributes a

Hoenselaars and M. Buning (Amsterdam, 1999), p. xii.

³⁰⁷ S. Kellman, *Switching Languages: Translingual Writers Reflect on their Craft* (London, 2003), p. xvii.

³⁰⁸ Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius*, p. 124-25.

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 125.

³¹⁰ *ibid.*

“rhetoric of ceremony”) would be lost if it were translated.³¹¹

Pound's *Cantos* are also famously plurilingual, and, as we shall see, more of the actual *meaning* of the texts would be lost through translation. In Pound's Canto VII, the English matrix is embedded with fragments of Greek, Old French, Provençal, modern French, Italian and Latin – many of the same languages used by Eliot in *The Waste Land*:

ELEANOR (she spoiled in a British climate)
“Ελανδρος and ‘Ελεπτολις, and
poor old Homer blind,
blind as a bat,
Ear, ear for the sea-surge;
rattle of old men's voices.
And then the phantom Rome,
marble narrow for seats
"Si pulvis nullus" said Ovid,
"Erit, nullum tamen excute."
Then file and candles, e li mestiers ecoutes;
Scene for the battle only, but still scene,
Pennons and standards y cavals armatz
Not mere succession of strokes, sightless narration,
And Dante's "ciocco," brand struck in the game.

Un peu moisi, plancher plus bas que le jardin.

"Contre le lambris, fauteuil de paille,
"Un vieux piano, et sous le baromètre ..."³¹²

While Eliot used italics to signal the “foreignness” of most of his inserts, Pound has, here, dispensed with them completely. Perloff sees Pound's *plurilinguismo* in the *Cantos* as being “of a very different order” from that of *The Waste Land*.³¹³ In Pound, the foreign fragments are not simply used to lend authenticity and exoticism as they were in Eliot. Perloff writes that

If Eliot carefully embeds the foreign, usually literary allusion inside what is of course an English poem, Pound produces a multiform text whose language layers intersect so as to create the meaning of a given passage.³¹⁴

For Perloff, Pound's “astonishing blend” of languages “creates a wholly distinctive verbal texture”, and she draws attention to points in the *Cantos* where the language

³¹¹ *ibid.*

³¹² Pound, *Cantos*, p. 24.

³¹³ Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius*, p. 126.

³¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 128.

registers change gear, which often accompany an “abrupt” shift in tone or “language register”.³¹⁵ And as such Pound is using what he learned from Dante about “scarti tonali”, employing the technique of *plurilinguismo* to facilitate his constantly shifting stylistic register. This differentiates Pound from Eliot, who, in *The Waste Land*, “embedded” his foreign language fragments into a more stylistically cohesive and emotionally coherent text and produced fewer dramatic and abrupt tonal shifts.

We have identified divergences in the roles played by *plurilinguismo* in *The Waste Land* and in the *Cantos*, but for both poets, the impulse to develop a plurilingual mode was a symptom of the Modernist collapse of faith in language: the crisis of language brought about by Modernity that was described in the Introduction. Pound explained one root of the linguistic alienation which plagued his era in *The ABC of Reading*:

The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is CAPABLE of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension.³¹⁶

The “intentional hybrid” text of *The Cantos* and *The Waste Land* are Pound and Eliot's poetic responses to this linguistic crisis, and part of a wider strategy which also included *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*. The aim of their recourse to fragments of foreign languages and cultures was to attempt to revivify (or “energizzare”) the deadened poetic idiom of the day: they strove towards what Kellman calls a “a synoptic vision” that would be capable of transcending “the limitations of any particular language”.³¹⁷

In this, the Modernist poets' motivations were not very different from Dante's, and indeed they were also similar to Joyce's. Samuel Beckett, in “Dante... Bruno, Vico... Joyce”, wrote that both Dante and Joyce “saw how worn-out and threadbare

³¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 128.

³¹⁶ C. Brooke-Rose, *A ZBC of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley, 1971), p. 25.

³¹⁷ S. Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination* (London, 2000), p. 16.

was the conventional language”; “standard” English for Joyce and Latin for Dante.³¹⁸ These literary media did not furnish them with adequate expressive possibilities, and each set himself the task of finding or indeed of inventing a radically new vernacular. Dante, as we saw earlier, wished to “transcend Italy's regional plurilingualism” and write a work that would encapsulate his “desire for linguistic unity to counter the surrounding political factionalism”.³¹⁹ Joyce, too, strove to create a language which was “above all languages”. And, indeed, this desire for a supranational language “echoes the aspirations in Dante’s treatise on language, the *De vulgari eloquentia*, in which he argues for the supremacy of an illustrious super-regional vernacular over Latin”.³²⁰

Needless to say, Eliot and Pound were writing in an age that was politically, socially and linguistically different to Dante's, but, nevertheless, the plurilingual facet of their depictions of the modern *inferno* also stem from a desire to “transcend” linguistic fragmentation and alienation. Eliot and Pound's polyglot indictments of the decay and degeneration inherent in Western civilization in the early twentieth century attempt to piece together the ruins of our post-babelian world. This has a transcendent, redemptive potential for Pound and Eliot, as, indeed, it did for Dante. Sanguineti inherits much of the technique and spirit of *plurilinguismo* from Dante, Eliot and Pound, and applies it in his attempts to encapsulate the *inferno* of Neo-Capitalist Italy. But, as will become apparent, this transcendent, aspirational quality is lost in Sanguineti's Neoavantgarde refashioning of the Medieval and Modernist plurilingual mode.

³¹⁸ S. Beckett, “Dante... Bruno, Vico... Joyce” in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. R. Cohn (London, 1983), p. 30.

³¹⁹ Baránski, “Notes on Dante and Plurilingualism”, p. 8.

³²⁰ D. Lalor, “A Daintical Pair of Accomplsses: Joyce and Dante in the Assault on Language”, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol 95, no. 397. 2006, p. 313.

Sanguineti's Plurilinguismo: In Theory

Sanguineti's *Laborintus* is densely polyglot. At the beginning of this chapter we looked at section 23, which contains fragments of English, French, German and Greek scattered or embedded throughout the Italian matrix. John Picchione describes *Laborintus* as a “plurilinguistic, babelic text” in which

fragments of sentences, quotations from foreign languages (English, French, German, Greek, Latin), neologisms, scientific terms, and segments of banal conversations are assembled in a montage that indiscriminately combines the language of erudition with that of the colloquial.³²¹

This description closely resembles those we have seen for Eliot and Pound, and, indeed, also calls to mind Barański's description of the language of the *Commedia* and it includes a description of Sanguineti's *pluristilismo*, which we will consider separately.

But has Sanguineti merely imitated the Modernist plurilingual technique, without doing anything new with it? Amelia Rosselli certainly thought so. Using her own genuine and biographically determined *plurilinguismo* as a platform from which to criticise the Novissimi, Rosselli accused them of “ripetere quasi in identico modo gli sperimenti” of Eliot, Pound, Joyce and Cummings.³²² Although Rosselli admired the plurilingual techniques used by Eliot and Pound, she deemed that when this device was used by Sanguineti it was utterly outmoded, simply “il solito *pastiche* semicasuale di moda ormai da cinquant'anni in ogni paese dell'Occidente”.³²³ Rosselli reiterated in an interview in 1977 that the Gruppo '63 “usano tecniche superatissime”.³²⁴

But was Amelia Rosselli right? Has Sanguineti simply appropriated and reused the Modernist technique of *plurilinguismo*, or has he recycled this device for

³²¹ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 115.

³²² A. Rosselli, “L'accusa di provincialismo turba troppo gli italiani” in A. Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, ed. F. Caputo (Novara, 2004), p. 79.

³²³ A. Rosselli, “Wirrwar” in *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 100.

³²⁴ Pecora, “Un incontro con Amelia Rosselli”, p. 153.

his own era, changing the mechanics of the plurilingual collage and modifying the role and function of the foreign-language fragments which are strewn throughout *Laborintus*? Thinking back to the Introduction, we will remember that, following Benjamin, Barthes and Perloff, we determined not to assess Sanguineti's recourse to the Modernists in terms of overcoming "influence" or of striving for "originality", since these modes have become redundant. And what will become clear in the analysis of *Laborintus* and *Laborintus II* that follows is that Sanguineti's response to the Modernists is, as Linda Hutcheon terms it: "double-coded".³²⁵ Sanguineti "questions the available modes of representation" (in this case those of the Modernists) whilst simultaneously "recognizing that [he] must still employ these modes": Sanguineti both "relies on" and "exploits [Modernism's] styles, codes and approaches".³²⁶ But whereas the Modernists were "nostalgic" in their own use of past forms, Sanguineti uses them with "ironic distance" - in line with what Hutcheon considers the Postmodern intertextual strategy of "parody".³²⁷ Umberto Eco, in his "Reflections on *The Name of the Rose*" agrees that the Postmodern artist must *parodise* and *ironise* past forms, simultaneously *employing* them and *undermining* them.³²⁸

But before taking a more sustained look at the plurilingual practice in *Laborintus* and demonstrating its novelty (and indeed, paradoxically, its *intentional* derivativeness), we should turn to Sanguineti's recent essay "Il plurilinguismo nelle scritture novecentesche", published in *Il chierico organico* in 2000, which will shed light on the "theory" of Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo*. As we shall see, this essay corroborates and clarifies many of the arguments that we have made thus far regarding Dante, Eliot and Pound's roles as models for Sanguineti, particularly in his

³²⁵ Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 188.

³²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 188-89.

³²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 189.

³²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 195. Allen is citing Eco's 1985 essay "Reflections on *The Name of the Rose*".

development of a technique of *plurilinguismo*.

Sanguineti begins by discussing Dante's *plurilinguismo*, referring to Contini's assessment that we discussed above, which pitted Dante as the model of *plurilinguismo* against Petrarch as the model of *monolinguisimo*. Sanguineti explains that Contini acknowledged Dante as the ancestor of all *plurilinguisti*, and specifies that Dante's *plurilinguismo* did not simply involve inserting fragments of dialect into sections of the *Commedia* – which he, of course, *did* do,³²⁹ but that this was just one aspect of Dante's assault on *monolinguisimo*. Sanguineti writes that Dante in fact practiced “un onnivoro rimescolamento stilistico (non lessicale soltanto, per carità, s'intende, ma sintattico e tonale, topico e tematico, sconfinatamente),”³³⁰ and that Dante “impiega tutte le pluritonalità disponibili.”³³¹ Sanguineti, here, is using the wider definition of *plurilinguismo* that we saw used by Barański. Sanguineti then makes the link between Dante's *plurilinguismo* and that of Modernism:

E qui, al nome di Dante, aprendoci davvero, finalmente, alla condizione moderna, dovremmo associare [...] il modernismo nel suo complesso, massimamente avendo riguardo, anche più che allo sviluppo della scrittura di Joyce, ai grandi esemplari poetici procurati da Eliot e Pound.³³²

Between Dante and the Modernists, he continues, there was a kind of transfer, a “trapasso perfettamente e documentatamente legittimabile e legittimato”,³³³ which we have indeed documented, to some extent, above.

Sanguineti then presents us, in a “piccola galleria antologica”, with various manifestations of plurilingual tendencies from the first two decades of the twentieth century; the “avanguardie storiche”, using the poetry of Lucini, Gozzano, Govoni and Soffici as examples. He states that this “discorso”, set in motion by the historical avant-garde was “quasi in geometrico ricorso, [...] ripreso dalle nuove avanguardie”

³²⁹ For example when Virgil addresses Guido da Montefeltro in Lombard.

³³⁰ E. Sanguineti, “Il plurilinguismo nelle scritture novecentesche”, in *Il chierico organico*, ed. E. Risso (Milan, 2000), p. 284

³³¹ Sanguineti, “Il plurilinguismo”, p. 285.

³³² *ibid.*, p. 286.

³³³ *ibid.*

in the fifties and sixties. And it was at that stage, he says, that “le sperimentazioni di un Eliot e di un Pound” could finally “riconduurre a Dante”. Eliot and Pound led the Italian poets – those who were open to this radical modernisation - to Dante's “mistilinguismo primario e originario” and to a “pratica scrittoria che mira a liquidare, senza più remore, le frontiere del poetese” (he defines “poetese” earlier in the article as the kind of lyrical language that was typical in poetry, particularly, at that time, in the poetry of the *ermeticì*). With this series of declarations, Sanguineti confirms the importance and nature of the triangle that we defined above in the section on “Models and Mediators”: a triangle with Dante, the Modernists, and the Neoavantgarde at its three points. Crucially, he says, everything was “radicalmente modificato, per non dire sconvolto” by the Neoavantgarde.³³⁴

Sanguineti then moves on to discuss Eliot's *plurilinguismo*, explaining that in the *The Waste Land*, from the epigraph right through to the final lines of the poem, there are foreign-language fragments *embedded* into the English *matrix*. Sanguineti turns to the (by now familiar) closing section of the poem which Massimo Bacigalupo has defined as the “celebre rompicapo poliglotta”, and which, he says, completes the multilingual “framing” (“incornicia[n]te”) device. The polyglot riddle, says Sanguineti, is a “squisito paradosso” composed of “tessere [...] scompost[e]”.³³⁵ It is

una professione di poetica, caotica quanto si vuole nella modalità, quanto nitida, però nella sostanza: “These fragments I have shored against my ruins” come raccolta di frammenti, adunati, ammucchiati, serrati, a resistere nel sogno di un ordine possibile, per le proprie terre, per questo dantesco “paese guasto” [...] trasferito, in spaesamento mitico, presso quel re che è lì, appunto, a pescare sulla riva, con l' arida pianura alle sue spalle.

This famous passage of Eliot's, then, for Sanguineti, is a declaration of poetics, chaotic in its modalities but clear in its substance: it is a gathering of fragments in order to hold back the chaos. Calling Eliot the “miglior poeta”, after Baudelaire, of “città irreali”, Sanguineti says that:

³³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 294.

³³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 295.

Di fronte al tramonto dell'Occidente, disperatamente tentando di arrestarne la frana, [Eliot] fa argine, come può, con i lacerti culturali, raccolti dovunque sia possibile raggiungerli, in un mosaico che risponde, pietruzza con pietruzza, a un disegno malinconicamente inconsolabile, ma nitido e meditato.³³⁶

Thus, for Sanguineti, Eliot “shore[s his] ruins” and erects a mosaic of salvaged cultural fragments as a sort of dike, and the end result is not chaos but “tanto nitido, tanto meditato”. Although much of the essay focuses on Eliot rather than Pound, Sanguineti does stop at one point to reflect on Eliot's “dedicatoria a Ezra Pound, 'il miglior fabbro',³³⁷ and to remind us that one of the many lessons which Pound taught Eliot is the importance of “l'infrazione del monolinguisimo materno”; thus Pound's place in this context is not completely ignored by Sanguineti.

Sanguineti insists that in order for the “'sole nero' del caos linguistico” to mark the sky in an effective way in Italy we had to wait until the second half of the twentieth century. This re-echoes his statements regarding the uptake of Joyce during this period that we discussed above, and Sanguineti also stresses once more that it was in this period that the “ritorno a Dante come a modello attivo e prossimo e concretamente fabbrile” became possible.³³⁸ Sanguineti then moves to a direct discussion of the place of the Neoavantgarde in this context. The “ritorno” to Dante, Sanguineti specifies, was “praticato dal mistilinguismo novissimo, infine degli anni cinquanta e sessanta. Di questo, chi vi parla porta qualche responsabilità personale”.³³⁹ So, the Novissimi had recourse to Dante as an active model, and this manifests in their experiments with “mistilinguismo”, and Sanguineti himself claims a certain amount of responsibility for this mediation of Eliot and Pound's plurilingual Dante to the other members of the Neoavantgarde. And, by quoting and agreeing wholeheartedly with Bacigalupo's statement that: “Senza questi `frammenti`, e le analoghe combinazioni dei `Canti` di Pound, chissà se la stessa poesia di Sanguineti

³³⁶ *ibid.*

³³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 296.

³³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 296.

³³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 296.

sarebbe quello che è”, he confirms our previous estimation of the impact of Eliot and Pound's *plurilinguismo* on his own creative writings. Sanguineti then states, bringing Pound firmly into his conclusion:

per esercitare violenza sopra il “parlar materno”, per nuovo paradosso, Eliot e Pound agirono mediatamente, come era naturale nel nostro “paese guasto”, attraverso Dante, riconducendoci a Dante, e dunque, per via interna, diciamo così, attraverso altro viaggio e, quasi, altra *nekyia*.³⁴⁰

Drawing his article to a close, Sanguineti writes, rather momentously, that the difference between his technique and Eliot's is that

[io] non raccoglievo e rimescolavo frammenti per frenare una rovina, ma per mettere a nudo, rovinosamente, rovine su rovine. Ero un uomo in rivolta, e nell'età atomica, ormai. E il mistilinguismo che sperimentavo rispondeva a un'idea di poesia come anarchia. Anzi, e piuttosto, come rivoluzione.³⁴¹

So Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo* was not an attempt to erect a protective dike out of the ruins like Eliot's was: it was an act of anarchy, of revolution - an attempt to *expose* and *revolt against* the nature of our ruined civilization and the ruins of its past.

Sanguineti's Plurilinguismo: In Practice

As Sanguineti himself explained in his essay on *plurilinguismo*, Eliot's technique of creating a multilingual collage to hold back the deluge of fragments is overturned in *Laborintus*. Sanguineti also mentions this departure from the Eliotic model in an interview with Cambon, saying that what operated “in una direzione metafisico-religiosa” in Eliot, in *Laborintus* emerges “in una dimensione rovesciata” with a “valenza, quindi, 'degradata e degradatoria’.”³⁴² For Sanguineti, any attempt to hold back the deluge would be futile; the Modernist technique simply cannot perform this function in Neo-Capitalist Italy.

The foreign language fragments in *Laborintus*, according to Gabriella Sica, are

³⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 296-7.

³⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 297.

³⁴² Lorenzini, “Eliot e i 'novissimi’”, p. 108.

stripped of the “alone esotico ed estetizzante” that they had in Modernist poetry (we must recall Perloff and Raine's arguments to that effect).³⁴³ Sanguineti's fragments are thoroughly degraded and, as Sica explains, they carry out an *alienating* function:

Preme sulla storia contemporanea, il peso di un a retroterra molto vecchio, di una barbaria culturale oppressiva e autoritaria che si rapprende emblematicamente in questi stralci di lingue morte. Così, è antico e di natura dotta il francese che viene utilizzato; soprattutto il latino, “terrifico e medievale” come lo definisce Zanzotto, viene scelto per il vistoso spessore storico che possiede, e, in quanto vecchio e inutile, come realtà grottescamente resuscitata a vita. Il latino come lingua privilegiata della tradizione aulica, ora rivelatosi fatiscente, è utilizzato in straniamento, come lingua morta di una realtà morta.³⁴⁴

And Sanguineti, in an interview declares that

Il mio plurilinguismo era per gran parte orientato sull'idea di rompere questa sorta di “cantata” che era affidata alla lingua italiana. [...] Insomma, si trattava dell'opposto del petrarchismo secondo il noto modello del monolinguisimo.³⁴⁵

His plurilingual juxtapositions, then, pillaged from Eliot and Pound (and inspired by Dante), played a major role in the articulation of his project to “rompere questa sorta di 'cantata'” in Italian poetry – what he described in his *plurilinguismo* essay as “liquidare [...] le frontiere del poetese”. And indeed the de-lyricisation of poetic language, that mimics the alienation in language, society and the individual, and that in turn brings about Brechtian alienation (or Benjaminian “shock”) within the mind of the reader, was not only one of Sanguineti's aims, but was a major shared objective of the Neoavantgarde.

One particularly distinctive feature of Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo*, and one of the techniques which he uses to “rompere” the “cantata” of language, is the creation of intentionally unsettling sites of linguistic ambiguity in his poetry. This specific and important manifestation of his *plurilinguismo* has not yet been studied. It exemplifies, very effectively, our discourse on the radicalised role of the reader that we discussed in the Introduction. Intense “moments” of linguistic ambiguity occur at

³⁴³ Sica, *Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 39.

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*

³⁴⁵ J. Butcher, “Da *Laborintus a Postkarten*: Intervista ad Edoardo Sanguineti” in eds. J. Butcher and M. Moroni, M, *From Eugenio Montale to Amelia Rosselli: Italian Poetry in the Sixties and Seventies* (Leicester, 2004), p. 224.

“l'impossibile 'unio mistico' e la complicazione-alienazione culturale”,³⁴⁸ demonstrating the fact that in the *Palus* “unity” is impossible and plurality is the inevitable *modus vivendi*.

The reader, therefore, faced with this word “qui”, “*può decidere se si tratta di latino medievale o di italiano*”.³⁴⁹ And by allowing, or indeed requiring, the reader to make this decision, Sanguineti is realising his anarchic intentions, which also erupt in the allusion to Artaud and his “Anarchist King” Héliogabale in the lines about sperm: “*seminis seu spermatis punctum*”.³⁵⁰ This is not “anarchy” in the derogatory sense, as in lawless chaos – this is, rather, anarchy in its pure sense of self-rule and self-organization. From the first line of section 15, the reader is confronted with “complicazione” embodied as “alienazione [...] aspra alienazione”, and in the concluding lines *anarchy* is figured as alienation: “*anarchia come alienazione / rotundae mortis undas necessarias*” (*L* 200). And so the aesthetic programme of alienating the reader through mechanisms like this linguistically ambiguous Latin/Italian “qui” is an anarchist one: one which confers autonomy on the reader, who must either learn to revel in the plurality of the *Palus* or else drown in it.

It is not only during clashes between Latin and Italian that this sort of linguistic ambiguity is created, but also at the interfaces between the other languages employed in the text. At the end of section 6, the section in which we are plunged once and for all into the *Palus*, we find an example of Italian/French ambiguity. It is in section 6 that we are introduced to the idea of “complicazione” (or the “multiformità del reale”, as Risso defines it) which we saw taken up in section 15 (*L* 199-200) and equated with “alienazione” in both its meanings, i.e. that of psychological and societal alienation, and that of the aesthetic strategy of alienating

³⁴⁸ Giuliani, *I novissimi*, p. 108.

³⁴⁹ Butcher, “Da *Laborintus*”, p. 224, italics mine.

³⁵⁰ Cf. Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 201.

the reader in a Brechtian sense.

“Complicazione” goes through a series of permutations in section 6 (*L* 117-18). It begins as a restricting force, in “complicazione quelli che non sanno crescere” (line 1) and “complicazione come impedimento” (line 3), but soon it is seen as “complicazione come necessità” (line 5) – both in the sense of its inevitability, and in the sense of its usefulness. “Complicazione”’s inevitability then figures as a definition for life itself: “esistenza come complicazione” (line 20). “Complicazione” is then defined as an aesthetic strategy in “la mia tessitura delle idee / la mia impaginazione per mezzo della complicazione” (lines 24-25), which is then defined as experimental and affirmative in “complicazione / come affermazione sperimentale nuova relazione melmosa” (lines 30-31). This affirmation, though, can only come about through an experience of the “melma”, and a veritable Dantescan journey through the hellish swamp of Neo-Capitalist existence figured in lines 34-37:

complicazione
come descendent in Infernum viventes
ma finalmente anarchia come complicazione radicale
come lotta contro l'implicazione come organizzazione
della coscienza eteroclita (*L* 117-18).

This necessary journey through hell is a “viaggio verso la conoscenza, alla maniera dell'Ulisse dantesco”,³⁵¹ one which equips us with the knowledge and tools to engage in the “lotta” against the forces of bourgeois hegemony that try to define us as “noi che non dobbiamo crescere” (line 46).

The final lines of the section run thus:

più tardi scrisse perché la pazzia è anche metafora ossia scambio
e disinganno ma vie c'est moi e un'altra volta
(le donne stanno ad ascoltare)
Laszo Varga (egli scrisse) come complicazione (*L*
118).

Here the word “ma” is linguistically ambiguous, like the word “qui” which we interrogated above. We expect it to be an Italian word, because the text has been in

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 122.

Italian leading up to the “ma”, but when we read on and recognize the shift to French, the “ma” becomes ambiguous. In the first instance we read it as the Italian conjunction “but” which appears to introduce a new main clause, but then it transforms into the French possessive “my”. And, in fact, the French phrase “ma vie c'est moi”, Sanguineti tells us, was spoken to him by a Danish girl when he was on holiday in the Val d'Aosta,³⁵² which is itself a region in Italy which exists in a sort of no-man's-land between France and Italy, and between French and Italian. This word “ma”, then, is the site of a code-switch in the poem from Italian to French, but it is also an embodiment of a state of very short-lived but intense oscillation between these two linguistic codes. The linguistically ambiguous “ma” creates not only a *linguistic* shock, then, but also a *semantic* shock, and it has a paradoxical status in that on the one hand it breaks up the fluidity of the text, but on the other hand it yokes together the two linguistically distinct sections – it divides and unifies simultaneously, condensing the strategy of “complicazione-alienazione” within just two letters.

These words “qui” and “ma” are words which are *spelled the same* in both languages (Latin and Italian, and French and Italian, respectively) but which have *different meanings* depending on the language ascribed to them - in linguistic terms they are “homonyms” (homophonic and homographic). Another group of linguistically ambiguous words which carry out similar transgressive functions in *Laborintus* are words which are *spelled the same* (homographic) but which *mean the same* thing in the two languages, and are also *pronounced differently* (heterophonic). There is an example later on in section 15:

[...] la proposta
 di proposizione di periodo aggiungere cercare o volere o tubercolo
 nous apercevons o labirinto un mécanisme impossible cosa transformateur
 du temps solaire en temps vrai

³⁵² *ibid.*

subversion of grammatical rules to bring about alienation in the reader occurs in section 22. In the *incipit*:

nella natura il faut prononcer de' numeri in intatta siccome in serietà
Cabalistiquement fisiologica consistono al dir d'Aristotile i numeri
le nom puissant in indivisibili NEHMAHMIHAH et le combiner Laszo
oltrepassando i tutti dans les formes e ricominciar Laszo avec le nom délicieux
dall'i (L 266).

The word-particle “de” abbreviates, agrammatically, either the French “s” from “des” or the Italian “i” from “dei”. The word is not “in intatta”, and its ambiguous truncation raises problems if we decide that “il faut [le] prononcer”. Here Sanguineti refuses to commit to one language or the other to the extent that the required letter is “apostrophised” into banishment, creating a veritable linguistic liminal space. Another example, found in section 23, adapts this technique a little, at a site where Sanguineti’s verse-form coincides with a switch from Italian (“te”) to Latin (“et”) to produce an effect of a visual chiasmus or multilingual palindrome:

[...] è come se io mi spogliassi le ferite le morti
di fronte a te
et de ea commentarium reliquit
(de λ) ecc. de morte ho capito
che non avevo (coloro che non sono trascurati!) mai
RADICAL IRRADIATIONS ecco: (L 279).

These alienating strategies are not, however, always plurilingual in Sanguineti. In section 17 of *Laborintus*, we do have another example that employs *plurilinguismo*, in the phrase “il lucente intellectus o le sexe complicando d'une femme” (L 244), where we are thrown by the switch from Italian into Latin. We tend to read “o le” in Italian as “or the (pl)”, when the “o” could equally be “o” in Latin as an exclamation (as it is used elsewhere in the text), and the more suitable singular article “le” in French. And there might even be an inclination, here, due to our disorientation, to pronounce “sexe” as if it were an Italian word, with the final “e” emphasised. But a similar technique is used later in section 17, in which code-switching is not part of the strategy:

omnis motus appunto nel punto
cieco in un vivo giro di sole si tratta di subire in molti giri
di luna motus daemonum anche certamente inordinatus anche
sicuramente anche ancora integrazioni
funzionali perché soprattutto è ed esclusivamente
è daemones tamen la mia cifra sunt natura
fallaces daemones femminili (L 224).

Here the word “girasole” is deconstructed and its parts are combined into a false idiom, “un giro di sole”. But the positive flash vision of the sunflower turns out to be a mirage, effaced by the poem's context – the sun is revolving in a “punto / cieco”, before being almost immediately eclipsed by the moon in “molti giri di luna” and pursued by “daemonum”. The linguistic and semantic manipulation of “girasole” creates a psychological short-circuit, a moment of alienation or “shock”, in much the same way as the linguistically liminal words that we discussed above. The final lines of section 17 run thus:

quasi relativamente secundum optimam operationem divaricata
dell'anarchia daemones nel golfo dove (duplices daemones) si attaccano
e staccano secundum optimum obiectum i gradi
di informazione all'esistenza ma esplicazione ma gusci
(il y a donc ambivalence) ovvero cortices sono definiti (L 224).

The parenthesised statement “(il y a donc ambivalence)” sums up the nature of the phenomenon that we are analysing here. The phrase occurs between the words “gusci” and “ovvero cortices sono definiti”. “Gusci” are shells or husks in Italian, just as “cortices” are shells or husks in Latin, so the “ovvero” (“or rather”) is semantically redundant, and simply signals a code-switch. Thus, straddling the declaration of the presence of ambivalence is a veritable *example* of ambivalence, not in the usual sense of “the coexistence of contradictory emotions or attitudes towards the same object or situation”,³⁵³ but in the sense particular to our context, that of “the coexistence” of different *languages* expressing “the same object or situation”. The shells are defined (“sono definiti”) in duplex; they are filled with “duplices daemones” which are both *double* and *duplicitous*.

³⁵³ *Oxford English Dictionary* [accessed online, 02/08/2011].

All of the linguistically and semantically ambiguous (or, indeed ambivalent) words and phrases that we have just examined are Sanguineti's "duplices daemones". These examples are concrete manifestations of linguistic doubleness and duplicity, described by La Torre thus:

Il linguaggio poetico di Sanguineti è "un incrocio di parole in cui si legge almeno un'altra parola": ogni elemento, ogni dato linguistico è duplice: uno e altro in ogni dato vi è la traccia dinamica dell'altro. La significazione si articola mediante una congiunzione di differenze. Ogni segno è insieme associativo e sostitutivo. Ogni sequenza è doppiamente orientata: verso l'evocazione della scrittura e verso la trasformazione della scrittura.³⁵⁴

And so these instances of *plurilinguismo* in *Laborintus* actually *enact*, within the language of the text, precisely the kind of Benjaminian "shock effect" that we analysed in the Introduction.

Plurilinguismo experienced as Shock

*fare della poesia una vera frusta per il cervello del lettore*³⁵⁵

These distinctive and previously unexplored manifestations of Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo* disrupt and break the "cantata" of the language, and the friction between the languages in question produces startling linguistic hybridity. There is psychological evidence that humans "prefer consistency to inconsistency".³⁵⁶ This technique, then, generates instances of "shock" or "cognitive dissonance" in the mind of the reader. The mechanisms which govern this drive to homogenise encourage us to interpret a word in the language of the word prior to it, but this does not suffice as a reading strategy for *Laborintus*, which radically (and continuously) defeats our expectation of continuity. We are incapable of perceiving – at least on our first "sight-read" - both senses, or of hearing both sounds, and so the linguistically ambiguous

³⁵⁴ A. La Torre, *La magia della scrittura: Moravia, Malerba, Sanguineti* (Rome, 1987), p. 90.

³⁵⁵ N. Balestrini, "Linguaggio e opposizione", in *Gruppo 63. Critica e teoria*, p. 47.

³⁵⁶ Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance*, p. 6.

words plunge the reader into a state of “shock”, “cognitive dissonance” or what Sanguineti calls “complicazione-alienazione”.

This plurilingual technique perfectly exemplifies Sanguineti's wider strategy, shared by the other Novissimi, of what Picchione describes as “thwarting the reader's habitual horizon of expectations”.³⁵⁷ Poetry for the Novissimi, as Picchione argues,

should refuse to court the reader with seductive lyricism and instead should create a distance from the automatism of everyday-language models by becoming the locus of defying and anarchic linguistic constructs.³⁵⁸

And this becomes what Mengaldo calls a full-scale “sabotaggio dei meccanismi linguistici 'normali'”.³⁵⁹

For Sanguineti, this is a political act. Sanguineti declares that in order to be “autenticamente critica, e autenticamente realista”, art must “energeticamente uscire dai limiti della normalità borghese, cioè dalle sue norme ideologiche e linguistiche”.³⁶⁰ Here Sanguineti is working from Marxist (or, as he preferred to say, Historical Materialist) principles. The job of the poet, for Sanguineti, is to allow art to escape the limits imposed upon it by bourgeois norms, and in this way, as Picchione puts it, to “relocate the road to revolution”.³⁶¹ Literature as inherited by the Novissimi was, for Sanguineti, riddled with the discourses of the bourgeoisie, and thus formed a part of the superstructural complex that legitimised capitalism (the Gramscian “cultural hegemony”). In *Ideologia e linguaggio*, Sanguineti makes it very clear that ideology and language cannot be separated, and so by transforming language (i.e. by subverting the conventional language which upholds capitalist hegemony), the poet can transform ideology, and hence transform the dominant vision of reality, since “l'esperienza delle parole condiziona quella delle cose”.³⁶² And it is in this way - as

³⁵⁷ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 7.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*

³⁵⁹ I. Paccagnella, “Plurilinguismo letterario: lingue, dialetti, linguaggi”, in *Letteratura italiana*, II: *Produzione e consumo* (Turin, 1983), p. 164.

³⁶⁰ *Gruppo 63: la nuova letteratura*, eds. N. Balestrini and A. Giuliani (Milan, 1964), p. 383.

³⁶¹ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde Italy*, p. 53.

³⁶² E. Sanguineti, “La letteratura della crudeltà”, in *Ideologia e linguaggio*, ed. E. Risso (Milan, 2001),

Sanguineti declared in his statement with which we opened this chapter – that art can actually “cambiare il mondo”.

Sanguineti's multilingual code-switches subvert these reigning hegemonies through the effect that they have on the reader, who is transformed into an “activist”. The loci of intentional linguistic ambiguity that we have examined break down the hierarchy between author and reader, forcing the reader to participate in the text's compositional and decision-making processes, thereby turning the text into a radically inclusive space. This is an example of the kind of extreme interpretive freedom that all of the Novissimi were striving for in their works, and, indeed this strategy is one of the ways in which *Laborintus* fulfils its status as an “opera aperta”. Joyce's works, as we saw in Chapter II, were defined by Umberto Eco as “opere aperte”. His masterpieces *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were conceived of as *democratic* works in which the reader was expected to participate. The eminent Joyce critic Declan Kiberd wrote very recently that:

Ulysses was designed to produce readers capable of reading *Ulysses* - a sentence which is not the tautology it seems – with the very difficulty intended by Joyce as an intrinsic part of the experience. It offers not only a text but a training in how to decode it. He acted on the brazen assumption that his book would not defer to the current taste of the public but serve to invent a new sort of reader, someone who after that experience might choose to live in a different way. He wanted to free people from all kinds of constriction, among them the curse of passive readership. This was not as immodest a programme as it might have seemed. Most writers believe that by changing language and style you may in time alter thought; and that by altering thought you may transform the world itself.³⁶³

The same could be said of *Laborintus*, except that, as Gabriella Sica puts it, in Sanguineti this Joycean “intenzionalità [...] democratica” took a more radical turn and metamorphosed into an “intenzionalità anarchico-rivoluzionaria”.³⁶⁴

As we saw in the Introduction, the act of *unsettling* the reader or spectator was a common aim of many experimental artists in the fifties and sixties, and this was by no means restricted to Italy. We discussed Walter Benjamin's theory of the “shock

p. 133.

³⁶³ D. Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us* (London, 2009), p. 17-18.

³⁶⁴ Sica, *Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 26.

effect", which he identified and analysed in contemporary cinema, in Brecht's plays and in Baudelaire's poems. Sanguineti called Benjamin "uno dei più grandi pensatori in assoluto del Novecento", and had recourse to his ideas throughout his life,³⁶⁵ and this Benjaminian concept of "shock" (or, to put it in cognitive terms – this "cognitive dissonance") is very helpful for our unpacking of Sanguineti's revolutionary linguistic practices. Indeed the strategy of "complicazione-alienazione" that we described in our analysis of Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo* corresponds precisely with Benjamin's theory of the "shock". It is important to note, though, that the Italian edition of *Illuminations, Angelus Novus*, was only published in 1962, so it did not directly inform his writing of *Laborintus*. But, as we shall see later on, Sanguineti himself considered that his artistic principles and practices were perfectly primed to receive Benjamin, and indeed had, even in the fifties, been operating along the lines that Benjamin's ideas would come to explicate rather neatly. And, broadly speaking, it is correct to say, as Picchione does, that "Sanguineti's politicization of the avant-garde is sustained" by reference to Walter Benjamin.³⁶⁶

Sanguineti expressed the disintegration of an entire culture by means of this exaggerated *plurilinguismo*, structuring his text around extreme linguistic juxtapositions. Just like Eliot, Pound and Joyce, he found at his disposal only a deadened literary language – a cliché-ridden and rule-bound idiom. Sanguineti's recourse to *plurilinguismo* was, just as the Modernists' had been, and just as Dante's had been, a way of exposing, extending and resuscitating – perhaps even of escaping – the idiom that was incapable of expressing his reality. But for Sanguineti, this task was part of a political programme that did not have origins in Eliot or Pound, though it did, arguably, have a "democratic" precedent in Joyce. It is clear that the

³⁶⁵ E. Sanguineti, "Come si diventa materialisti storici?", in *Cultura e Realtà*, ed. E. Risso (Milan, 2010), p. 30.

³⁶⁶ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 52.

plurilinguismo in *Laborintus* was not put to the service of “shoring” the ruins, or of finding a transcendent, universal idiom. Further analogies and counterpoints between these models of *plurilinguismo* and Sanguineti's own use of the technique will emerge as we consider his two other major axes of Modernist-inspired linguistic experimentation: *pluristilismo*, and *citazionismo*. These two techniques are intimately linked to his use of *plurilinguismo*, and will therefore inform our assessment of the wider contexts that we have considered in this section.

Sanguineti and Pluristilismo

*et ce mélange de comique ah sono avvilito adesso et de
pathétique [...]
this immensely varied subject matter is expressed! (L 279)*

The chain that we have followed above, which links Dante's *plurilinguismo* to Eliot and Pound's Modernist use of the technique and finally to Sanguineti's Neoavanguardia plurilingual experimentations, also appears to hold true for *pluristilismo*. And, to further complicate matters, *pluristilismo* is, for all of these authors and at every link of the chain, intimately connected to *plurilinguismo*.

Dante, as we saw, inserted regionalisms and foreign words into the *Commedia* (embodying the *plurilinguismo*). But he also opened up his poetic language to an unprecedented degree to include many traditionally “un-poetic” Italian words, inserting colloquialisms and vulgar words as well as what Barański calls

terms associated with specific *genera*, and a broad range of technical vocabulary embracing, *inter alia*, scholastic logic, the sciences, theology, commerce, politics, and literary theory and criticism [as well as] technical vocabulary – drawn, for example, from optics, astronomy, scholastic theology, mysticism, the language of merchants” (embodying the *pluristilismo*).³⁶⁷

And this “'transgressive' mixing of the *stili*” is considered by many as the “supreme expression of [Dante's] literary inventiveness”³⁶⁸. This “sustained 'stylistic' hybridity – the mingling and fusion of elements normally treated as discrete and inviolate in medieval culture”³⁶⁹ has often been called Dante's *plurilinguismo*, but we will call it *pluristilismo* – meaning the mixing of linguistic registers specifically, rather than the embedding of foreign language fragments into the text's *matrix language*.

³⁶⁷ Barański, “The Roots of Dante's Plurilingualism”, p. 101.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 99. In this essay Baranski traces the roots of what he calls Dante's hybridity or eclecticism right back to the *Vita Nuova*, whereas other scholars have since Contini always said it “is firmly the preserve of the *Commedia*” (p. 102).

³⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 99.

English-Language Modernist Pluristilismo

The English-language Modernists inherited this propensity for *pluristilismo* from Dante, but their stylistic juxtapositionings were also a part of a wider Modernist drive to that effect, and this proved as controversial as the *plurilinguismo*, even within Modernist circles. Declan Kiberd relates that Virginia Woolf, for example, mocked and derided Joyce's *Ulysses* for its “succession of disparate and discordant styles” (which he too learned from Dante), and “the very same complaint” was made about many other works of art at the time, for example Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*, in which each figure is painted in a “different style”.³⁷⁰ But it is Eliot's and Pound's uses of the technique more than Joyce's which impacted on Sanguineti.

Eliot, in *The Waste Land*, juxtaposes contrasting varieties of English. For example, in this passage from “A Game of Chess”, various English-language “voices” introduce different linguistic registers (and in fact the poem was originally entitled “He Do the Police in Different Voices”):

And we shall play a game of chess,
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said -
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you (CPP 56).

Here the typically “poetic” image and diction in “Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door” are succeeded by a series of snippets of conversations, with colloquialisms (“mince my words”, “make yourself a bit smart”) and incorrectly used grammar (“what you done”), and then the reader is brought firmly into an un-poetic world with the bar-man's announcement of closing time. Other juxtaposed voices that we have already seen in *The Waste Land* are Eliot's use, in the “rompicapo plurilinguo”, of the fragment of nursery rhyme (“London Bridge is falling down

³⁷⁰ Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, p. 9.

The tone of the first part is formal and laboured, but clearly tongue-in-cheek. In the section between inverted commas, Pound follows aspects of a very ornate, archaic style and vocabulary (“whence” and “foetor”) with the slang expression “stank up”, and then blends the two contrasting styles dramatically in “It had made the emparadisèd spirits pewk”. This example, when considered against those taken from *The Waste Land*, suggests that Pound takes *pluristilismo* much further than Eliot, and this is certainly the case. The *Cantos* is saturated with varieties of slang as well as comic (mis)spellings used to designate many different accents, mispronunciations and mistakes, and these are often put to comic effect. And, indeed, arguably, Joyce took this technique further even than Pound did, in *Finnegans Wake*.

The Modernists' experimentations with style had impacts throughout the rest of the twentieth century. Joyce's expansion of stylistic range, for example, has been one of his most influential innovations, and has had an enduring effect on writers from many different cultural backgrounds. As has been well documented, for many authors, it was Joyce who paved the way for the use of vulgar and colloquial language in literature. This impacted on authors such as the *nouveaux romanciers* Queneau, Vian, Pinget, Butor, Simon and Mauriac,³⁷² and also Thomas Pynchon³⁷³ and the Cuban author José Lezama Lima.³⁷⁴ Some of these authors increased the stylistic range to the extent that they included language “to encompass scholastic notions of ontology at one end of the scale and foul-mouthed guttersniperly at the other”.³⁷⁵ Sanguineti and his Neoavantgarde peers fit into this wider context. In terms of stylistic range, the *Divine Comedy*, *The Waste Land*, *The Cantos*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were all linguistic precedents for *Laborintus* as well as for other

³⁷² R. M. Adams, *AfterJoyce: Studies in Fiction after Ulysses* (New York, 1977), p. 63, and V. Mercier, *The New Novel: From Queneau to Pinget* (New York, 1971), p. 36.

³⁷³ Adams, *AfterJoyce*, p. 174.

³⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 183.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 61.

texts produced by the Neoavantgarde, although the direct impact on Sanguineti came from Eliot and Pound more than from Joyce.

Sanguineti's Pluristilismo: Dante or Petrarch?

In our discussions on *plurilinguismo*, we looked at various quotations from Sanguineti where he lauds Dante's *pluristilismo* and acknowledges its importance for both the Modernists and his own generation, but it is useful to remind ourselves of these comments while we consider the topic of *pluristilismo*. To recap briefly, Sanguineti said that Dante “impiega tutte le pluritonalità disponibili” in the *Commedia*,³⁷⁶ he recognised the Dantescan origin of Eliot and Pound's *pluristilismo* when he wrote that Eliot and Pound learned from Dante's “grandissima ricchezza di scarti tonali”,³⁷⁷ and he declared that Dante offered a “grande libertà di scrittura” to later writers. Sanguineti applied this directly to his own poetics when he claimed that an “importante punto di riferimento” in his own works is “quel Dante che tende a rimescolare fra di loro i linguaggi e i livelli di stile in maniera molto complessa”.³⁷⁸

Whereas Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo* stemmed from Eliot and Pound, with a consciousness that the Modernists had learned the technique from Dante; in the case of *pluristilismo* it appears to be the other way around. It seems more likely that Sanguineti has appropriated the technique directly from Dante, with an acute awareness that it has, in the meantime, passed through the hands of the Modernists. Just like the language in the texts of Dante, Eliot, Pound and Joyce, the language of *Laborintus* is not only plurilingual, but also contains many styles of its *matrix language* (Italian), and indeed even the foreign fragments are taken from a stylistically divergent set of source texts. *Laborintus* is “open” to every variety of

³⁷⁶ Sanguineti, “Il plurilinguismo”, p. 285.

³⁷⁷ Sanguineti, *Intrepretazione di Malebolge*, p. 264.

³⁷⁸ Butcher, “Da *Laborintus*”, p. 224.

nei pozzi vederti come la luna dormire
come la muffa dei ragni e i ladri di cavalli e la pietra focaia
dentro la candela più misericordiosa delle dita

come il giornale della sera

come la metafora

With this Sanguineti parodies the kinds of similes found in traditional love poetry, and with these *pluristylistic* juxtapositionings Sanguineti generates “shock” or “cognitive dissonance” for the reader. He even comments upon these overturned similes metapoetically in the line “Oh parola incrociata comparativa”, in which Ellie is invoked and described by a phrase that ironically defines the similes and metaphors of lyric discourse - a simile or metaphor is indeed a “parola incrociata comparativa” which we need to decode. She is then said to be

[...] il cambio della vocale e l'amplificatore
ad alta frequenza
e l'enciclopedia scientifica

and to thus represent human language and the voice. But rather than the soft, sweet whispers of a woman's voice that we might expect to find in lyrical poetry, hers is technologically amplified to a high frequency.

This line is followed by “sei tutta in ogni elemento / sei questo parametro facilissimo della estrazione della mia disgrazia aperta”. Here with “sei tutto” Sanguineti pushes the lyric trope to its limit, calling Ellie “everything”, but this too is shown to be a very different “everything” to that of the traditional discourse of love-poetry. It links back to the previous line; Ellie represents all knowledge (she is “l'enciclopedia scientifica”), and she is “tutta in ogni elemento” - she dissipates here again, her “anima delirante” dispersing still more. In “sei questo parametro facilissimo della estrazione della mia disgrazia aperta”, the scientific vocabulary and the baseness of the image which turns the description of Ellie back to the male voice's flaws combine to deliver another dramatic debasing blow to the love-poem genre.

Towards the end of the poem we have “sempre sempre sarai la mia”, which, again, mimics the effusive language of the poet-lover addressing the object of his

affection, until Sanguineti completes the phrase with “lanterna magica”. This sounds romantic at first, but Risso explains that the object referred to is in fact an “antico strumento ottico da proiezione, a forma di scatola, che ingrandisce le immagini dipinte su vetro; estensivamente è passato a designare il cinema o la televisione”.³⁸⁰ With this analogy, then, Ellie is said to enlarge images just as she increases the frequency of sounds, which aligns with her role as a multiplier, and the invocation of the television also fits in with that of the amplifier. Risso writes: “Ellie si fa strumento sonoro e strumento visivo-ottico, amplificatore e proiettore”³⁸¹ - love and human expression have become thoroughly mediated experiences in the *palus putredinis* of the *Laborintus*, with its inhabitants communicating via modern technological appliances.

In section 13 of *Laborintus*, then, Sanguineti parodies the cliché-ridden tropes of the love-lyric, calling on its techniques in order to overturn them and expose them as thoroughly defunct and degraded modes of expression. And this is another way in which Sanguineti creates “shock effects” and cognitive dissonance in his poem. The shifts between one linguistic register and another create similar effects of defeated expectation and cognitive dissonance to those that erupt out of the juxtapositioning of different national or regional languages. This overturning of *pluristilismo* certainly has a Modernist flavour, and also seems to exemplify another facet of Sanguineti's Dantescan nature.

But Sanguineti's “Dantescan” strategy is more complex than it might at first seem, and in order to unpick it, we must cast our minds back to the Continian opposition between a “plurilingual” Dante and a “monolingual” Petrarch, which was so tenacious in literary criticism throughout the second half of the twentieth century, leading critics and poets to believe that a poet had to be *either* Dantescan *or*

³⁸⁰ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 182.

³⁸¹ *ibid.*

Petrarchan. Very recently, however, critics have been re-evaluating this Continian oppositional mode, and are increasingly ready to see nuances in the relationship between the two poets, and to identify 'Petrarchan' features in poets who have always been considered staunchly 'Dantescan', and vice versa.³⁸² Petrarch, as Nicola Gardini stresses, was not simply a poet of “impasti fonici” or a poet characterised solely by the famous, and enormously reductive, programme of “monolinguismo”.³⁸³ This binary model of Contini's was much too formulaic; according to Gardini it was a “fin troppo facile contrapposizione”, and was responsible for packaging “un petrarca ermetico – cioè antimimetico, mistico e magico”.³⁸⁴ This *Hermetic* Petrarch is oversimplistic in two ways, according to Gardini. Firstly, it reduces Petrarch's oeuvre to the *Canzoniere*, and secondly, it obliterates “ogni traccia realistica che vi sia contenuta, e quindi il dantismo del *Canzoniere*”.³⁸⁵

This acknowledgement of the reductiveness of the Dante-Petrarch binary is a very important process for twentieth century Italian poetry, which has generally been seen as a century that developed a Dantescan dimension to poetry, and a century in which Petrarch, who had reigned over Italian poetry for centuries, went completely out of vogue. As Berardinelli frames it, “nel Novecento nessuno sembra voler essere allievo di Petrarca, tutti o quasi [...] aspirano a Dante”³⁸⁶. “Antipetrarchismo” became a

tendenza generale e una tentazione polemica costante”, and “la maggior parte dei maggiori poeti hanno voluto (almeno voluto, se non potuto) essere antipetrarchisti. Il petrarchismo, infatti, da tempo non gode di buona fama, per ragioni anche opposte, sia morali o politiche, sia teoriche o filosofiche, sia infine, ovviamente, stilistiche o strutturali.”³⁸⁷

³⁸² Cf. *Un'altra storia: Petrarca nel Novecento italiano*, atti del convegno di Roma, ed. Andrea Cortellessa, especially the essays by Andrea Cortellessa, Alfonso Berardinelli and Nicola Gardini.

³⁸³ Gardini, “Un Petrarca che non c'è”. Petrarch is also “il discepolo di Agostino, l'autore del *Secretum*, l'inventore della sequenza lirica, il costruttore di un romanzo erotico, il compositore di ben nove sestine, l'imitatore di Virgilio”, p. 44.

³⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 48-49.

³⁸⁶ A. Berardinelli, “Il fantasma di Petrarca” in *Un'altra storia*, p. 37.

³⁸⁷ Berardinelli, “Il fantasma di Petrarca”, p. 37.

But Berardinelli suggests that in spite of this, Petrarch played a more significant role than is generally acknowledged. He states that the “fuga volontaria da Petrarca” by the twentieth century Italian poet was often accompanied by a “ritorno di un Petrarca rimosso e negato” – in other words, no matter how determined you are to be *Anti-Petrarchist*, Petrarch may well creep back into your poetry.³⁸⁸ Andrea Cortellessa makes a similar statement when he speaks of “un petrarchismo segreto e difficile”³⁸⁹ in twentieth century Italian poetry, which “può apparire allora, nonché *paradossale*, persino *trasgressivo*”.³⁹⁰ Berardinelli, though, considered that a handful of authors, namely Palazzeschi, Pagliarani and Sanguineti, seem to be “altrettanto immuni da Petrarca”.³⁹¹ And indeed, if we recall, Sanguineti himself, in 2004, situates himself firmly to the Dantescan side of the Continian opposition:

Il mio plurilinguismo era per gran parte orientato sull'idea di rompere questa sorta di “cantata” che era affidata alla lingua italiana. [...] Insomma, si trattava dell'opposto del petrarchismo secondo il noto modello del monolinguismo.³⁹²

But Andrea Cortellessa contradicts both Berardinelli and Sanguineti himself when he identifies a Petrarchan dimension *even to Sanguineti*, whom he classifies as the “caso forse in assoluto estremo, nel nostro secondo Novecento, di poesia 'dantesca' (di fatto eliotiana-poundiana), plurilinguistica disarmonica grottesca antigraziosa espressionistica ecc”.³⁹³ Cortellessa bases this statement on the fact that Sanguineti, a long time after publishing *Laborintus*, owns up to a Petrarchan dimension to the poem, thereby stupefying, Cortellessa surmises, “molti suoi lettori”. Sanguineti, in conversation with Corrado Bologna (also in 2004), makes what he calls a “confessione, che faccio forse per la prima volta pubblicamente”.³⁹⁴ When he

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁸⁹ Cortellessa, “Petrarca è di nuovo in vista”, p. xi.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. xii. Cortellessa mentions writers like Pascoli, Gozzano, Sereni, Petrocchi, Luzi, Caproni, Sbarbaro, Pizzuto, Manganelli, Rosselli, Giorgio Orelli, Fernando Bandini, and Flavio Santi.

³⁹¹ Berardinelli, “Il fantasma di Petrarca”, p. 40.

³⁹² J. Butcher, “Da *Laborintus* a *Postkarten*: Intervista ad Edoardo Sanguineti” in eds. J. Butcher and M. Moroni, M, *From Eugenio Montale to Amelia Rosselli: Italian Poetry in the Sixties and Seventies* (Leicester, 2004), p. 224.

³⁹³ Cortellessa, “Petrarca è di nuovo in vista”, p. xii.

³⁹⁴ C. Bologna, “Corrado Bologna a colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti”, in *L'io lirico: Francesca*

wrote *Laborintus*, he says, he had in mind “due direzioni di lavoro, per uso tutto mio interno”.³⁹⁵ On the one hand, he was thinking “certo a Dante come a un punto di riferimento capitalissimo”, but on the other hand, he was composing poems that “in maniera assolutamente arbitraria, fra me e me, a mio uso, denominavo *petrarchesche*”.³⁹⁶ And Erminio Risso calls the results of this Sanguineti's “mai citato e più nascosto Petrarca”.³⁹⁷

What exactly does Sanguineti mean by *petrarchesca*? He explains that his attempt to combat the “visibilità' del discorso poetico” led him on the one hand to write some poems which displayed an “*iperdantismo*”;³⁹⁸ what he terms “un discorso estremamente intellettuale, astratto, che mi spingeva a evitare il mondo dei sensi, del visibile, del gustabile, del tangibile, del odorabile, del tattile”, and on the other hand to write some poems which were “*iperpetrarchesche*” in which

le immagini si accumulavano in maniera caotica e distorta, quasi con violenza, e il discorso esplodeva attraverso una comunicazione troppa piena, potrei dire: emblemi, figure, insegne d'ordine assoluto, venivano a disperdersi.³⁹⁹

Yet this chaotic, distorted accumulation of images is *precisely* the feature of his works that critics, and indeed Sanguineti himself, have been calling Dantescan. And, most alarmingly, this description also aligns very closely with Barthes' notion of textual “multiplicity” and *jouissance*. The *rapprochement* of Petrarch and Barthes in this manner, and the identification of Petrarch as a stimulus not for *monolinguisimo* but for plurality and *pluristilismo* is, to say the least, highly unprecedented.

Sanguineti, in this interview, states that the “iperpetrarchismo” described above made him feel close to the idea of a Petrarch

che vuole costruire un personaggio che dice 'io', il quale, a mio parere, è

Petrarca: radiografia dei Rerum vulgarium fragmenta, eds. G. Desideri, A. Landolfi, S. Marinetti (Rome, 2004), p. 612.

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*

³⁹⁷ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 37.

³⁹⁸ Bologna, “Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti”, p. 612.

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 612-13.

assolutamente distinto da qualsiasi maturazione di tipo biografico, autobiografico, confessionale. In questo senso, appunto, mi sentivo lontano se non nel senso davvero elementare del 'soggetto-individuo', del 'soggetto-uomo' che sta alla base, ovviamente, di tutta l'opera di un autore.⁴⁰⁰

Sanguineti's reading of Petrarch's "io", then, is radically different from Contini's Petrarchan "io monologante" which we considered above. It seems that Petrarchan notions of the "io lirico" may not have been so anathema to Sanguineti's project as we might have imagined. Elsewhere in the confessional interview, he says that Petrarch was "il primo a porre in termini davvero moderni, perché tuttora nostri, il problema dell'io, dell'io lirico", that Petrarch

sonda vie inedite, apre nuove strade al *soggetto poetico*, all'io lirico. Mi sembra che costruisca un'enciclopedia del personaggio che dice 'io', in qualche modo complementare, antitetica, tuttavia anche concorrenzialmente equivalente, per certi riguardi, rispetto alla condizione dantesca.⁴⁰¹

And indeed Dante's "realism" loses ground here too, in his re-evaluation of Dante and Petrarch approach to the "io":

tanto poco credo a Beatrice, quanto poco credo a Laura. Se vogliamo, esse sono veramente delle 'modelle' possibili, astratte, delle quali ignoriamo tutto: e questo forse non è male, perché in questo modo esse possono assumere un valore archetipale immenso.⁴⁰²

He continues that:

La preoccupazione di Petrarca è proprio di sondare tutte le opportunità, di sperimentare tutte le permutabilità, le predicabilità di un personaggio che dice 'io' e che esaurisce, o almeno tende ad esaurire tutte le posizioni e le variazioni possibili.⁴⁰³

And this is where the discussion comes to bear on *Laborintus* 13, which we analysed above in terms of its *pluristilismo*. We could say that Petrarch's Laura in fact shares some of the characteristics attributed to Ellie in section 13 – she too is an elusive "everything", and functions as a kind of amplifier and projector for the lover. And Sanguineti has made it clear above that Laura's diffuseness, her role as a device through which the lover can project himself - which we have seen taken up by

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 615.

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 610.

⁴⁰² *ibid.*, p. 615.

⁴⁰³ *ibid.*

Sanguineti for Ellie - are also attributes of Dante's Beatrice. In this way the binary opposition between Dante and Petrarch is seen to be over-simplified, and Sanguineti's Ellie joins the ranks of these archetypal Medieval females. Sanguineti continues:

L'archetipo femminile è veramente la predicabilità infinita. La donna era per me allora davvero la Grande Madre, proprio nel senso di un Utero inesauribile, da cui tutto esce e in cui tutto in qualche modo sprofonda. La palude, la putredine, la *palus putredinis* è veramente il ventre generatore, nello stesso tempo informe caos originaria e risoluzione terminale di tutti gli aspetti della realtà, insomma, il Tutto.⁴⁰⁴

Thus Sanguineti defines Ellie and her predecessors, literally, as the archetypal “Tutto”, an embodiment of a radical multiplicity which he labels not as Barthesian, not as Dantescan, but as *Petrarcan*:

Se vuole, pensavo alla scolarizzazione radicale di un'idea di divinità femminile, di Grande Dea, il cui nome è impronunciabile in via diretto, ma della quale è possibile una molteplice, infinita predicabilità, che non ha termine, non ha confini. Sì, questo avevo in mente, e questo era per me 'petrarchesco': quest'infinita predicabilità, nella quale in qualche modo tutto è metamorfosi, trasformazione della forma. In questo senso è 'petrarchesca' l'immagine femminile che è al centro di *Laborintus*, tema portante da cui diramano tutte le altre tematiche che il libro intendeva affrontare.⁴⁰⁵

Sanguineti's brazen juxtaposition of conflicting styles brings about what Gabriella Sica calls “la smentita del sublime”,⁴⁰⁶ which describes what we identified in our analysis of the “shock”-inducing hybridity of section 13. The juxtaposition of such stylistically diverse fragments, in tandem with the technique of *plurilinguismo*, allows the sublime to be refuted, and poetic language to be delyricised. Picchione connects the project of the “smentita del sublime” with the Novissimi's common project dubbed by Giuliani as the “riduzione dell'io”; he writes that the Novissimi “refused to pursue forms of lyrical effusions centred around the “I” or to identify poetry with the search for the sublime.”⁴⁰⁷ Picchione explains that *Laborintus* “displays the condition of the 'I' before the revolution; it is living the Marxian pre-

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 614.

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ Sica, Edoardo Sanguineti, p. 37.

⁴⁰⁷ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 7.

history, enduring all the alienating effects of a state of degradation” and so the “impossibility of monoglossia” in *Laborintus* stems from “the impossibility of a unified poetic self.” The reader is thus “faced with a sort of dialogized heteroglossia that, with its polyglottism and conflicting linguistic registers, denounces at once both the impossibility of a univocal lyric voice and the impossibility of the sublime.”⁴⁰⁸

But as we have seen, Sanguineti's “heteroglossia” and “polyglottism” on the one hand, and the “univocal lyric voice” on the other, cannot be mapped firmly on to Dantescan and Petrarchan grids, respectively, as decades of critics were wont to do. Sanguineti's confession of a previously unacknowledged, and almost inconceivable Petrarchan dimension to *Laborintus* (given the tenacity of the Continian model and Sanguineti's avowed Dantism) forces us to be wary of neat identifications, and problematises the seemingly self-evident chain of models and mediations that we have traced from Dante, through Eliot, Pound and Joyce, and finally to Sanguineti. With this confessional interview, and with his identification of a radically pluralistic quality to Petrarch, Sanguineti - who began writing *Laborintus* in 1951, the same year that Contini's *Preliminari* was published - places a detonator under the rock-solid foundations of half a century of literary scholarship.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 119.

The Citational Mode in Eliot, Pound and Sanguineti

*Tutto è citazione.*⁴⁰⁹

We have seen that two of the major axes of Sanguineti's strategy for generating plurality and “shock effects” in *Labotintus* are the Modernist-inspired techniques of *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*. The other is *citazionismo*, and this device of quoting from a wide range of sources also features heavily, and famously, in Eliot's and Pound's poetry. The techniques of *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo* are inextricably intertwined not only with one another, but also with *citazionismo*, in Eliot and Pound and also in Sanguineti. Let us consider the Modernist citational technique, and then look at how it was adopted and developed by Sanguineti to serve his revolutionary purposes.

Citazionismo in Eliot and Pound

The Waste Land and the *Cantos* are encyclopaedic texts - both are structured around fragments of remnants (or “ruins”) from myriad cultures. Just as we have an “overlaying of languages” in these poems,⁴¹⁰ so we have “cultural overlaying”⁴¹¹ with both poets plundering other texts to create their own. This becomes clear if, for example, we think back to the “polyglot riddle” from the end of *The Waste Land* which many critics (and indeed Sanguineti himself) have used to exemplify the mechanics of Eliot's *plurilinguismo*. We already identified the languages present in this extract, but in order to gloss it fully, we must also identify the sources of these foreign language fragments and indeed of some of the English lines which generate the *pluristilismo*. They are all literary citations, from a variety of different sources:

⁴⁰⁹ E. Sanguineti, “Per una teoria della citazione”, in *Cultura e realtà*, p. 337.

⁴¹⁰ G. Kearns, *Ezra Pound. The Cantos* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 35.

⁴¹¹ D. Davie, *Studies in Ezra Pound* (Manchester, 1991), p. 107.

from a nursery rhyme, Dante, the *Pervigilium Veneris*, Nerval, Kyd and the *Upanishad*.

In fact the whole of *The Waste Land* is filled with citations

from East and West, past and present, the world of the war and its aftermath, becomes fused in the poem's linguistic eclecticism, its teasing quotations, snatches of song, snippets of conversation, multiple languages, halfthoughts, nursery rhymes, monologues and myths⁴¹²

which "express contemporary life in a polyphony of cultured soundbites".⁴¹³ *The Cantos* too are heavily laden with all manner of quotations, in many different languages. Elizabeth Gregory, in her book *Quotation and Modern American Poetry* (1996), writes that

the practice of poetic quotation came into vogue among the Americans writing in the early part of the twentieth century. Pound, Zukofsky, Williams, Moore, Eliot, Brown, and Crane all employ borrowed words meant to be recognized as such.⁴¹⁴

Gregory aligns this poetic practice with "collage" techniques used by Modernist painters: "Modernist collage constitutes a kind of quotation, of the mass-produced materials Picasso pasted onto his canvases or of the objects and printed material Kurt Schwitters organized in his constructions", and by Modernist novelists: "Joyce's last two books [are full] of phrases borrowed from popular song, from advertisements, and from literature".⁴¹⁵

Let us now look at some examples of Eliot and Pound's "citational" techniques, which include endless permutations and fusions of the techniques of direct quotation, allusion, echoing, translation, mistranslation, paraphrase and misquotation. This passage from "The Burial of the Dead" in *The Waste Land*, for example, is constructed through a series of literary allusions:

Unreal city,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed under London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.

⁴¹² Childs, *Modernism*, p. 182.

⁴¹³ *ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴¹⁴ Gregory, *Quotation and Modern American Poetry*, p. 2.

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 22.

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes upon his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine (CCP 62).

The first intertext alluded to in Eliot's notes, Baudelaire's poem "Les sept vieillards", is the declared impetus behind "Unreal city":

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,
Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant.

"Unreal city", however, is not a *translation* of "fourmillante cité". Baudelaire's words evoke an image of a city as a swarming ant-heap. Without Eliot's paratextual apparatus one would be hard pressed to guess at this allusion, but its spectral content does nevertheless inform the rest of the passage. The second intertext, according to Eliot's notes, is a passage from Dante's *Inferno* III 55-57:

sì lunga tratta
di gente, *ch'i' non averei creduto*
*che morte tanta n'avesse disfatta.*⁴¹⁶

The third and fourth lines of Eliot's passage are a near-faithful rendition of Dante's words italicised here; indeed Eliot's translation is a particularly striking one. The only slight change that Eliot makes is one of tense, moving it from a conditional to an indicative mood. The second Dantean intertext, however, from *Inferno* IV 25-27, is modified considerably:

Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
non avea pianto mai che di *sospiri*
che l'aura eterna facevan tremare⁴¹⁷

All that Eliot salvages from this extract is the word "sospiri" ("sighs") and the general tone of sorrow. The details of Dante's words are lost, and in their place Eliot inserts his own.

These examples show a range of the citational techniques used by Eliot in the composition of *The Waste Land*. The literary fragments are used in very different

⁴¹⁶ D. Alighieri, *Divina Commedia: Inferno*, eds. U. Bosco and G. Reggio (Florence, 2002), p. 43, italics mine.

⁴¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 59-60, italics mine.

ways, some rendering the passage quite faithfully in translation, and some simply capturing a mood and imbuing the text with additional contextual and semantic nuances. James Longenbach writes that

All these references are folded into what begins as a naturalistic description of the City of London [...] but then becomes an increasingly horrific city of dreams. The allusions, by relating modern London to medieval Florence, ancient Greece, and nineteenth-century Paris, suggest that this condition is neither unique nor insurmountable.⁴¹⁸

So the citations serve the purpose of stressing the *universality* of the condition of this modern Hell.

Longenbach also argues that the allusions in *The Waste Land* are “structural”;⁴¹⁹ they “do not seem to reinforce an otherwise approachable meaning but instead seem essential to the structure, not immediately perceivable, of the poem.”⁴²⁰ In other words, if they were excised some meaning would be lost; they do not just “enrich our understanding”, but “make it possible in the first place”⁴²¹. Elizabeth Gregory writes that Eliot, in *The Waste Land*, “follows the principles for poetic borrowing that he laid out famously in an essay on the Elizabethan poet Philip Massinger”.⁴²² Eliot writes in this essay:

One of the surest of tests [of poetic merit] is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take; and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion. A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest.⁴²³

Gregory considers that *The Waste Land* “fulfils the theft criterion for mature poetry so literally that it can be read as a skit on the essay's point”.⁴²⁴ But, crucially, although Eliot's *Waste Land* is dramatically different from Dante's or Baudelaire's poems, the

⁴¹⁸ J. Longenbach, “‘Mature Poets Steal’: Eliot's Allusive Practice”, in *The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot*, ed. A. D. Moody (Cambridge, 1994), p. 183.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 177.

⁴²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 176.

⁴²¹ *ibid.*, p. 186.

⁴²² Gregory, *Quotation and Modern American Poetry*, p. 40.

⁴²³ *ibid.*

⁴²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 41.

fragments which Eliot embeds in his own poem, in spite of the fact that they have been adulterated, carry much of the semantic content, or at least much of the mood, of the texts from which they are extracted.

Pound's *Cantos* too display a literary thief at work, and he inflicts similar distortions on literary fragments; in fact Pound plunders even more courageously than Eliot does, and disrupts the citations still further. Canto VII is a good case in point; its *incipit* has been described by Dekker as “a highly condensed, peculiarly Poundian history of mimesis from Homer to Flaubert (Henry James appear[ing] shortly, bringing the history up to date)”:⁴²⁵

ELEANOR (she spoiled in a British climate)
“Ελανδρος and ‘Ελεπτολις, and
poor old Homer blind,
blind as a bat,
Ear, ear for the sea-surge;
rattle of old men's voices.
And then the phantom Rome,
marble narrow for seats
"Si pulvis nullus" said Ovid,
"Erit, nullum tamen excute."
Then file and candles, e li mestiers ecoutes;
Scene for the battle only, but still scene,
Pennons and standards y cavals armatz
Not mere succession of strokes, sightless narration,
And Dante's "ciocco," brand struck in the game.

Un peu moisi, plancher plus bas que le jardin.

"Contre le lambris, fauteuil de paille,
"Un vieux piano, et sous le baromètre ..."

In this section, Pound takes an extract from Flaubert's *Un coeur simple* of a description of an interior and puts it through a process of fragmentation, condensation and re-composition. The Flaubertian passage in question is:

Un vestibule étroit séparait la cuisine de la sale où Mme. Aubain se tenait tout le long du jour, assise dans un *fauteuil de paille*. *Contre le lambris*, peint en blanc, s'alignaient huit chaises d'acajou. *Un vieux piano* supportait, *sous un baromètre*, un tas pyramidal de boîtes et de cartons [...] et tout l'appartement sentait *un peu le moisi*, car le *plancher* était *plus bas que le jardin*.⁴²⁶

which becomes in Pound's text:

⁴²⁵ G. Dekker, *Sailing After Knowledge: The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London, 1963), p. 16.

⁴²⁶ C. F. Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley, 1980), vol I, p. 30, italics mine.

Un peu moisi, plancher plus bas que le jardin.

“Contre le lambris, fauteuil de paille,
“Un vieux piano, e sous le baromètre...”

It is apparent that as well as divorcing these fragments (which are italicised in the source text) from their context, Pound re-orders them; the pieces that make up his first line come from the end of the passage and vice versa, and he also uses quotation marks inconsistently. Furthermore Pound makes small alterations, deleting, for example, the article in “un peu le moisi” and thus transforming “moisi”, which Flaubert uses as a noun, into an adjective. Elsewhere in Canto VII Pound combines direct quotation with creative translation or paraphrase. One such passage runs thus:

And the great domed head, *con gli occhi onesti e tardi*
Moves before me, phantom with weighted motion,
Grave incessu, drinking the tone of things,
And the old voice lifts itself
Weaving an endless sentence.

The first italicized part fuses two Dantean quotations: “Genti veran con occhi tardi e gravi”,⁴²⁷ which describes Homer, Horace and Ovid approaching Dante and Virgil, and “e nel mover de gli occhi onesta e tarda”,⁴²⁸ which is a description of Sordello. Pound’s line “Grave incessu” is often read to be a misquotation of Virgil’s own description of a mysterious figure advancing towards him: “vera incessu”.⁴²⁹ This brings us back in a circular fashion to the first Dantean quotation, in which Virgil was evoked. And, in fact, two further layers of literary allusion are also present, as the description is of Henry James, and it is paraphrased from Pound’s own essay on James: “The massive head, the slow uplift of the hand, *gli occhi onesti e tardi*, the long sentences piling themselves up in elaborate phrase after phrase”.⁴³⁰ In Canto VII it becomes apparent that, just as in *The Waste Land*, although Pound fragments and disrupts his citations, the semantic material which they carry cohere with the tone

⁴²⁷ Alighieri, *Inferno*, p. 67 (Canto IV, line 112).

⁴²⁸ Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, p. 114 (Canto VI, line 63).

⁴²⁹ Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos*, vol I, p. 31.

⁴³⁰ Pound, *Literary Essays*, p. 295.

and sense of Pound's own piece. The citations in Canto VII, “piling themselves up in elaborate phrase after phrase”, generate a *multi-layered* but *coherent* scene.

Gregory and Longenbach, in their discussions of Eliot's citational method, both draw our attention to one aspect of his technique that is sometimes overlooked. Gregory explains that the infamous notes to *The Waste Land* which ostensibly designate the sources to which he alludes are actually a “basket of red herrings” which “mislead the reader because they do not account for all of his borrowings”.⁴³¹ This, she says, is part of a bigger project, both in these notes and in Eliot's critical writings, of disguising the “specifics of his own debts, directing us to benign providers of material rather than the threatening providers of inspiration”.⁴³² The most notable absences from Eliot's notes are Whitman, Tennyson, Milton and Shelley. Longenbach explains that

While Eliot's very practice of allusion was designed to enhance his status as a professional poet, his acknowledgements of them (Dante but not Whitman) were designed to emphasize the particular sense of tradition that underwrote his modern 'pantheon of literature.' In more ways than one, then, Eliot's allusions were part of a self-consciously political program. Whitman and Tennyson were crucial, Eliot knew, to his personal life as a poet; but they could not be part of his public mission to alter the terms of his literary culture.⁴³³

To give an example of this, the final passage of *The Waste Land*, the “polyglot riddle” that we have already considered, contains, as well as those citations which Eliot himself flagged up, a citation from Tennyson's “The Princess” in the lines “O swallow swallow”, which does not appear in the notes.⁴³⁴ This is a point of difference with Pound, who virtually always wore his sources on his sleeve, borrowing brazenly and openly.

Let us now move away from the texts to look at the wider picture, and the role of quotation in Modernist writing as a whole. Elizabeth Gregory identifies various

⁴³¹ Gregory, *Quotation and Modern American Poetry*, p. 42.

⁴³² *ibid.*

⁴³³ Longenbach, “Mature Poets Steal”, p. 180.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Gregory, *Quotation and Modern American Poetry*, p. 60.

functions of quotation in Modernist American poetry, one of which is to explore the notion of “originality” that was so prevalent in Romantic poetry.⁴³⁵ Umberto Eco reiterates this:

the "modern" avant-garde (at the beginning of this century) challenged the Romantic idea of "creation from nothingness", with its techniques of collage, mustachios on the Mona Lisa, art about art, and so on.⁴³⁶

Marjorie Perloff explains that

citation especially citation that draws on other languages, undermines and destroys the very essence of poetry, which is (or should be) the expression of personal emotion – emotion conveyed, of course, in the poet's *own words*, invented for this express purpose.⁴³⁷

Other critics identify different functions for the citations in Eliot and Pound, and questions have been raised as to the nature of the Modernists' approach to the “ruins” of history that is exemplified in the technique of *citazionismo*. George Steiner, for example, speaks of Modernism as “a strategy of conservation, of custodianship,” and sees key Modernist literary texts - *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, and the *Cantos* - as “deliberate assemblages, in-gatherings of a cultural past felt to be in danger of dissolution”.⁴³⁸ Longenbach writes that in *The Waste Land*, “the wide field of references are folded into the present to remind us of historical continuity and show us the way out of our predicament”.⁴³⁹ This notion of the citations “conserving” fragments of history, of “in-gathering” and “folding in”, coheres with Eliot's own declaration of “shoring” up the fragments “against” [his ruins],” striving against the dissolution of the past.

Indeed this position echoes various other statements made by the Modernists themselves. Eliot wrote that Joyce had recourse to “mythology” (i.e. citations and structuring devices taken from past works of art) as a means of “controlling”, “ordering” and giving “shape and significance” to what he defines the “immense

⁴³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴³⁶ U. Eco, “Interpreting Serials” in U. Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington, 1990), p. 95.

⁴³⁷ Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius*, p. 2-3.

⁴³⁸ G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford, 1998), p.489–90.

⁴³⁹ Longenbach, “Mature Poets Steal”, p. 183.

panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history”.⁴⁴⁰ Elsewhere Eliot speaks of the “‘task of unifying’ points of view to make new wholes” in poetry, and says that in both Pound’s and his own, that task would be “accomplished by allusion” (i.e. by what we have termed *citazionismo*).⁴⁴¹ Many critics have followed Eliot in discussing this in terms of “unity”. Longenbach, for example, writes that through *citazionismo*, *The Waste Land* “undertakes the ‘task of unifying’ disparate worlds, combining discordant viewpoints [...] into a richer and more complicated perspective on modern life”.⁴⁴²

But another critical approach sees this notion of “unity” as somewhat problematic. Childs, for example, writes that there is, in *The Waste Land*, “a clear tension between unity and disunity”; the poem aims to “shore” the ruins, to:

piece together or reconcile the jigsaw of the myriad references, half-lines, non-sequiturs and quotations; and all kinds of peripheral machinery [including the infamous ‘notes’] is put in place around the poem as though to try to hold in the chaos.⁴⁴³

But Childs argues that this is “at loggerheads with the reader’s experience of the text and with the lives of the figures depicted in the poem” who can “connect / Nothing with nothing”. Thus the “unifying” function of Modernist collage and *citazionismo* is a contentious one, perhaps because the tension between unity and disunity is inscribed in the fragments themselves, and in the ways in which they are manipulated. Eliot also wrote in “A Note on Ezra Pound” that another effect of Joyce’s “allusions” is to “open [the] extent of the vista [...] to the imagination”. And these Modernists works did certainly “open” out to other worlds and to other languages. They also “open” out to the reader in the way that Eco described, and the new active reader – our reader-turned-activist - resides in this tension between unity

⁴⁴⁰ T. S. Eliot, “Ulysses, Order and Myth”, in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, ed. F. Kermode (London 1975), p. 177.

⁴⁴¹ Longenbach, “Mature Poets Steal”, p. 182.

⁴⁴² *ibid.*

⁴⁴³ Childs, *Modernism*, p. 182.

and plurality, a tension that is inherent to Modernism.

Eliot, Pound and Joyce were like Benjamin's "Angelus novus" who, when he looked to the past, saw not a chain of events but "one single catastrophe that keeps piling ruin upon ruin and hurls it in front of his feet" and who has the urge to "awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed."⁴⁴⁴ But, as we shall see, Sanguineti is well aware that he cannot "make [it] whole". He is like Benjamin's angel after he has been hit by a storm: the angel's urge to unify is thwarted by the storm that "irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward".⁴⁴⁵ Sanguineti, in his utterly "degradata e degradatoria"⁴⁴⁶ Italian Neo-Capitalist version of the Modernist *inferno*, is forced to adopt an entirely different attitude in order to face the "ruins".

Sanguineti's Citazionismo: In Theory

In Sanguineti's recently published posthumous collection of essays entitled *Cultura e realtà* (2010), there is an essay, delivered as a speech in 2001, entitled "Per una teoria della citazione". This will prove most instructive in our analysis of how Eliot and Pound have impacted Sanguineti's development of his own technique of *citazionismo*. Let us first, then, consider Sanguineti's citational *theory*, before assessing how he puts it into *practice* in his poetry.

Sanguineti declares that "la mia tesi di partenza è questa: che tutto è citazione", by which he means (in an anthropological sense, he says) that "noi viviamo citando,"⁴⁴⁷ he speaks of the "onnipervasiva citazionalità dell'esistere".⁴⁴⁸ A text, he says, is "un insieme, più o meno ben strutturato naturalmente, di

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 16-17.

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁶ Lorenzini, "Eliot e i 'Novissimi'", p. 108.

⁴⁴⁷ Sanguineti, "Per una teoria della citazione", p. 335.

⁴⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 337.

citazioni”,⁴⁴⁹ and this, although he does not mention Barthes here, is a very Barthesian notion of the text - we saw in the Introduction that Barthes defined a “texte” (and, by extension, the “monde comme texte”) as “un tissu de citations, issues des milles foyers de la culture”.⁴⁵⁰ It is not only texts which are composed of citations, Sanguinetti continues – so too are all verbal utterances, hand gestures, and physical postures and even human rituals, such the Catholic Mass, are “tutto un sistema di citazioni”.⁴⁵¹

Sanguinetti goes on to state that it is one thing simply to *cite*, and quite another thing to “servirsi effettivamente della cosa citata”, which reminds us of Eliot's statement about “good” and “bad” borrowing strategies, and he fleshes out this idea with recourse to Benjamin. Sanguinetti mentions Benjamin's discussion of “interference” in his essay “What is Epic Theatre?” which we considered in the Introduction. Sanguinetti says that Benjamin “si parla molto della citazione come sistema di interferenze,” and indeed Benjamin wrote in this essay that “interference” is “the basis of quotation” and explained that this is because “to quote a text involves the interruption of its context”.⁴⁵² For Sanguinetti,

Siamo in piena filosofia antropologica benjaminiana: si rompe il continuum e si stacca qualcosa dal contesto; il gioco è quello di contestualizzare e decontestualizzare, di spezzare il discorso.⁴⁵³

And with this, in both Benjamin and Sanguinetti, we have moved irredeemably away from Eliot's concept of *citazionismo* as a strategy for creating “wholeness” and “unity” – here the very act of citing is conceived of as an irrevocable act of rupturing, of interruption, of “shock”.

Sanguinetti then goes on to discuss *citazionismo* as it manifested during

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 336.

⁴⁵⁰ Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 43-44.

⁴⁵¹ Sanguinetti, “Per una teoria della citazione”, p. 336-37.

⁴⁵² Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 153.

⁴⁵³ Sanguinetti, “Per una teoria della citazione”, p. 343.

different literary periods. He says that *citazionismo* is often “identificato con la postmodernità”,⁴⁵⁴ but “In realtà il citazionismo, poiché non esiste altro che arte allusiva e perché tutto è allusione ovvero citazione, è sempre esistito”.⁴⁵⁵ Indeed, he says, “Altro che postmoderno; se mai è prearcaico”, because even the works of Homer and Dante are heavily citational.⁴⁵⁶ And, he continues, “Se c'è un sistema citazionale forte è il sistema moderno, e non il postmoderno”, and the “testo più citante”, for Sanguineti, is *The Waste Land*, in which

le citazioni sono buttate lì esplicitamente, promosse, dichiarate, nella lingua originale tanto perché non nasca nemmeno l'equivoco che si tratti solo di calco e di trasposizione; e note a pie' di pagina che dicono che quello è il Tristano e Isotta, o che si sta citando un passo in sanscrito.⁴⁵⁷

Finally, to conclude this second section, he remarks on the fact that *citazione* takes place in painting too, and especially in “la pittura moderna”, which starts with Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* and *Olympia*. He explains this by saying that is is “impossibile leggere Olympia”, which places a prostitute in the place of the Classical Venus-figure, “se non si sono viste le Veneri del Cinquecento”.⁴⁵⁸

Sanguineti then moves the discussion on to the topic of *montages*. The twentieth century is “il secolo del montaggio”, he says.⁴⁵⁹ The montage technique is “tipico della modernità” but we must not forget that it has *always* existed, because “il montaggio non è altro che la messa in evidenza del fatto che tutto è citazione nel senso che tutto è combinazione di codici”.⁴⁶⁰ And with that declaration, he gives his own take on the Barthesian approach to intertextuality that we discussed in the Introduction, and he calls on Benjamin again to drive this home: “Vedere Benjamin, teoria dello choc, rottura del continuo, e questo è il sistema comunicativo”.⁴⁶¹ Art, for

⁴⁵⁴ Sanguineti, “Per una teoria della citazione”, p. 344.

⁴⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 345.

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 345-46.

⁴⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 346.

⁴⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 347.

⁴⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 346.

modern man, is a montage governed by interruptions and “shock effects”, Sanguineti declares, through Benjamin:

Non è necessario essere andati al cinematografo per vivere di montaggio: una volta si sarebbe detto è lo spirito dei tempi, cioè, per dirla con i piedi per terra, ci sono delle ragioni strutturali che influenzano la cultura europea con la crisi dello sviluppo borghese e fanno sì che vive di un montaggio, e l'effetto choc perfettamente individuato da Benjamin è la regola dell'arte moderna.⁴⁶²

And once he discovered this permeation of *montage*, Sanguineti found that

non è che cambi tutto, però ho una chiave che mi permette di comprendere il funzionamento e più ancora di percepirlo e di viverlo come un effetto costante di choc, cioè col senso del frantumarsi di una continuità.⁴⁶³

Sanguineti, here, stands for the new postwar reader-turned-activist, the one whose “strutture mentali” and mode of “reading” art and reality, have changed decisively; the one theorised by Barthes and by Eco. And this new-found “chiave”, he goes on to say, allows us to *enjoy* this never-ending “shock-effect”, to “godere di tutti gli sbalzi, di tutte le sorprese”.⁴⁶⁴

Perhaps surprisingly, the “chiave” can even be used to carry out new readings of old texts:

Occorreva arrivare al montaggio per leggere come montaggio tutto il lavoro di cucitura che faceva Omero. E Dante mi si sleviga tutto, perde tutta la buona educazione. Ma perfino i petrarchisti, che dovrebbero essere il colmo del leccato [...] con il loro cruciverbalismo ossessivo diventano finalmente godibili perché nascono degli choc continui nel sistema combinatorio.⁴⁶⁵

Thus even poetry in the Petrarchan tradition can become palatable (“godibil[e]”) to the reader with the staunchest *antibembista* and *antipetrarchista* tendencies, as long as they find the “chiave” and learn to read art under a constant state of “shock”. So, clearly, Sanguineti already possessed this “chiave” when his reading of Petrarch as an embodiment of explosive plurality inflected his writing of *Laborintus*. And in fact Barthes also makes a very similar point – for Barthes, as for Sanguineti, as Graham Allen explains, the “modern, avant-garde text, after Mallarmé” is the intertextual text

⁴⁶² *ibid.*, p. 347.

⁴⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 347.

⁴⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 347.

⁴⁶⁵ *ibid.*

par excellence, it is “self-consciously intertextual”, but we can also “discover the disruptive power of the intertextual within earlier, apparently realist works”.⁴⁶⁶

Sanguineti concludes “Per una teoria della citazione” by stating that nothing will ever be “scorrevole e fluido” once we have entered, “davvero”, into the “gioco citazionale”.⁴⁶⁷ This system is not a “sistema autoritario”, it is a “sistema continuo di opzioni per cui tra gli infiniti – potenzialmente, in realtà finiti, come sempre – scarti che mi posso permettere scelgo quelli e non altri”.⁴⁶⁸ *Citazionismo* (or montage), understood in this intertextual/Bartesian/Benjaminian mode, acts as a “chiave” to open texts up to the plurality of their signification. There is no vestige of “unity” (the “scorrevole e fluido”) here: quite the contrary. An understanding of the shock mechanics of *citazionismo* allows us even to lift the veil of unity from traditional texts to reveal their plurality, and also, for Sanguineti, the alienated and alienating nature of bourgeois reality. The purpose of *citazionismo*, then, for Sanguineti, is to embody and denounce the conflict and discord in Neo-Capitalist society, and also, crucially, to teach the reader to “godere” these “shocks”. And in this way, Sanguineti theorises what Benjamin asserts in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”:

the instant the criterion of authenticity [or originality] ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.⁴⁶⁹

Let us now consider how he puts his theory into practice in his creative works *Laborintus* and *Laborintus II*.

⁴⁶⁶ Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 81.

⁴⁶⁷ Sanguineti, “Per una teories della citazione”, p. 347.

⁴⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ Benjamin, *Illumintions*, p. 226.

Sanguineti's Citazionismo: In Practice

Sanguineti pillages many texts - modern, medieval, literary, scientific, technical, historical and political - and uses them to build the montage of *Laborintus*. Various critics identify a strong Eliotic derivation in Sanguineti's use of the citational method. Alberto Godioli, for example, writes that “il mistilinguismo ottenuto tramite citazioni nell'idioma originale documenterebbe [...] l'influsso di T. S. Eliot”,⁴⁷⁰ and Niva Lorenzini sees an Eliot-inspired “rilettura dantesca” at the root of Sanguineti's “dilatazione della lingua che trasforma un *collage* di citazioni ormai inappartenenti, estranee, in un repertorio straordinario di immagini e gesti linguistici”.⁴⁷¹

As we saw in his essay “Per una teoria della citazione”, Sanguineti considered *The Waste Land* to be the text that best exemplified his intertextual notion of a text as a radically pluralistic montage. But, in an interview with Cambon, when he compared the technique used by Eliot to that used in *Laborintus*, he stressed the difference in their approaches:

il *Laborintus* è una specie di *Terra desolata* alla rovescia: nel caso di Eliot il piano delle citazioni è caratteristico ed egli stesso, all'interno della *Terra desolata*, dichiara che si tratta di frammenti usati come puntelli per sostenere le rovine (‘These fragments I have shored against my ruins’). Nel caso del *Laborintus*, si manifesta un orizzonte di rovine irredimibili, invece, immediatamente. Cioè il *mondo della cultura, della tradizione culturale*, diventa una mera galleria di mummie esibibili.⁴⁷²

In this statement Sanguineti uses almost precisely the same language with which he defined the difference between Eliot's *plurilinguismo* and his own. This makes it clear that *citazionismo* was conceived of as part of his wider linguistic and stylistic strategy, which included *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*. And the difference here is, again, that which characterises the two phases of Benjamin's “Angelus novus”: Eliot is the angel *before* the storm, and Sanguineti is the angel *after* the storm – in

⁴⁷⁰ A. Godioli, “Citazione e allusività in *Laborintus* di Edoardo Sanguineti”, *Contemporanea: Rivista di studi sulla letteratura e sulla comunicazione*, II, 2004, p. 23.

⁴⁷¹ Lorenzini, “Eliot e i 'Novissimi'”, p. 112.

⁴⁷² *ibid.*, p. 107.

Sanguineti's Neo-Capitalist *inferno*, the “ruins” are taken for granted, and there is no longer any scope for “shoring” against them.

But how does Sanguineti's overturning of Eliot manifest in *Laborintus*? Godioli distinguishes what he perceives to be one major way in which Sanguineti departs from the Eliotic model. He writes that in Eliot

il messaggio del poeta, anche tralasciata la fonte, rimane comprensibile e pressoché invariato. Al contrario, per Sanguineti la trasposizione di un passo determina il suo totale straniamento semantico.⁴⁷³

Godioli cites “A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many” from *The Waste Land*, and states that “Anche se ignorasse la celebre terzina dantesca [...], il lettore non perderebbe la connotazione di morte e di squallore che domina tanto la scena eliotiana quanto la scena infernale”.⁴⁷⁴ To exemplify Sanguineti's differing approach, he cites from *Laborintus* 26

livida Palus
livida nascitur bene strutturata Palus; lividissima (lividissima terra)
(lividissima): cuius aqua est livida; (aqua) nascitur! (aqua) lividissima! (*L* 308)

and says that here “Sanguineti snatura il testo di Benvenuto da Imola, attribuendo alla 'Palus' un senso molto diverso rispetto a quello di partenza: chi non conoscesse il *Comentum* fraintenderebbe del tutto gli intenti dell'innesto”.⁴⁷⁵ He continues that

Eliot pone il problema dell'allusività in termini ben diversi. La citazione, nella *Waste Land*, è sempre letteraria, e la memoria si presenta come un insieme di 'fragments': ma il senso dei frammenti rimane intatto, fondandosi su basi metafisiche, eterne, non storiche. Il rapporto con la cultura del passato è organico, e l'allusione ha ancora facoltà comunicativa (sebbene rivolte a un futuro indeterminato).⁴⁷⁶

Godioli is correct to some degree – the Dantean mood in the quotation used by Eliot does carry over, whether the reader knows the source context or not – the message does remain “comprensibile”, but Godioli simplifies Eliot too much when he says that the message remains “invariato”. Longenbach, as we saw, identified Eliot's quoting

⁴⁷³ Godioli, “Citazione e allusività”, p. 36.

⁴⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 36-37.

⁴⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 38.

mechanism as a “structural” one, saying that the quotations do not just “enrich our understanding”, but actually “make it possible in the first place”.⁴⁷⁷

Longenbach's argument chimes with a statement that Sanguineti himself made in “Per una teoria della citazione” regarding citation in Dante: “di Dante non posso capire una parola se non faccio riferimento al sistema di allusioni e citazioni”,⁴⁷⁸ and he uses the phrase “nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita” as an example of the fact that “Tutto è codificato. La questione è come mi muovo all'interno di questa iperallusività che scoppia da tutte le parti”.⁴⁷⁹ But this difference in stance between Godioli and Longenbach is simply a question of degree, and what is important is that Sanguineti certainly takes this much further than Eliot did – often not even a trace of the original intent of the quotation remains intact in *Laborintus*: the effect is of a dramatic “slittamento semantico” from the source texts, which is part of his programme of “demol[ire] il sublime”.⁴⁸⁰

Risso demonstrates that citation, in *Laborintus*, “sfugge completamente alle funzioni di arricchimento e impreziosimento del testo”.⁴⁸¹ We are indeed, in *Laborintus*, very far from Eliot's impulse to imbue a poem with a sense of exoticism and authenticity. Let us consider one more Eliotic statement on citation:

You cannot effectively borrow an image, unless you borrow also, or have spontaneously, something like the feeling which prompted the original image. An 'image', in itself, is like dream symbolism, is only vigorous in relation to the feelings out of which it issues, in the relation of word to flesh. You are entitled to take it for your own purposes in so far as your fundamental purposes are akin to those of the one who is, for you, the author of the phrase, the inventor of the image; or if you take it for other purposes then your purposes must be consciously and *pointedly* diverse from those of the author, and the contrast is very much to the point; you may not take it merely because it is a good phrase or lovely image.⁴⁸²

And Eliot, for the most part, follows the first part of this advice, borrowing mainly from texts and poets with whom he shares a poetic or philosophical agenda.

⁴⁷⁷ Longenbach, “Mature Poets Steal”, p. 186.

⁴⁷⁸ Sanguineti, “Per una teoria della citazione”, p. 345.

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 345.

⁴⁸⁰ Godioli, “Citazione e allusività”, p. 38.

⁴⁸¹ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 275.

⁴⁸² C. Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford, 2002), p. 3.

Sanguineti, much more often, follows the second part of Eliot's advice, borrowing snippets from authors or texts, and pointedly subverting them.

Let us look at an extract from section 3 of *Laborintus* to begin to identify another element of difference between Eliot and Sanguineti's strategies of *citazionismo*:

un esaurimento geodetico e nulla più
più nulla
prendimi cranio di creta nel tuo litorale orale senza percentuale di umidità
ugualmente affogatoio ugualmente χειριστον ὕδωρ udibile per mormorio
(un senso di mistero nel paesaggio)
impossibile parlare di due cose (di una c'est avoir le sens de l'anarchie)
l'unità di tutte le pozze faticose (L 88).

This passage contains a citation from Antonin Artaud: “c'est avoir le sens de l'anarchie”. This a direct quotation: the words are taken, unmodified, from “La culla e lo sperma”, a section in Artaud's work on the Anarchist King *Héliogabale ou l'Anarchiste couronné*. This citation, then, is taken not from one of Artaud's more famous works of criticism (such as his manifestos on “The Theatre of Cruelty” or his book *The Theatre and its Double*), but from this much more obscure work of historical biography. The passage which Sanguineti has pillaged from Artaud runs thus:

Ce monothéisme, ensuite, il l'introduit dans les oeuvres. Et c'est ce monothéisme, cette unité de tout qui gêne le caprice et la multiplicité des choses, que j'appelle moi, de l'anarchie. Avoir le sens de l'unité profonde des choses, *c'est avoir le sens de l'anarchie*, - et de l'effort à faire pour réduire les choses en les ramenant à l'unité. Qui a le sens de l'unité a les sens de la multiplicité des choses, de cette poussière d'aspects par lesquels il faut passer pour les réduire et les détruire. Et Héliogabale, en tant que roi, se trouve à la meilleure place possible pour réduire la multiplicité humaine, et la ramener par le sang, la cruauté, la guerre, jusqu'au sentiment de l'unité.⁴⁸³

Sanguineti has taken the aforementioned phrase, as well as the word “unità”, which becomes the Italian word “unità” for Sanguineti, and has inserted them into this passage from section 3. But there is another word in this passage from *Héliogabale* which Sanguineti does not appropriate, and this omission displays a significant facet

⁴⁸³ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 91, italics mine.

of his citational strategy. The word in question is “cruauté”. It is a word which Sanguineti used, unmistakably in an Artaudian mode, in the title of his essay “Per una letteratura della crudeltà”, and it is the most important Artaudian buzz-word, immortalized in his transgressive manifesto “The Theatre of Cruelty.”⁴⁸⁴ The fact that this word remains unvoiced in Sanguineti's poem, in spite of its proximity in Artaud's text to words which he *does* take, might seem arbitrary but it is part of a pattern which will be described shortly.

In spite of the absence of this crucial word, the invocation of Artaud does bring with it an Artaudian lexis of cruelty in section 3. Images of rotting flesh, body fluids and medical abnormalities recur here (“sacrificio dello sperma”, “il divincolarsi fittizio e cancrenoso delle qualità profetiche / nella cavità dei canali auricolari”, “cranio di creta”, “capillari generativi”, “i cadaveri con i polsi vermicolari”), as indeed they do throughout the whole of *Laborintus*. Indeed Risso writes that

Ad Artaud è sicuramente legato il modo di mettere in scena il corpo, frammentato e separato, ridotto ai singoli organi, al cervello e alle viscere, senza nessun compiacimento, in maniere davvero letterariamente spiazzante ed eversiva, tanto risulta freddo e quasi oggettivo. Il corpo è messo a nudo.⁴⁸⁵

Niva Lorenzini, in her study “Corporalità e crudeltà nella poesia degli anni sessanta” connects the atomisation of the word with that of the body when she speaks of “il corpo-parola fatto a pezzi dalla società”,⁴⁸⁶ and she connects the fragmentation of the human body, in Sanguineti and in other poets of the sixties (including Amelia Rosselli, Antonio Porta and Alda Merini), with Artaud's theory of “cruauté’.” Cruelty for Artaud, Lorenzini writes, is “nel senso che esso si tinge di sangue [...] secondo una modalità di chirurgia o addirittura da macelleria”.⁴⁸⁷ Indeed even *the body*, mercilessly fragmented, becomes involved in this process of “montage” that

⁴⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 25-26.

⁴⁸⁶ N. Lorenzini, “Corporalità e crudeltà nella poesia degli anni sessanta”, in *From Eugenio Montale to Amelia Rosselli*, p. 6.

⁴⁸⁷ Lorenzini, “Corporalità e crudeltà”, p. 6.

Sanguineti discussed in his essay on citation; in Section 1, for example, in this image of corporal collage: “cuore ritagliato / e incollato e illustrato con documentazioni viscerali” (L 73).

So, while Sanguineti does not actually quote from the more familiar Artaudian texts, and while he side-lines the Artaudian buzz-word, Artaud's theory and lexis of “cruelty” is evoked, indirectly, through the citation from *Héliogabale*. This is a pattern in the quotation mechanisms in *Laborintus*, and a key feature of Sanguineti's citational programme. We can see this also in his appropriation of fragments from Dante. Sanguineti quotes from Benvenuto da Imola's *Commentum super Dantis Comoediam*, from Dante's own self-commentary (the Epistle to Cangrande), from the sonnet addressed to Guido, as well as from the *Convivio*. But he never quotes from the *Commedia itself*, which, of course, is the crucial text behind *Laborintus*. Renata Sperandio discusses this phenomenon, stating that we experience the Dantisms in *Laborintus* “filtered through Benvenuto da Imola's XIV century's comment on Dante's text”,⁴⁸⁸ and that these citations could thus be called “meta-citations”, which give us a mediated Dante, a “sort of background Dantism, a narrative and cognitive texture that reveals the cultural and ideological monument represented by Dante”.⁴⁸⁹

Risso explains that these citations make it evident that “non sia possibile un contatto diretto con la poesia, la cui natura viene identificata con il continuo rinvio a niente altro che a se stessa”.⁴⁹⁰ Sanguineti distances himself from his sources with these games: the snippets that he offers us are very often at one remove from what we would expect or hope for, and so the citations constantly elude us and frustrate our aspirations. This is one way in which Sanguineti moves away from Eliot's

⁴⁸⁸ R. Sperandio, *Dantean Reverberations: Four Readers of Dante in the Twentieth Century. A Study on the Dantes of Primo Levi, Edoardo Sanguineti, Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney*. PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham, 2009, p. 96.

⁴⁸⁹ Sperandio, *Dantean Reverberations*, p. 102.

⁴⁹⁰ Sica, *Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 69-70.

method, for Eliot, when he draws on the giants of “Tradition”, gives us what we want (or what we expect): when he quotes from Dante it is from famous lines of the *Inferno*, and when he quotes from Baudelaire, it is from equally well-known and identifiable texts.

In fact Sanguineti side-lines and even banishes some of his source texts using another technique which we could, to some extent, attribute to Eliot. Giuliani, in his notes to the extracts published in *I novissimi*, provides us with indications of the sources of the texts used for section 23, the most complex plurilingual and citational collage in *Laborintus* (which we considered at the very beginning of this chapter):

I frammenti in lingua greca sono tratti dalla Retorica e dalla Poetica di Aristotele, quelli in inglese dai neoplatonici di Cambridge (ved. Cassirer: *La rinascenza platonica in Inghilterra e la scuola di Cambridge*). La fonte francese indicata dall'A. è: *Nouveaux entretiens sur les sciences secrètes ou le Comte de Gabalis* (Cologne, 1691). [...] “Unruhig” = inquieto (con rifer. alla prima parte del *Faust* di Goethe). [...] Il penultimo verso è una citazione da un saggio di H. Reed su Klee.⁴⁹¹

The conspicuousness of the references in the *Novissimi* anthology, which Sanguineti must have sanctioned, recalls Eliot's copious notes to *The Waste Land*. But on closer inspection, these notes seem, like Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land*, to be red herrings, giving us only part of the story. And indeed Sanguineti's notes go further than Eliot's, in that at times they even mislead us entirely. Risso identifies the mistakes in Giuliani's notes, saying that this “quadro di Giuliani va [...] puntualizzato e corretto”.

He lists Giuliani's catalogue of errors:

Il riferimento al *Faust* di Goethe è, per precisione, sia alla didascalia della scena “Nacht” della I parte sia della II parte; quanto ai frammenti in lingua inglese, essi provengono sì dai neoplatonici di Cambridge, ma non tutti si trovano nel saggio di Cassirer. Quanto alla fonte francese, essa non è, come per le precedenti sezioni, i *Nouveaux entretiens*, bensì, significativamente, i *Mémoires* di Goldoni, in particolare le pagine relative alla riforma teatrale, al comico e al patetico.

Per quanto riguarda il patetico, è esatto il rimando alla *Retorica* e alla *Poetica*, anche se il mediatore è [...] Metastasio, mentre gli altri frammenti in greco compongono un sintagma unico e di senso compiuto [...] che proviene sì da Aristotele ma dalla *Politica* [...] e soprattutto, anche in questo caso, sempre attraverso la mediazione dell'*Estratto dell'Arte Poetica di Aristotele* di Metastasio.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹¹ Giuliani, *I novissimi*, p. 115-16.

⁴⁹² Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 270 -71.

Risso teases out the significance of this, saying that, for example

la correzione di Giuliani, con Goldoni al posto di *Gabalís*, non costituisce, in quest'ottica, focalizzando sul manifesto di poetica, una pura e semplice sostituzione didascalica, poiché l'insospettata presenza della celebre coppia, Goldoni e Metastasio, sarà [...] gravida di conseguenze.⁴⁹³

Risso's revelations constitute quite an extreme *exposé* of a technique of misdirection - this is by no means sloppy note-taking – it is clearly a carefully planned and executed attack on literary authority with which Sanguineti mocks the source-hunters in the academy. This demonstrates his declaration given in an interview that “Se usavo dei modelli, cioè riferimenti, questi erano sfigurati, degradati, resi caotici”.⁴⁹⁴

Whether Giuliani was aware of the misdirections contained within his notes is unclear – Sanguineti may simply have provided these notes for Giuliani to include, and not spelled out his strategy. The fact that Giuliani himself misdirects the reader in an analogous fashion in his often farcically inaccurate “definitions” in his tongue-in-cheek “Glossario” to *Il giovane Max* suggests that Giuliani might have been complicit in this. But whether or not Giuliani was party to this trick, the following comment that he makes regarding Sanguineti's technique of *citazionismo* in one of his notes to section 23 is instructive: “La trama dei frammenti consente (qui come altrove) una doppia lettura: riallacciando i piani linguistici e conservandoli frantumati.” Thus the *citazionismo*, just like the *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*, opens out the text to the reader, who must “decidere” how to read it, either attempting to piece together the fragments, or revelling in its plurality. Yet again, the reader must become an activist, must collaborate with the author and “re-write” the poem in order to “read” it. Thus the citations in *Laborintus* do indeed enact what Sanguineti himself theorized in “Per una teoria della citazione” - they are assembled

⁴⁹³ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 271.

⁴⁹⁴ Butcher, “Da Laborintus”, p. 227.

into a complex “montage” which thrives on “interruption” and on “shock”.

Risso argues that each citation enters completely into Sanguineti's “organismo testuale, dove il tutto viene fuso insieme, secondo la logica autoriale che tutto è citazione” and that as a result this has the effect of “svuota[re] ogni presenza di qualsiasi idea di autorità o di preminenza rispetto alle altre componenti”.⁴⁹⁵ Risso stresses the horizontal, non-hierarchical nature of the citational practice again here:

frasi fatte, sintagmi originali, microcitazioni di reminiscenze di discorsi personali o di lettere private, citazioni di *auctoritates* vengono trattate allo stesso modo e quindi convivono sullo stesso piano in perfetto equilibrio, conferendo al testo una struttura orizzontale, poiché tutto si amalgama – e tra un ricordo, la *boutade* di una ragazza danese o Marx non c'è nessuna differenza. Questo ci mostra chiaramente l'atteggiamento 'dantesco', estremamente aperto, dell'autore, che dà cittadinanza ad ogni elemento del reale, ponendo Spinoza o i Salmi, Brecht e la cronaca giornalistica, Tommaso d'Aquino, Schickele e la ragazza straniera su un piano del tutto orizzontale, paritario.⁴⁹⁶

The citations, then, just like the plurilingual fragments and pluristylistic juxtapositions, are instrumental in bringing about the new reader-turned-activist capable of confronting and collaborating in the production of polysemous works of art.

Risso's analysis, in the light of Sanguineti's “Per una teoria della citazione”, is, for the most part, excellent. However, Risso does not seem to recall that this system of interruptions brought about by the montage technique, for Sanguineti, should also incite the reader to “godere” his or her experience. We considered Barthes' definition of the *jouissance* inherent in the experience of reading a pluralistic text in the Introduction. As we have seen, the constant clashing and multiplicity that is inscribed in *Laborintus* as a result of the interconnected strategies of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* (which form the basis of his “complicazione-alienazione”) create interruptions and shocks in our reading experience. These interruptions, which constantly defeat our expectations, are certainly exasperating,

⁴⁹⁵ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 31.

⁴⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 26-27.

disorientating, disconcerting, alienating, challenging, unsettling – but what Risso seems to miss is that they are also *exhilarating*. They are moments of orgiastic release, moments in which we transcend the stagnation in our lives and in our language and enter, just for a moment, into a Bakhtinian *carnivalesque* space. Giuliani hits the mark when he describes the function of the assault on language in *Laborintus* as akin to a cross between an orgasm and a hallucination. For Giuliani, Sanguineti's radicalised language is not “un divertimento” any more than Barthes' *jouissance* is a “divertimento”, but, just as there is for Barthes, there is an exhilarating quality to the sense of alienation that it creates in the reader:

Le parole greche francesi inglesi non sono “citazioni”; hanno una certa parentela con i grotteschi linguistici di Rabelais, una funzione esasperante l'oggetto, lo isolano per un istante e lo esaltano nel flusso della sintassi seriale. Il poliglottismo di Sanguineti non è un divertimento, ci suggerisce la dismisura dell'anima materiata di parole, ci dà un'impressione di realtà maniaca e drogata oppure la sensazione di trovarci a contatto d'un formicolante liquor seminale.⁴⁹⁷

This bizarre image of Giuliani's describes the shocks engendered by the *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* as hitting the back of our throats like a shot of tingling alcoholic ejaculate. This “liquore” is potentially dangerous in that there is a risk that it will knock us out and bring about an “évanouissement”⁴⁹⁸, but, if we are lucky, the “cohabitation des langues” will allow us to “accède à la jouissance” and experience a “Babel heureuse”.⁴⁹⁹

Modernist Mummie in Sanguineti's Citazionismo

Sanguineti, then, drew consciously and deliberately on the Modernist citational technique, and transcended his models in a number of ways which we have just outlined. But there is another aspect to this that we must now consider, and that is the fact that Sanguineti also included *extracts from Eliot and Pound's texts* in his

⁴⁹⁷ A. Giuliani, “Laborintus”, in *il verri* 2, 1957, p. 86-7.

⁴⁹⁸ Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, IV, p. 229.

⁴⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 219.

own texts. And in this way the citationist masters themselves become part of the repertoire of authors from which the younger poets pillage. They become part of the “ruins”, part of the “*mondo della cultura, della tradizione culturale*”, mere exhibits, amongst the many others, in what Sanguineti called his “galleria di mummie esibibili”.⁵⁰⁰

A number of critics have identified relatively straight-forward allusions to Eliot and Pound in Sanguineti's works. Alfredo Giuliani began this by drawing attention to the allusion to Tiresias in his notes in the *Novissimi* anthology.⁵⁰¹ Alberto Godioli identifies an Eliotic allusion in the words “mese d'aprile” in section 8 of *Laborintus*, from “April is the cruellest month” in *The Waste Land*. Gabriella Sica detects an Eliotic allusion at the end of section 16 of *Laborintus* to the myth of the Fisher King.⁵⁰² Niva Lorenzini's article “Eliot e i ‘Novissimi’” deals in more depth with allusions to Eliot in Sanguineti's works. She writes that “nei testi di Sanguineti le citazioni eliotiane compaiono in effetti in numero rilevante”.⁵⁰³ She sees, for example, Eliot's “Burnt Norton” behind Sanguineti's use of the theme of time in *Laborintus*,⁵⁰⁴ she traces a series of recurring echoes of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* which operate “come controcanto” throughout Sanguineti's works, and she identifies in *Passaggio* (1961-62) “un ritmo da marcia macabra: e si pensa a una non diversa *Triumphal March*, dissacrazione parodica di insensati riti da parata”.⁵⁰⁵

Lorenzini also pinpoints two instances of direct and explicit quotation, in addition to the more vague allusions mentioned above, from Eliot in Sanguineti's works. Both occur in the “mistilinguismo polifonico” of his *libretti* written with Berio, *Laborintus II* and *A-Ronne*, in amongst the “affioramenti biblici e reminiscenze

⁵⁰⁰ Lorenzini, “Eliot e i ‘Novissimi’”, p. 117.

⁵⁰¹ Lorenzini, “Eliot e i ‘Novissimi’”, p. 108.

⁵⁰² Sica, *Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 33.

⁵⁰³ Lorenzini, “Eliot e i ‘Novissimi’”, p. 107-08.

⁵⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 108.

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 109-110.

dantesche”.⁵⁰⁶ *A-Ronne* includes fragments from parts I and V of “East Coker” in the *Four Quartets*. Eliot’s line “in my beginning is my end” generates the following multilingual cascade:

a: ah: ha: hamm: anfang:
in: in principio: nel mio
principio:
am anfang: in my beginning:
ach: in principio erat
das wort: en arkè en:
verbum: am anfang war: in principio
erat: der sinn: caro nel mio principio: o logos: è la mia
carne:
am anfang war: in principio: die kraft:
die tat:
nel mio principio⁵⁰⁷

And in *Laborintus II*, Sanguineti combines lines from the first Canto of Dante’s *Inferno* and lines from Eliot, again from “East Coker”, as we shall see shortly.

Let us take a closer look at *Laborintus II*, which concocts what David Osmond-Smith calls a “heady brew” out of many of the techniques which we identified in *Laborintus* (*plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo*, *citazionismo*).⁵⁰⁸ In this later piece, though, these techniques are used more densely, and also function quite differently in some crucial ways. *Laborintus II* was a collaborative project between the composer Luciano Berio and Sanguineti, commissioned by French radio to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Dante’s birth. It is “a piece of musical theatre in which music, text and gesture are integrated”.⁵⁰⁹ The libretto builds on the technique of *citazionismo* of the original *Laborintus*; it is a montage composed almost exclusively of citations from medieval and modern texts (including Eliot, as we have seen, and also Pound), combined and often radically adulterated. There are Medieval authors used in the montage: the Spanish encyclopaedist Isidore of Seville’s commentary on the *Old Testament*, Benvenuto da Imola’s commentary on the *Commedia*, and Dante’s *Vita*

⁵⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 110. Stefano Maria Casella also refers to these same two citations from Eliot, clearly drawing on Lorenzini.

⁵⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 111.

⁵⁰⁸ Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, p. 72.

⁵⁰⁹ V. Hand, “*Laborintus II*: A Neo-avant-garde Celebration of Dante”, in *Italian Studies* 53, 1998, p. 122.

nuova and *Inferno*. The modern texts used are, as Vivienne Hand puts it in her article on the text,

ones that were in some way inspired by Dante: Ezra Pound's 'Canto XLV', subtitled 'With usura' (*Cantos*); T.S. Eliot's 'East Coker' (*Four Quartets*); and Sanguineti's own previous work – the original *Laborintus* - quotations from which are, for the most part, intermingled with the new lyrics that Sanguineti composed especially for the libretto.⁵¹⁰

Let us consider in more detail the section of *Laborintus II* which fuses Eliot and Dante, to display Sanguineti's technique of *citazionismo* at work:

e nel mezzo: e in una selva:
oscura: selvaggia selva: e aspra: ed una lupa: ma: not
only
in the middle of the way: una lupa: in the middle: concealing paura:
ma questa bestia uccide: uccide: but all the way in a
dark wood:
in a bramble: nel mezzo: the years of *l'entre deux*
guerres: una lupa:
nel mezzo[.]⁵¹¹

The Italian lines here, from Canto I of Dante's *Inferno*, and the English (and French) lines, from Eliot's "East Coker" II, are fragmented, rearranged and interspersed with one another. The extracts from Eliot also display, in themselves, quotation from Dante: Eliot's "in the middle of the way" is, of course, an appropriation of Dante's "nel mezzo del cammin", and his "dark wood" is of course Dante's "selva oscura", so we have a sort of citational *mise-en-abîme* effect here.

This serves to exemplify Sanguineti's declaration that "tutto è citazione", for here *even the citations* are citations themselves. And this is the difference between a traditional "source-hunting" mode of analysis which is tied in to concepts of "influence", and a mode of Bathesian intertextuality – as Graham Allen explains,

To say that the text is constructed from a mosaic of quotations does not mean we can find the text's inter-texts and then view them as the signified of the text's signifiers. The inter-texts, other works of literature, other kinds of texts, are themselves intertextual constructs, are themselves able to offer us nothing more than signifiers.⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰ Hand, "Laborintus II", p. 124. We must add to this list the self-citations from Sanguineti's poem *Purgatorio dell'Inferno*, which Hand missed, erroneously attributing these lines to new lyrics composed for the libretto.

⁵¹¹ E. Sanguineti, *Per musica*, (Modena, 1993), p. 54.

⁵¹² Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 73.

In Sanguineti's *palus*, “tutto è citazione” - not only our texts but also our minds are filled with the ruins of other peoples' thoughts; Sanguineti has learned from what Declan Kiberd calls the “modernist discovery” [...] “that [even] the subconscious is not individualised, but the greatest plagiarist of all”.⁵¹³ And in order to propel this even further, later on in the libretto, Sanguineti mummifies *himself* by fusing the Eliot/Dante fragments with words from the original *Laborintus*:

et dans le labyrinthe : e in una selva : selvaggia selva e forte :
ed una lupa : all the way : l'entre deux guerres :: una lupa :
dans le labyritnthe : con paura : ma questa bestia uccide : but
not only in the dark wood : ma non soltanto nel mezzo : nous
retournâmes au labyrinthe : una lupa : dans le labyrinthe.⁵¹⁴

What results is a layered infernal vision, stemming from all three authors, which flattens not only all hierarchies between the authors, but also notions of time and history, and generates a plurivocal “howl” denouncing this timeless *inferno*.

While the passages that we have just looked at exemplify intertextual plurality, they also demonstrate that the citations in *Laborintus II* work in a different way to those in *Laborintus*. The citations here, from Eliot, Dante and Sanguineti himself, although they are fragments, and are thus removed from their original contexts, are not actually divorced from their original *meaning* in the way as the citations in *Laborintus*. Nor does Sanguineti make the citations elude us by citing from obscure texts and leaving more important intertexts unvoiced, as he does in *Laborintus*. This becomes clear if we compare the very familiar words from Canto I of the *Inferno* which are used in *Laborintus II* with the Dantean citations in *Laborintus*, in which Sanguineti refused to cite from the *Commedia* and danced tantalisingly around this key-text. Here, in *Laborintus II*, the citations are not semantically desecrated – in fact they carry with them precisely the meaning with which they were imbued in their original texts. Renata Sperandoli writes, to this effect, that

⁵¹³ Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, p. 28.

⁵¹⁴ Sanguineti, *Per musica*, p. 55.

the text of *Laborintus II* is less complex than that of the original *Laborintus*: the sources are definitely more detectable and the process of manipulation tends to produce a synthesis whereby the narrative thread is much more recognisable.⁵¹⁵

David Osmond-Smith says of the fragments that they “represent[...] in skeletal outline the narrations from which they came”⁵¹⁶ and that they are “often chosen to represent salient features of the original text”.⁵¹⁷ This is not a statement that could be made of *Laborintus*, and in this sense the “shock effect” could be said to be reduced in *Laborintus II*. But there are other ways in which the “shock effect” is increased in *Laborintus II*, which have to do with the fact that this is not simply a poem, or a libretto, but that it has an accompanying score and also, at times, a *mise-en-scène*.

One way in which the libretto of *Laborintus II* extends and develops the compositional practice of montage used in *Laborintus* is that the words are combined with other elements which serve to increase the intensity of the experience of plurality and create new kinds of “interference”. The score is interpreted, live, by a group of musicians: one solo male speaker, three female singers, a chorus of eight actor-singers, a jazz orchestra and a small string ensemble, all of which are superimposed onto a pre-recorded cassette of electronic music. Berio's score displays musical equivalents to *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*. For example, Berio's musical accompaniments to Sanguineti's text range in their dynamic markings from “ppp” to “fff”, vary enormously in tempo, and the musical styles range from

[Afro-Cuban] jazz sections conveying the sins of the night club and the modern world, to the Renaissance-style 'canzonetta' accompanying the references to suffering and death in the second quotation from the *Vita Nuova*, and the chaotic mixture of percussion, electronic and choral sounds evoking the uncontrolled temper of the Wrathful in Dante's Hell – the music is consistently in tune with the mood of the lyrics.⁵¹⁸

In this sense, the musical citations cohere semantically with the textual fragment, and so the interruptions and shock come about not from fitting *text and music*

⁵¹⁵ Sperandoli, *Dantean Reverberations*, p. 111.

⁵¹⁶ Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, p. 72.

⁵¹⁷ D. Osmond-Smith, *Playing on Words: A Guide to Luciano Berio's Sinfonia* (London, 1985), p. 9.

⁵¹⁸ Hand, “Laborintus II”, p. 145.

together in jarring ways, but at the sites in which text-music units interface with one another.

Furthermore, these musical components actually enter into the citational game, fleshing out another dimension of Sanguineti's statement that "tutto è citazione". David Osmond-Smith writes that the relationships between the different instruments and voices are sometimes emphasized. For instance, at the beginning of the piece

the clarinet and the second trombone each take a note from a singer and develop it, and in so doing they play a fast passage imitating the singer. At another point the soloists and the eight actors imitate the cello, the double-bass and the trombone. Or a soprano mimics the cello, and the flute the soprano. By the time the message reaches the flute, it has become distorted.⁵¹⁹

This imitation and mimicry is a form of internal citation. And *Laborintus II*, when it is performed as a theatrical piece rather than as a radio piece, introduces still further elements of interruption, at a visual level. Consider, for example, the extra "shock effect" of the following feature of one particular staging of the piece (it is Berio speaking):

When we performed [it] at La Scala, Sanguineti himself produced it. Maybe that was a mistake. I have nothing against genitals, but I did not like the spectacle of giant plastic phalluses slowly erecting on stage.⁵²⁰

These musical and visual elements contribute enormously to the creation of an experience of plurality for the spectator, forming a dense polyphonic "text" (in the Barthesian sense). *Laborintus II*, then, although in some ways it normalises the experimental Modernist techniques, manages, with its mixture of media and generic hybridity, to take the Benjaminian shock effect engendered by the montage in directions that were not possible in *Laborintus*. With it, Sanguineti and Berio create a veritable Brechtian "epic theatre" for postwar Italy, actually *staging* the alienation inherent in modern life. We will return to *Laborintus II* later on, when we consider

⁵¹⁹ *Two Interviews*, p. 162.

⁵²⁰ *ibid.*, p.161.

the role of citations from Pound in Sanguineti and Berio's indictment of usury. But now let us bring Ezra Pound firmly back into the discussion, first by considering Sanguineti's critical responses to the *Cantos*, and then by tracing how Poundian techniques figure in *Laborintus*.

Ezra Pound: Il grande fascino

We have seen that Eliot was influential for Sanguineti in leading him to Dante, and that Eliot functioned as a model of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo*, and *citazionismo*. But what about Pound - can the same be said of him? Why has he remained somewhat in the wings throughout this chapter? Many critics, in their (often superficial) evaluations of the Modernist influence on Sanguineti, have consolidated the two poets' influence, but, as we have seen, the critics who analyse this debt more closely (e.g. Lorenzini) have mainly focussed on Eliot, and Sanguineti himself more often than not speaks about Eliot rather than about the poets *as a pair*. In an interview, Fabio Gambaro asks Sanguineti to speak about his relationship to Pound, and Sanguineti answers, displaying some reserve: "L'avevo letto. L'avevo trovato di grande fascino, ma nei suoi confronti giocava la connotazione politica che lo rendeva meno praticabile." So the political dimension - Pound's ties with Fascism - was clearly a problem for Sanguineti, as it was for many poets and critics, both in Italy (as we saw in the Introduction), and indeed beyond.⁵²¹

But Erminio Risso describes Pound as an "autore sempre presente [...] tra i referenti indicati come prefiguratori di Sanguineti",⁵²² and Luciano Anceschi, as we saw in Chapter II, was adamant that Pound's impact on the Novissimi towered over Eliot's, so perhaps there is more to link the two poets than we are led to believe. It is worth noting that Sanguineti used the word "fascino" to describe his reaction to Pound's poetry. As we saw earlier he also used the word ("affascinava") in relation to Eliot's poetry. Sanguineti, then, not only read but was fascinated by *both poets*, although he claims that Eliot had more of an impact on his works.

But did he? Or is it possible that Sanguineti is putting up smoke-screens for

⁵²¹ Gambaro, "Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti", p. 24.

⁵²² Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 36.

political reasons, in a similar way to Eliot with his sources for *The Waste Land*? Sanguineti certainly had good reason to gloss over this Poundian influence, perhaps even more so than Eliot did for Tennyson and Whitman – there is no need to spell out the dangers for a historical materialist/anarchist poet of being associated with a poet notorious for his ties to Fascism. But let us put aside Sanguineti's reluctance to declare poetic kinship with Pound for the moment, and consider Sanguineti's own critical statements on Pound, as well as various manifestations of the American poet's impact on his creative works.

Sanguineti Reviews the 'Pisan Cantos'

Very early in Sanguineti's career, in 1954 – the year in which he finished writing his Dante thesis *Interpretazione di Malebolge* - Sanguineti wrote a review of the “Pisan Cantos”, which had just been published in Italian translation. In this review, he mentions or quotes not only from the “Pisan Cantos”, but from various other parts of the *Cantos*, and also from Pound's “Moeurs contemporaines” from *Lustra*, and “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley”. He also includes citations from Eliot's *Four Quartets* (from “East Coker” in particular), *The Waste Land*, and from *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. In so doing he displays the breadth of his reading in both poets' oeuvre at this very early point in his literary *formazione*.

Sanguineti charts what he identifies as a change in Pound's poetics throughout the writing of the *Cantos*. He sees an evolution, from the mood in what he calls the famous “definizione interna dei *Cantos*”:⁵²³

And they want to know what we talked about?
“de litteris et de armis, praestantibusque ingeniis,
Both of ancient times and our own; books, arms,
And of men of unusual genius,
Both of ancient times and our own, in short the usual subjects
Of conversation between intelligent men” (C 51)

⁵²³ E. Sanguineti, “I Canti Pisani”, *Aut Aut*, 22, 1954, p. 329.

as: “estremi e privatissimi e lussuosissimi approdi della cultura contemporanea”.⁵²⁷ Both authors, Joyce and Pound, achieve “il senso tenace di una totale trascrizione [...] di un mondo mentale perfettamente compiuto”, a perfectly rendered transcription of an internal world, as a complete mental universe:⁵²⁸ a transcription that is “assolutamente privata”, but that does not, as a result, become any less “assolutamente oggettiva”, rigorous, tangible and measurable.⁵²⁹ This technical impersonality “raggiunge quella diversa impersonalità – privatissimo lusso davvero – che è propria di ogni grande lirica: una particolare 'pubblico' certezza”.⁵³⁰ Sanguineti concludes his review thus:

E storicamente intanto, anche grazie a questo libro, il senso della lirica ritorna problematico: un'opera come questa, ha scritto Montale, “presuppone la prossima fine del mondo”; di un mondo, certamente, e per quel che qui più importa, di un mondo poetico, particolarmente; e l'opera di Pound nel senso della distruzione è anche troppo facilmente valutabile; ma ciò che soprattutto qui si afferma è la determinazione di un inedito orizzonte poetico; poeticamente fondato, la germinazione di un mondo.⁵³¹

Here Sanguineti attributes some of the problematising and subverting of the lyric mode in the twentieth century to Pound, whose *Cantos* played their part in destroying the old poetic world and opened up unheralded poetic horizons. For the young Sanguineti, Pound's assault on language and poetic form has not only been *destructive*, it has also been *creative* and has brought about the “germination” of a new world. Pound does indeed, at least at this very early stage of Sanguineti's career, seem to constitute for him the “miglior fabbro”. And, crucially, Sanguineti's focus on Pound's approach to the “crisis of language”, to his technique of “montage”, and to the analogy with *Finnegans Wake*, bolsters much of what we discussed in Chapters I and II.

⁵²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 334.

⁵²⁸ *ibid.*

⁵²⁹ *ibid.*

⁵³⁰ *ibid.*

⁵³¹ *ibid.*

Pound in Sanguineti's Poetry

Does Sanguineti's early “fascino” for Pound bring about Poundian elements in Sanguineti's creative works? Sabrina Stroppa identifies several Poundian traits to *Laborintus*, picking up on Sanguineti's analysis of various elements of Pound's poetics in the “Pisan Cantos” review, which she says can be used as “indizi” for the “decifrazione” of Sanguineti's own poetry. Stroppa writes that the rhythm of Sanguineti's poetry follows the Poundian “ritmo del pensiero e quindi dell’umano parlare” and that Sanguineti's use of insertion of dates into *Laborintus* and his deviant punctuation can be traced to Pound's *Cantos*.⁵³² For Gabriella Sica, the stylistic and linguistic elements which make up Pound's “tessuto poetico” are

il polimaterismo linguistico, le citazioni fantomatiche in lingua straniera, le monotonie ossessive, le lacerazioni ritmiche, le forme ideogrammatiche, le distorsioni ironiche, le deformazioni topografiche e sintattiche.⁵³³

These elements, at a structural level, according to Sica, expose “l'impossibilità lacerante, nella società contemporanea, del sublime”.⁵³⁴ This fits in with our previous discussions regarding the problematising of the discourse of the “sublime”. Sica then argues that “persiste in Pound una connotazione di fondo fortemente romantica” that is expressed “nella stessa strutturazione dell'opera in tre momenti: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* e *Paradiso*, di evidente accendenza dantesca, come storia della poesia alla ricerca dell'assoluto”.⁵³⁵ In other words Sica sees aspects in Pound that are in tension, and which attempt (or at least yearn) to resolve this tension. But for Sanguineti, Sica says, things are very different:

il sublime paradisiaco è invece irreversibilmente profanato e deturpato nell'inferno reificante della storia; stravolto il mito romantico, consolatorio e sublimante, della poesia, tutte le possibilità sono affidate alla storia.⁵³⁶

For Sanguineti, then, nothing redeems the chaos. Sica's analysis coheres with

⁵³² S. Stroppa, “Sanguineti, o del ritmo”, in *Album Sanguineti*, p. 188.

⁵³³ Sica, *Edoardo Sanguineti*, p. 37.

⁵³⁴ *ibid.*

⁵³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 37-38.

⁵³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 38.

Sanguineti's statements on the difference between *The Waste Land* and *Laborintus* as embodied in terms of the techniques of *plurilinguismo* and *citazionismo* that we have already considered, and serves to include Pound in this discussion that has previously centred mainly around Eliot.

Erminio Risso expresses this difference between Pound and Sanguineti in terms of structuring principles in much the same way as Sica:

mentre in Pound [...] esiste una struttura poetica, soprattutto in relazione ai *Cantos*, verticale, nel senso che la discesa agli inferi organizza il materiale secondo un canone e una logica ancora dantesche e medievalescenti, in Sanguineti, invece i materiali sono tutti accostati appunto in uno stesso piano orizzontale: durante l'attraversamento della palude, all'alto e al basso (nozioni di una cultura medievale) si aggiunge l'idea di spostamento non uniforme (nozione del paradigma scientifico moderno).⁵³⁷

This presents Pound, like Eliot, as akin to Benjamin's "Angelus Novus" *before* the storm, hoping to create a "wholeness" out of the ruins that surround him. Sanguineti, though, as we have seen, is the angel's incarnation *after* the tempest - he knows that striving towards unity in the modern world is a redundant enterprise. Sanguineti's world, as he stated in his essay on *plurilinguismo*, is simply composed of "rovine su rovine".⁵³⁸

But Risso also warns us against attempting to make artificially neat identifications between Pound and Sanguineti's poetics, arguing that certain statements in Sanguineti's review of the "Pisan Cantos" (and he must be thinking of Sabrina Stroppa in particular here) have led to

una sorta di automatismo eccessivo nel parallelo Pound/Sanguineti, gettando il Pound di Sanguineti su Sanguineti stesso, quando, invece, strumenti o funzioni apparentemente simili vengono utilizzate in maniera decisamente antitetica; diverso è l'atteggiamento dei due autori.⁵³⁹

Risso suggests that critics have perhaps got a little carried away by the apparent similarities in the two poets' "babele linguistica" and by some of Sanguineti's assertions in his Poundian review. Risso suggests that we need to "rendere più labile

⁵³⁷ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 36-37.

⁵³⁸ Sanguineti, "Il plurilinguismo", p. 297.

⁵³⁹ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 61-62.

il rapporto con Pound”; that while we are right to recognise “similitudini nelle tecniche”, we should not forget that the actual textual strategies and the objectives of the two authors are “notevolmente diversi”.⁵⁴⁰ Risso is certainly correct when he says that there is limited merit in attempting to force an alignment between the poets' techniques. As we have discovered, the interest in *Laborintus* often lies precisely in the sites in which Sanguineti's radically intertextual strategies *integrate* lessons learned from his Modernist models but also *depart from them*. And so, rather than positing Sanguineti in a direct line descending from Eliot and Pound, Risso places the American Modernists somewhat off to one side, and maps out the following “constellation” of intertextual dialogues:

una linea che si apre con Baudelaire, per procedere con Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Majakovskij, Brecht, Beckett, fino appunto a Sanguineti, con aperture, naturalmente, in alcuni casi, verso Breton, Lorca e Apollinaire, o, certo, verso Eliot e Pound; non si tratta quindi di una linea quanto di una costellazione.⁵⁴¹

Pound, Sanguineti and the Theme of Usury

*questo è il gatto con gli stivali, questa è la pace di Barcellona
fra Carlo V e Clemente VII, è la locomotiva, è il pesco
fiorito, il cavalluccio marino: ma se volti il foglio Alessandro,
ci vedi il denaro...*

*e questo è il denaro,
e questi sono i generali con le loro mitragliatrici, e sono i
cimiteri
con le loro tombe, e sono le casse di risparmio con le loro
cassette
di sicurezza, e sono i libri di storia con le loro storie:
ma se volti il foglio, Alessandro, non ci vedi niente.*⁵⁴²

There is, however, one particular element of Sanguineti's dialogue with Pound which has not yet been considered and which is certainly worth investigating. According to Goodwin, Pound passed on to subsequent generations of poets “sometimes a style, sometimes a tone, sometimes a subject matter, sometimes a form

⁵⁴⁰ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 49.

⁵⁴¹ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 49-50.

⁵⁴² E. Sanguineti, “Purgatorio dell'inferno”, in *Segnalibro* (Milan, 1982) p. 83.

of construction”.⁵⁴³ Although in general poets have had recourse to Pound more often in stylistic terms than for subject matter, some of his theoretical and thematic concerns *have* had an impact on other poets. For example, Christopher Beach informs us that Pound’s assertion that “poets are the antennae of the race” was “frequently summoned as an argument for a poetry relevant to the world of political, social, and economic realities” in postwar America.⁵⁴⁴ Goodwin notes that Pound has also “had some influence in bringing certain subjects into poetry”, particularly economic subjects, for example for the poets Edwin Muir, Hugh MacDiarmid, and Osbert Sitwell,⁵⁴⁵ and for William Carlos Williams whose poetry, in Goodwin's estimation, mimics rather unoriginally Pound’s views on the subject of usury.

Indeed, it is the Poundian theme of usury which Sanguineti also has recourse to. A very significant embodiment of the Pound-Sanguineti dialogue is in their attitude to money and economics, and in particular to usury, which is developed most thoroughly in *Laborintus II*. Pound's own stance on money and usury, which manifests not only as a major theme throughout the *Cantos*, but appears very often in his essays too, stems from Dante's. So, just as we have seen for Sanguineti's *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*, this Modernist influence on Sanguineti mediates a Dantean influence, and reinforces our Dante/Modernists/Neoavantgarde triangulation (in spite of the challenges posed to this by Sanguineti's Petrarchan “confession”). Indeed as though Sanguineti actually sought to *embody* this triangulation, the section on usury in *Laborintus II* fuses quotations from Dante, Pound, and encases them in extracts from his earlier collection *Laborintus*. But before considering this let us first briefly examine the Dantescan roots of Pound's own stance on usury.

⁵⁴³ K. L. Goodwin, *The Influence of Ezra Pound* (London, 1966), p. 218.

⁵⁴⁴ C. Beach, *ABC of Influence: Ezra Pound and the Remaking of American Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1992), p. 25.

⁵⁴⁵ Goodwin, *The Influence of Ezra Pound*, p. 204.

Gabrielle Barfoot's essay "The Theme of Usury in Dante and Pound" is most instructive on this topic. She posits, as one of the "unquestionably vital links between Dante and Pound", "their attitude to usury".⁵⁴⁶ Pope Leo X defined usury in 1515 in the Fifth Lateran Council as "the attempt to draw profit and increment, without labour, without cost, and without risk, out of the use of a thing that does not fructify".⁵⁴⁷ For Dante, the result of exploitation through usury is that "one pays an undue respect to money which is after all just a means of exchange, instead of being productive in itself".⁵⁴⁸ In Dante's day, usurers were considered to have violated both nature and art "by making money beget money", and usury, in the *Divina Commedia*, is punished in one of the lowest circles of Hell.⁵⁴⁹

Pound concurred with the Dantean attitude to money; Barfoot states that Pound considered Dante to be a "model of right thinking on the subject of usury".⁵⁵⁰ For Pound, "usury and speculation" are the "fundamental evils in any society",⁵⁵¹ and money, banks and usury permeate his conception of history. Pound

abhors the gold standard as something anti-human and ultimately responsible for drawing men away from nature and making them surrender themselves to a force that 'divides, shatters and kills'.⁵⁵²

Pound inherits the Medieval view that money has no intrinsic value. Following suit from Dante, Pound states that "It is absurd to speak of [money] as bearing fruit or yielding interest. Gold does not germinate like grain. To represent gold as doing this is to represent it falsely".⁵⁵³

Pound also inherits the Medieval view that usury is not only a violation of nature, but also a violation of art. Usury makes art and creativity wither and become

⁵⁴⁶ G. Barfoot, "The Theme of Usury in Dante and Pound", in *Rivista di Letterature Moderne e Comparate* 30, 1977, p. 154.

⁵⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 258.

⁵⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 257.

⁵⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 254.

⁵⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 270.

⁵⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 255.

⁵⁵² *ibid.*, p. 258.

⁵⁵³ *ibid.*

debased - Barfoot writes that “usurious practices” have a “detrimental effect on the quality of life in general and on the fine arts in particular”.⁵⁵⁴ Pound considers that “in a just and healthy society the state of the arts must be equally healthy”,⁵⁵⁵ that creativity will thrive. A country which “does not get the maximum of best work out of its artists” is a “profoundly foolish” one, because “the artist is one of the few producers. He, the farmer and the artisan create wealth; the rest shift and consume it”.⁵⁵⁶ Barfoot explains that it follows for Pound that

whenever a country connives at usurious practices or – worse still – encourages them in order to achieve international power, the arts cease to be either inspired or inspiring. In fact, [Pound] regards usury as synonymous with the death of genius – an attitude repeatedly expressed in his writings.⁵⁵⁷

Jeffrey Twitchell, making a similar point in his essay “Art and the Spirit of Capitalism: Iconography and History in the 'Usura' Canto”, cites what he calls Pound's

provocative and, for many, outrageous remark that it is possible 'to tell from the quality of a painting the degree of tolerance or intolerance of usury extant in the age and milieu that produced it'.⁵⁵⁸

This, of course, includes the art of writing, and so, as Barfoot explains, “for Pound the corruption of the word – or of the writer's medium of expression – is inseparable from the corruption of monetary systems”.⁵⁵⁹ This means that usury and the rise of capitalism is, for Pound, in large part responsible for bringing about not only the Modernist “crisis of language”, but also the state of psychological degradation and alienation that characterises Modernity. As Twitchell remarked, “Pound intuited [that] the profit motive penetrates into one's very mode of thinking and being.”⁵⁶⁰

For Sanguineti, usury has just as pernicious an effect as it does for Pound and

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 264.

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 268.

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 269.

⁵⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 272.

⁵⁵⁸ J. Twitchell, “Art and the Spirit of Capitalism: Iconography and History in the 'Usura' Canto”, in *Paideuma* 19.3, 1990, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁹ Barfoot, “Usury in Dante and Pound”, p. 256.

⁵⁶⁰ Twitchell, “Art and the Spirit of Capitalism”, p. 22.

for Dante. In spite of their Marxist politics, which differed dramatically from Pound's fascist sympathies, Sanguineti and his Neoavantgarde peers shared Pound's view of usury - or what they called Neo-Capitalism - as a degenerating force in society as a whole, in culture, and in individual psychology. Sanguineti reveals his vituperation of capitalism in many (if not all) of his works. In *Laborintus*, as we have seen, the *Palus Putredinis* embodies the societal breakdown and alienation that has resulted from capitalism. But in *Laborintus II* (1965) this becomes a more specific attack on *usury* in particular, which Sanguineti has recourse to here as a crystallised representation of the capitalist system. Vivienne Hand, in her essay on *Laborintus II* writes that in this piece Sanguineti is “at pains to denounce the morally unacceptable system of capitalism and profit in contemporary Italy” and exposes the historical pervasiveness of usury, the “evil and violence of civilization, from its earliest days [...] to the present age”.⁵⁶¹

As we have already seen, *Laborintus II* is constructed out of medieval and modern quotations, including fragments from Pound's Canto XLV, subtitled “With Usura”. But before we get to the citations from Pound, the stage is already set for the denunciation of usury in *Laborintus II*, beginning with the appearance of Dante's “lupa” (or she-wolf) in the Dante/Eliot passage which we considered earlier. Vivienne Hand notes the significance of the fact that Sanguineti selects the “lupa” rather than either of the other beasts that Dante met at this juncture on his journey, for this she-wolf embodies covetousness and greed. The wolf's insatiable hunger, in the context of *Laborintus II*, is reworked to symbolise usury – she is the “bestia che uccide”:

e nel mezzo: e in una selva:
 oscura: selvaggia selva: e aspra: ed una lupa: ma: not
 only
 in the middle of the way: una lupa: in the middle: concealing paura:
 ma questa bestia uccide: uccide: but all the way in a
 dark wood:
 in a bramble: nel mezzo: the years of *l'entre deux*

⁵⁶¹ Hand, “*Laborintus II*”, p. 125.

guerres: una lupa:
nel mezzo[.]⁵⁶²

The theme of usury returns in a later section of the libretto which Osmond-Smith describes as a list of “incongruously juxtaposed facts and figures from contemporary life”.⁵⁶³ In this list Sanguineti catalogues, in heavily alliterative lyrics, various features of the Neo-Capitalist *inferno*:

tutto tutto tutto
dalla biblioteca
 al babuino
dal 1265
 al 1321
dal ciancuro di potassio
 alla cronaca cittadina
dalla cresima
 alla corte dei continuità
dalla oscurità in cui è sempre immersa la nostra vita
 alla rendita del 4%
dalla carotide
alla tibia
dall'elefante di mare, grande foca del Pacifico fornita di due lunghe zanne
 al 1965
dal fegato
 al frigorifero
dal francobollo
 al formaggio
dalla prova del nove
al cavallo di Troia
dal lapsus linguae
 alla rivoluzione russa
dal piedistallo, che sa sostenere tutte le colonne
 alla folgorazione, atto e feto del folgorare
 alla pietra focaia
 alla luna
 al rame
 alla polvere.⁵⁶⁴

This is a portrait of Neo-Capitalist Italy, with its consumerism, the “corte dei conti” (Treasury Department), and the “rendita di 4%” which was achieved through the usurious practices of the Capitalist system. This gives us a portrait of Italy in the midst of the “miracolo economico”, stripped of any suggestion of glamour.

The theme of usury is brought out much more fiercely in the Dante/Pound section of the libretto which follows from this catalogue, after a short section which

⁵⁶² Sanguineti, *Per musica*, p. 58.

⁵⁶³ Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, p. 72.

⁵⁶⁴ Sanguineti, *Per musica*, p. 59.

confirms the infernal nature of modern life, characterised as a “valle d'abisso : / dolorosa: / oscura” plagued with “diverse lingue” and “strida, e compianto, e lamento”.⁵⁶⁵ The passage, which fuses Dante and Pound's denunciations of usury, is a montage composed of fragments taken from Dante's *Inferno* XI and from Pound's “Usura” Canto:

with usura :

natura lo suo corso prende da divino intelletto e da sua arte :
l'arte vostra quella segue, come 'l maestro fa il discente :
da queste due convene prender sua vita ed avanzar la gente :
l'usuriere altra via tene : per sé natura e per la sua seguace
dispregia :

with usura hath no man a house of good stone :
with usura hath no man a painted paradise on his church wall :
harpes et luthes :
no music is made to endure not to live with
but it is made to sell and sell quickly :

novi tormenti, novi tormentati :
e piova eterna :
e grandine :
maledetta piova, e fredda :
e acqua tinta, e greve :
e grandine
grossa, e neve :
per l'aere tenebroso :
sopra lor vanità che par persona : con usura:
e tutto l'oro ch'è sotto la luna, e che già fu,
di quest'anime stanche non potrebbe farne posare una :
e li foco eterno :
e tra li avelli, fiamme :
with usura,
sin against nature :
with usura the line grows thick :
CONTRA NATURAM⁵⁶⁶

The sections chosen for inclusion by Sanguineti flesh out very explicitly the basics of both Dante's and Pound's attitudes to usury that we described above. The lines that Sanguineti “lifts” from Dante explains the fact that usury, in the Middle Ages, was a sin against “natura” and also a sin against “arte”. Dante also states, quite simply, that “convene prender sua vita ed avanzar la gente” directly from nature and from art rather than by engaging in usurious practices and trying to “avanzar” by buying and

⁵⁶⁵ Sanguineti, *Per musica*, p. 59 – 60.

⁵⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p 60-61.

selling money. The quotations from Pound's Canto XLV show that usury blocks access to essentials such as housing, and that it corrupts religion, art, music and literature (“the line grows thick”).

Pound's and Dante's texts are radically fragmented and dispersed, but their original meanings remain intact, just as they did in the Dante/Eliot section. Sanguineti appropriates not only Dante and Pound's *words*, but also imports, wholesale, elements of their *world-views*, into the libretto. This confirms that *Laborintus II* does not engage in the desecration of its citations in the same way as *Laborintus*. Sanguineti's purpose is to use Dante and Pound to give historical weight to his arguments, and in this sense Sanguineti's project shares more with the Modernist technique of citation than with his own development of this technique in *Laborintus*.

Hand notes that

This Dante-Pound section on usury, coming directly after Sanguineti's own neo-avant-garde preoccupation with capitalism and profit, would seem to be reinforcing the cyclical nature of the usurious system - its all-pervasiveness across the centuries from Dante's medieval age to the modern one of Pound and Sanguineti.⁵⁶⁷

Indeed, Hand reminds us, Pound himself, in Canto 92, wrote that the “immoral practices of the usurer have been going on for 'two thousand years’”, and she states that Sanguineti too is “at pains to establish usura as a timeless vice”.⁵⁶⁸ Hand sees a musical expression of this in *Laborintus II*:

The musical property of 'Canto XLV' is obviously that of the fugue – its use of anaphora (the repetition of 'with usura' at the beginning of successive clauses) creating the effect of a tolling bell, or a chant of the dead. It is Pound's 'fugal' poetry which is echoed by Berio at this stage of the score, with four of the eight choral voices shouting out the term 'with usura' one after the other in fugal style. The fugal style reinforces the emphasis placed in the libretto on cycles – a fugue having, ideally, no point of termination, while also consolidating the idea of usury as an incessant 'breeding' of money, and as a timeless evil.⁵⁶⁹

And, significantly, immediately after the libretto has established the historical

⁵⁶⁷ Hand, “*Laborintus II*”, p. 141.

⁵⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 141-42.

ubiquity of usury, we have another Sanguinetian catalogue beginning with the lines

tutto tutto tutto
dalle caramelle
al miele
dalla guerra di frontiera cino-indiana
agli idiomi tribus
a Bruxelles
a Parigi
ai miei piedistallo
alla segreteria telefonica.⁵⁷⁰

This passage brings us firmly back to a contemporary vision of hell characterised by consumerism, war and technology. Thus the Dante-Pound section is framed or *encased* in Sanguineti's contemporary version of the *inferno* that they defined.

Dante and Pound's focus on the fact that usury sullies art is particularly apt for Sanguineti, as well as for his Neoavantgarde peers, who bore witness to the "escalating degradation of the word to a commodity" in Italy's "emerging consumer society".⁵⁷¹ These poets were acutely aware of the inescapability of this process (which they called "culture commodification" or "commodity fetishism"), even for their own works, and of the futility of launching their attacks on Neo-Capitalism through the media of language and art, which were inevitably implicated in its structures. This tension was expressed most memorably by Sanguineti in the following statement:

L'avanguardia si leva, strutturalmente parlando, contro la mercificazione estetica, e infine [...] vi precipita dentro: a livello sovrastrutturale, essa ha il suo nemico dichiarato nel museo, che, da ultimo, come nelle peggiori favole, se la divora tutta tranquillamente.⁵⁷²

But perhaps Berio assists Sanguineti in overcoming this in the "usura" section of *Laborintus II*, through the experimental techniques of the musical accompaniments to the textual montage, which Vivienne Hand does not mention. We must look to the score rather than the libretto to find indications of this, and to Peter Stacey's analysis of the relationship between music and text in the piece. In the

⁵⁷⁰ Sanguineti, *Per musica*, p. 61.

⁵⁷¹ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 7.

⁵⁷² *ibid.*, p. 62.

“usura” passage we find, accompanying the words, a “sustained and striking use of phonetics without textual derivation [in] the actors' singing of vowel sounds in unstriated pitch contours that follows the repeated references to 'usura'”, which stand “on the verge of the paralinguistic”.⁵⁷³ These percussive utterances, Stacey argues, “are closely related to the 'cello glissandos and must be considered an extension of this musical gesture”,⁵⁷⁴ but they are neither word nor music - they evade language completely.

Furthermore in this “usura” section, and only in this section of the score, there is an instruction to the singers to “scat ad. lib.”, inviting the musicians to carry out an improvisation based on “combinations of phonemes without textual reference”, with no other restrictions than the vowel “o” as the starting point. Berio states that this free-style jazz improvisation occurs only for “a short moment”, and that it must take place at the point “where the singers sing about *usura*, that is, the degradation of values”.⁵⁷⁵ And with this unprecedented bestowal of interpretative freedom, Sanguineti and Berio “open” up *Laborintus II*, transcending the boundaries of both the textual and the musical through the a paralinguistic indictment of their Neo-Capitalist hell. The singers and musicians escape the strictures of usurious commodification and thus succeed in issuing a raw and unadulterated “howl” - of outrage but also of exultation - releasing the transgressive energy of *jouissance*.

Politics in the Palus

We have seen that Sanguineti drew on Pound regarding the theme of usury, and that he seems to have been impacted by various stylistic and linguistic features of the *Cantos*, indeed much more so than he seems to have been willing to declare

⁵⁷³ P. F. Stacey, *Contemporary Tendencies in the Relationship of Music and Text with Special Reference to Pli selon Pli (Boulez) and Laborintus II (Berio)*, (London, 1989), p. 228.

⁵⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ *Two Interviews*, p. 162.

himself. And in our discussions of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*, although the critics focussed more on the Eliotic derivation of these traits, Sanguineti's technique seemed quite often to be more akin to Pound's than to Eliot's. There is a sense of daring and iconoclasm in Sanguineti's poetry which aligns more easily with the mood of Pound's poetry than with that of Eliot's. For Pound, as we saw, the linguistic and stylistic juxtapositioning is put to the service of generating "shock effects", whereas this is not so much the case for Eliot. Like Dante and Pound (and Joyce), Sanguineti really did use "tutte le pluritonalità disponibili" in his poems, whereas Eliot was always much more cautious. And, as Anceschi argued, even when it seems to be Eliot's lessons that are being passed on, these are features of Eliot's early – and therefore heavily *Poundian* – poetics.

Indeed also in his recourse to Dante, Sanguineti seems to align more easily with Pound than with Eliot. As Donald Sassoon remarked, the sinners of the "Malebolge", that place very deep down in Dante's hell, "remained Sanguineti's focus of contempt throughout his life".⁵⁷⁶ Not only in his criticism but also in his poetry Sanguineti seems drawn to the Malebolge, the eighth circle of hell, where, as Sassoon notes, "cheats, hypocrites, fraudsters, seducers, pimps and simonists [...] are whipped by horned demons and dropped in excrement".⁵⁷⁷ David Wallace, in his article on Dante's legacy in English-language literature, argues that Eliot and his characters seem to reside most often in the vestibule to hell; Eliot "side-steps" the Malebolge "entirely", and "leav[es] the mud and crud" to Pound, who visits the Malebolge often, for example when he dips "offensive historical personages in excrement" in his "Hell Cantos".⁵⁷⁸ Sanguineti shares Pound's preference for the lower regions of the *Inferno*.

⁵⁷⁶ D. Sassoon, D., "Edoardo Sanguineti", *The Guardian*, Thursday May 27th 2010.

⁵⁷⁷ *ibid.*,

⁵⁷⁸ Wallace, "Dante in English", p. 251.

Why, then, did Sanguineti continually emphasize the Eliotic influence and side-line Pound? And why have many of his critics done the same? A major key to this must reside in Sanguineti's assertion about Pound that "L'avevo trovato di grande fascino, ma nei suoi confronti giocava la connotazione politica che lo rendeva meno praticabile." It was the political dimension to Pound which forced Sanguineti to distance himself from him. Indeed the poets of the Neoavantgarde, as Lucia Re reminds us, "dismiss[ed] futurism" on the grounds of its "collusion with fascism", and it was Sanguineti who issued a "particularly strong indictment" of futurism on these grounds.⁵⁷⁹ Sanguineti simply could not take the risk of aligning himself - even simply aligning himself aesthetically - with Pound, a poet who was so unmitigatingly implicated in Fascism. In this sense Sanguineti seems to have acted much like Eliot did with his series of red herrings in the notes to *The Waste Land* – he has done his utmost to throw us off the scent of his Poundian influence.

This becomes even more complex when we look beyond the Poundian stylistic features that we have considered in Sanguineti's poetry, and consider Pound's thematic impact. We have traced a direct and constant line of thought - from Dante through Pound to Sanguineti - in their attitudes to and outraged invectives on usury. This must have been extremely problematic for Sanguineti, because, on the one hand, he concurred with Pound's anti-usurious stance, but on the other hand, Pound's views on usury were entangled with anti-semitism, which would have been utterly anathema to Sanguineti.

Sanguineti would have agreed with many of Pound's statements on usury, like those we saw above, but consider, for example, the following statement which defines usury as "semitic immoderation" from Pound's "On the Degrees of Honesty in Various Occidental Religions":

⁵⁷⁹ Re, "Language, Genders and Sexuality", p. 141.

'Our' hierarchy of values shines from the Divina Commedia, or one can at least use that work as a convenient indicator of it. Both the catholic [sic] mediaeval and the Chinese hierarchies and senses of proportion are infinitely removed from semitic immoderation. When Europe flopped from the state of mind of St Ambrose and St Antonino into pre-Christian barbarisms we suffered a not inconsiderable setback. The thing we flopped back to is unpleasant. It was and still filthily is usurer's measure.⁵⁸⁰

Carlo Ginzburg, in an essay discussing the figure of Geryon in Dante's *Inferno*, demonstrates the inseparability of Pound's "anti-Semitism" from his "obsession with usury",⁵⁸¹ and writes that for Pound usury was a "synonym of Jewish international finance".⁵⁸² Pound's anti-Semitism led to his direct "support of Italian Fascism, reinforced by the latter's infamous racial laws",⁵⁸³ which ultimately landed him in a cage in Pisa. As a radical left-wing poet Sanguineti must have felt that he had to attempt to efface the importance of Pound for his works, for fear of becoming tainted by Pound's anti-semitic, Fascist views. So, in a similar fashion to the way that Eliot knew that Whitman and Tennyson were crucial to his "personal life as a poet" but judged that they "could not be part of his public mission to alter the terms of his literary culture",⁵⁸⁴ perhaps Sanguineti has, publically, side-lined Pound.

Sanguineti inherited Modernist stylistic and linguistic techniques but embedded them firmly into his own historical, political and aesthetic project. Sanguineti's poetry, like that of his Neoavantgarde peers, is one based on "shock" and provocation, and, as we saw in the Introduction, this strategy was developed out of the iconoclastic impulse of Modernist art. But the *aim* of the Neoavantgarde programme of provocation has a political impulse that is very different from that of the Modernists. Sanguineti defines the ultimate "compito" of the intellectual as being to "collaborare a diffondere o consolidare, per quel tanto o pochissimo di cui sono capaci, la coscienza di classe".⁵⁸⁵ This is in no way akin to the political programmes

⁵⁸⁰ E. Pound, *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. W. Cookson (New York, 1975), p. 65.

⁵⁸¹ C. Ginzburg, "Dante's Blind Spot (*Inferno XVI-XVII*)", in *Dante's Plurilingualism*, p. 156.

⁵⁸² *ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 156.

⁵⁸⁴ Longenbach, "Mature Poets Steal", p. 180.

⁵⁸⁵ Sanguineti, "Come si diventa materialisti storici", in *Cultura e realtà*, p. 30.

contained within Pound's, or indeed Eliot's texts. We could, perhaps, argue that it resembles Joyce's democratising impulse somewhat, and radicalises it.

We have seen that Walter Benjamin was crucial for Sanguineti's articulation of both the political and aesthetic facets of his work as an artist, particularly in his delineation of a mode of reading texts as *montages* in his essay “Per una teoria della citazione”. There is, however, one further Benjaminian concept which Sanguineti embraced and which dovetails with Sanguineti's assimilation of Eliot and Pound, namely his concept of “allegory”, which he outlined in “The Origin of German Tragic Drama” (1928). There is no space to give a thorough discussion of this here, but, for our purposes, suffice to say that Benjaminian allegory represents the opposite of “unity of meaning” and “univocal[ity]”: it promotes “the transient, [and] the dismembered” and “coincides with the montage technique of avant-garde art”.⁵⁸⁶ Benjaminian “allegory”, then, is another term for precisely the kind of aesthetic programme of creating “interference” and “shock effects” that we have been discussing throughout this chapter and that so appealed to Sanguineti.

But Sanguineti had not yet read Benjamin when he wrote *Laborintus*. And this is where Eliot and Pound come in – it seems that they embodied, for Sanguineti, much of the Benjaminian mode, and prepared the ground for his encounter with the German intellectual. Sanguineti writes that at the beginning of the fifties, “in attesa di incontrare Benjamin (con il suo barocco, non a caso, e con il suo Baudelaire)”, that it was Eliot's own “difesa luminosa dell'allegoria, per intanto come sorgente di chiare immagini visive” which served as a “strumento straordinario di liberazione, nei confronti della chiusa tradizione simbolistica”.⁵⁸⁷ But Sanguineti highlights, once again, that this was an Eliot “rovesciato”:

È ovvio sottolineare, ancora una volta, che un Eliot come quello che qui si indica,

⁵⁸⁶ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 63-64.

⁵⁸⁷ Sanguineti, “Testimonianza su Eliot e Pound”, in *Cultura e realtà*, p. 146.

quell'Eliot che poteva così funzionare quarant'anni or sono, occorreva associarlo, perché funzionasse davvero, contro il fondo ideologico di Eliot (come di Pound), alla problematica vera dell'"avanguardia" europea, per essere ripreso a contrappello, e ricollocando tutta la questione sopra i propri piedi. Giocare Eliot contro Eliot, in breve, era un punto determinante, almeno per me, nel '51, puntando sopra una rinnovata lettura di Dante. Ormai è lecito pensare, a così grande distanza, credo, che non si trattava soltanto di un fatto personale.⁵⁸⁸

So when Sanguineti wrote *Laborintus* (1951-54), he had not yet read Benjamin, but as he explains, Eliot helped to pave the way towards his Benjaminian poetics.

However, by 1965, when Sanguineti wrote *Laborintus II* with Berio, he *had* read Benjamin. And while writing this libretto he must have been acutely aware of the ethical gulf between his models – Pound's Dantescan but anti-semitic diatribes against usury being blended with Benjamin's stance on capitalism and commodity fetishism. When Sanguineti wrote his review of the "Pisan Cantos" in 1954, he had not yet read Benjamin either. And in this article he lauds Pound's "montage" technique almost ecstatically. But, as Benjamin knew, and as Sanguineti would soon learn from him, this aesthetic programme of structuring art through interruptions and shock effects *can* be put to (what he and Sanguineti would consider) sinister use if it falls into the hands of an artist who is that way inclined.

Benjamin's allegorical mode and the impulse towards extreme montage can, as he implies in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *either* be put to the service of propping up and perpetuating fascist ideology, as it is by Pound, *or* it can be put to the service of furthering the proletariat revolution, as it is by Sanguineti. As Graham Allen explains, Benjamin "made the point that technological processes of representation, functioning on a mass level, can be deployed by socially regressive as well as socially progressive forces", and he gives the example that Benjamin's Nazi Germany of the thirties "notoriously employed film as an outlet for its propaganda".⁵⁸⁹ And so, as Benjamin predicted, paradoxically, the two poets' texts,

⁵⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 182.

both of which thrive on rupture and "shock", originate in diametrically opposed political urges.

In the first instance, then, the young Sanguineti allowed himself to indulge his "fascino" for Pound's montages. But ultimately, once he had become aware – through Benjamin – of the dangerous permeability of the membrane separating the fascist from the revolutionary, he saw the necessity of playing down his fascination for Pound: his "grande fascino" for Pound, then, gave way to a side-lining of this "grande [fascista]". But, if the avant-garde artist lands on the correct side of this membrane, his or her art can generate the kind of exhilarated ecstasy or *jouissance* in the reader that Sanguineti himself experienced when he read Pound as a young man, but an ecstasy - a sense of "godere", as he calls it - which can launch the reader on a revolutionary path. And it is in this sense Sanguineti relies on but ultimately devastates his little-acknowledged Poundian model.

We have seen that *anarchy* - stemming to a great extent from Antonin Artaud - was a central philosophy for Sanguineti. We have seen that Sanguineti defined his poetics in terms of "anarchy" when he said that "Ero un uomo in rivolta, e nell'età atomica, ormai. E il mistilinguismo che sperimentavo rispondeva a un'idea di poesia come anarchia. Anzi, e piuttosto, come rivoluzione",⁵⁹⁰ and Erminio Risso even defined *Laborintus* as "l'enciclopedia poetica dell'anarchismo".⁵⁹¹ Sanguineti inscribed this poetics into *Laborintus* in his strategy of "complicazione-alienazione" (which included the techniques of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citrazionismo*) and which he defined in the poem as "anarchia come complicazione radicale". "Anarchy", for Sanguineti, was not at all synonymous, as it is for some, with "chaos"; his anarchic poetic strategies were in fact highly ordered – *Laborintus*, like *The*

⁵⁹⁰ Sanguineti, "Il plurilinguismo", p. 297.

⁵⁹¹ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 49.

Waste Land, he said, "voleva essere un'opera molto controllata intellettualmente".⁵⁹²

But we have not considered another facet of Sanguineti's interest in anarchy, and that is his recognition of the anarchic impulse in Modernism. In his essay on "cruelty", he identifies the anarchic "pulsione" in Modernity, and writes as follows:

tutto ciò che nella Modernità trascorsa ha avuto senso e peso e rilievo si è sempre fondato in qualche modo sopra una pulsione radicalmente anarchica e se non altro anarcoide, anarchiceggiante.⁵⁹³

In 1999, in his essay "I santi anarchici", he declares that this anarchic impulse is also behind all modern poetry

se oggi io dovessi dire, in breve, quale sia la pulsione profonda, non importa se conscia o inconscia, da cui è nata tutta la moderna poesia, questa modernità che ancora viviamo nella forma di una esaurita e inesauribile anarchia, direi che tale pulsione è quella dell'anarchia. E intendo questa parola, questa idea, non in un senso rigorosamente ma limitatamente politico, ma, anche più radicalmente se possibile, in senso etimologico.⁵⁹⁴

As Erminio Risso argues, it is precisely this anarchic impulse that forms the "nucleo significativo dell'atteggiamento eversivo sanguinetiano, che non si limita mai al momento della distruzione, ma è sempre costruzione di qualcosa di nuovo".⁵⁹⁵ This is the impulse to which Sanguineti is attracted in the Modernists – in Joyce, in Pound, and in the early Eliot - where it manifests in highly experimental linguistic and stylistic strategies. This is also the impulse which Sanguineti identifies in Dante and, in complete defiance of the literary heritage of the *secondo novecento*, in Petrarch too. And this is the impulse that we find in Sanguineti's own poetry, an impulse that generates exhilarating "shock effects".

We have traced, in this chapter, the various modulations through which the three Modernists evolved as models within Sanguineti's oeuvre, and charted instances where he simply adopted their techniques, and many more instances where he used his models as spring-boards from which to develop his own innovative

⁵⁹² Gambaro, "Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti", p. 24.

⁵⁹³ Sanguineti, "La letteratura della crudeltà", p. 269.

⁵⁹⁴ E. Sanguineti, "I santi anarchici", p. 15.

⁵⁹⁵ Risso, *Laborintus*, p. 26.

programme. But where Sanguineti departs, most significantly, from these Modernist models is that he puts this “pulsione anarchica” to the service of a subversive political programme. The ultimate challenge, for Sanguineti, is to “trasformare l'impulso alla rivolta in una proposta di rivoluzione, e fare della propria miscredenza un progetto praticabile”⁵⁹⁶ - to lay bare the “dantesco 'paese guasto’” of Neo-Capitalist Italy, and in so doing, to subvert the reigning bourgeois hegemonies and ultimately to realise his dream of a poetry that can “modificare il mondo, e cambiare la vita”.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ Sanguineti, “I santi anarchici”, p. 15.

⁵⁹⁷ *ibid.* p. 16.

CHAPTER IV: Rosselli and English-Language Modernism

[...] *Che*
mondo crudele è questo esclami ma non vedi ch'io penso cerca
quel che puoi, un incastro qualsiasi, puttana dalle lunghe
orecchie sornione, credimi la battaglia non è che una
semantica rivoluzione (P 358).

In Chapter II we saw that experimental poets in the late fifties and sixties, many of whom were associated with the Neoavantgarde, drew on the critical and creative writings of the English-language Modernists. In Chapter III we considered the case of Edoardo Sanguineti, one of the Novissimi and arguably the most important poet of the Neoavantgarde. Chapters II and III demonstrated that Sanguineti and his Novissimo peers became acquainted with the works of Eliot, Pound and Joyce - not always in the original language - when they were young men at a most formative stage of their development as poets, and that they were introduced to these writers in literary contexts, principally by Umberto Eco and Luciano Anceschi. Amelia Rosselli, a poet whose association with the Neoavantgarde was, to say the least, peripheral and problematic, also engaged with the ideas and texts of the English-language Modernists, and in this chapter we will consider how this manifested in her critical and creative works. But Rosselli's initial acquaintance with English-language Modernism occurred in a very different context to that of Sanguineti and the other Novissimi: Amelia Rosselli's Modernist education was a much more *direct* form of cultural inheritance.

Let us first consider Rosselli's linguistic and literary *formazione*, outlining her contact with the works of Eliot, Pound and Joyce as well as the existing scholarship that deals with this, and the place of the Modernists within the broader context of her literary development, before going on to examine how they helped to shape her

radically individual poetic practices. We will start with Rosselli's portmanteau punning practices, a Modernist practice that was not taken up by Sanguineti but which was employed by other Neoavantgarde poets. Then we will move on to consider Rosselli's approaches to the by-now familiar Modernist techniques of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*. Finally, we will consider Rosselli's dramatically innovative development of the Modernist technique of idiomatic manipulation, which was not used by any other experimental poets in Italy at the time, and analyse how this contributes to Rosselli's staging of conflict in *Variazioni belliche* (1964) and in *Sleep* (1953-1964). With Rosselli we will find that while she did have recourse to the same Eliot-Pound-Joyce triad as Sanguineti, the ratio with which these three authors impacted her works was very different. While Eliot and Pound feature prominently, alongside Joyce, in Rosselli's critical writings, their presence in her creative works is dwarfed by that of Joyce. As we have seen, the balance was precisely the other way round for Sanguineti.

Rosselli's "formazione non italiana": Languages and Literatures

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 (P 202)

Amelia Rosselli's cultural and linguistic formation has been described as "complex and anomalous".⁵⁹⁸ She spent her childhood moving between France, the UK, the US, and Italy. Her father was Italian and her mother was English, and as a child she learnt first French, then Italian, and then English.⁵⁹⁹ Her brother John described their household *lingua franca* as "un miscuglio di lingue",⁶⁰⁰ and as a result of this she experienced what her father Carlo called a "confusione degli idiomi".⁶⁰¹ What was particularly uncharacteristic of her multilingual upbringing was the fact that the first language that she learnt was not the mother-tongue of either of her parents. Probably as a result of this she "never felt completely 'at home' in any one language".⁶⁰²

Yet Rosselli turned this apparent disadvantage, the linguistic confusion of her early life, into a source of inspiration for experimentation and for her own very distinctive brand of literary *plurilinguismo*, with her three languages - French, Italian and English - coming to form what Giudici called the "triplice sottofondo linguistico" of her poetry.⁶⁰³ She wrote creative works in all three languages, which makes her an "ambilingual" writer (i.e. one who has "written important works in more than one language"), and this is an important point of difference with

⁵⁹⁸ C. O'Brien, "Amelia Rosselli" in *Italian Women Poets of the Twentieth Century*, ed. C. O'Brien, (Dublin, 1996), p. 116.

⁵⁹⁹ A. Rosselli, *Epistolario familiare: Carlo, Nello Rosselli e la madre (1914-1937)* (Milan, 1979), p. 580.

⁶⁰⁰ G. Fiori, *Casa Rosselli: Vita di Carlo e Nello, Amelia, Marion e Maria*. (Turin, 1999), p. 167.

⁶⁰¹ Rosselli, *Epistolario Familiare*, p. 550.

⁶⁰² L. Re, "Introduction" and "Notes on the Text and its Language" in *War Variations*. Translated by L. Re, and P. Vangelisti (Los Angeles, 2005), p. 6.

⁶⁰³ A. Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, ed. F. Caputo (Novara, 2004), p. 5.

Sanguineti, who wrote only texts with an Italian *matrix*.⁶⁰⁴ Her collection of early works, *Primi scritti*, contains pieces in each of her three *matrix languages* (French, Italian, and English), and her more mature works were written either in Italian or in English.

We also find that all three of these languages feature as *embedded languages* in a variety of ways within each of these linguistic matrices, none of which was immune to interference from the other languages. Emmanuela Tanello attributes to the “glaring absence of a clearly identifiable ‘mother’ tongue” a “permanent dimension [of] foreignness” and “a mistrust for language *tout court*” in Rosselli’s works, irrespective of the language in which she was writing.⁶⁰⁵ Her Italian, English and French, are affected by the “incertezza in fondo grammaticale” that Rosselli admits to in her “Glossarietto esplicativo” - they are all “marked by chronic instability, and by an overall, unsurprising mistrust of language as a successful instrument to acquire and interpret personal reality”.⁶⁰⁶ Thus for Rosselli, the “crisis of language” which we explored in the Introduction has this extra edge to it. Yet, as Emmanuela Tanello emphasizes, when applied to her *poetry*, “her uncertainty, her chronic linguistic instability, as well as the impressive linguistic range at her disposal, are turned into major tools of experimentation”.⁶⁰⁷

Amelia Rosselli's *literary* heritage reflected this linguistic heritage. Throughout her life she read extremely widely in Italian, French and English, and the English-language Modernists featured heavily in her reading. When she was asked: “quali [autori] ritieni i maggiori e quali ami di più?” she replied:

Quelli che conosciamo tutti: Penna, Pavese, Montale, Saba. Cinque, sei... Gli altri vanno letti ... non dimentichiamo gli stranieri: Rimbaud, Baudelaire. È doveroso conoscerli. Ho molto amato Pasternak... Non sono nemmeno delle scelte ... Vanno

⁶⁰⁴ Kellmann, *Switching Languages*, p. 12.

⁶⁰⁵ E. Tanello, “Doing the Splits: Language(s) in the poetry of Amelia Rosselli, in *The Journal of the Institute of Romance Studies*, 1, 1992, p. 364.

⁶⁰⁶ *ibid.* p. 365.

⁶⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 366.

letti... Sono tanti... Pound, Eliot, Dickinson, Plath. E altri, altri...⁶⁰⁸

In her “Introduzione a ‘Spazi metrici’” she writes that when she was “giovanissima” she read “ogni sorta di poesie, qualvolta in inglese (classici e no), qualvolta in francese o in italiano” as well as “molta prosa (Faulkner per esempio, o la poesia prosastica di Eliot)”.⁶⁰⁹ Elsewhere she stressed that around the time of the publication of *Variazioni belliche*,

Non avevo in realtà seguito i letterati della mia generazione, a parte un ristretto gruppo di amici. Studiavo continuamente gli inglesi, gli americani, i francesi, le traduzioni, anche l’italiano classico, ma non l’italiano moderno.⁶¹⁰

Indeed except for a handful of “moderni”, she was more often rather scathing of the poetry of her Italian peers, particularly of the members of the “Gruppo 63”. She informed us that at their meetings,

Stavo a sentire, tutto quel chiacchiericcio critico era un po’ pesante. Scoprivano Pound, Joyce e tanti altri che io avevo letto mille volte, che io avevo scoperto tanti anni prima, per via della mia formazione non italiana.⁶¹¹

As these declarations make clear, the English-language Modernists - Joyce, Eliot and Pound - played a central role in Amelia Rosselli's poetic development. Her “formazione non italiana” that has been outlined above equipped her with first-hand knowledge (i.e. not through translation) of the English-language Modernists that was rare in Italy at the time. In fact, Chiara Carpita, in her recent article on Eliot and Rosselli: finds archival evidence to demonstrate the fact that Rosselli had already encountered Pound, Joyce, Eliot and Virginia Woolf by the early fifties and that she had

assimilato la loro lezione a tal punto da poterli superare, da riuscire a formulare tra il 1958 e il 1961 un nuovo sistema metrico e retorico e a proporre contenuti che da quella tradizione prendevano il via alla ricerca però dell’impostazione autonoma della propria voce.⁶¹²

⁶⁰⁸ E. Pecora, “Un incontro con Amelia Rosselli”, in *Amelia Rosselli*. Special issue of *Galleria*, eds. D. Attanasio and E. Tandello, a. 48, n. 1/2 (January-August), 1997, p. 152.

⁶⁰⁹ Introduzione a ‘Spazi metrici’, in Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 59.

⁶¹⁰ Bettarini, M. “Per un’intervista inedita ad Amelia Rosselli” in *Amelia Rosselli. Un’apollide alla ricerca del linguaggio universale*. (Proceedings of the conference at Gabinetto Viesseux, 29 March 1998), ed. S. Giovannuzzi, *Quaderno del Circolo Rosselli*, 17, 1999, p. 83.

⁶¹¹ Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 17.

⁶¹² C. Carpita, “‘At the 4 pts. of the turning world’. Dialogo e conflitto con l’opera di T.S.Eliot nella

Carpita is right to say that in this respect Rosselli was “in largo anticipo rispetto alla Neoavanguardia”.⁶¹³ Rosselli, however, also explored extensively writings from the Early Modern period in English literature (particularly by Donne and Shakespeare), American female poetry (by Dickinson and Plath), and contemporary American literature. Thus Rosselli's English-language Modernist engagement not only predated that of Sanguineti and his peers, but also formed part of a much deeper and broader consciousness of English-language literature than that of the Neoavantgarde.

poesia di Amelia Rosselli”, in *Poesia in Conflitto*, eds. R. Riccobono and G. Talbot, *Mosaici: St. Andrews Journal of Italian Poetry*, 2011. Accessed online on 16/09/2011: http://www.mosaici.org.uk/index.php?p=show_item_home&ID=99p. N.B. This is an unpaginated article.

⁶¹³ *ibid.*

The Modernists in the “Diario in Tre Lingue”

A crucial text which documents Rosselli's early *formazione* as a poet, in terms of her linguistic, cultural and literary heritage, is the “Diario in Tre Lingue” (1955-56). This “Diario” is one of the sections of *Primi scritti (1952-1963)*, a volume which Rosselli described as a “libretto della gioventù”, “una specie di scherzo letterario”, in which are contained what she defines as “esercizi”, insisting that they are “da prendere come tali”.⁶¹⁴ Rosselli explained that she published *Primi scritti*

con l'idea di spiegare la mia formazione giovanile trilingue, che dai miei ventidue anni al 1963, tramite la prosa ed esercitazioni poetiche, tentava di raggiungere una certezza d'innovazione stilistica e linguistica.⁶¹⁵

It contains stylistic games, notes on her reading, and cultural musings related to music and literature. As such it gives us insight into her cultural influences and linguistic and poetic concerns during this most formative year of 1955-56.

Joyce and Eliot both feature prominently in the “Diario in Tre Lingue”, for example in the following passage, which Bisanti defines as “una lista delle fonti che hanno ispirato la lirica della Rosselli”.⁶¹⁶

Montale-Proust
italian stornello popolare
greek-latin prose
Joyce, frantumazione
surrealismo (french)
classici
argots
Chinois
strutture lingue straniere
eliot-religious (P 76-77).

Joyce's radical techniques of fragmentation (e.g. of language, style, genre) are alluded to here, and Eliot's religious or mystical dimension is highlighted. This passage exemplifies Chiara Carpita's assertion that: “Nel tentativo di definire la propria identità artistica Amelia Rosselli si confronta con la tradizione ed in particolare con il

⁶¹⁴ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 81.

⁶¹⁵ A. Rosselli, *Antologia poetica*, ed. G. Spagnoletti (Milan, 1987), p. 160.

⁶¹⁶ Bisanti, “L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli”, p. 90.

surrealismo e il modernismo.”⁶¹⁷ In the following extract, Eliot is mentioned again:

Gauguin-Tahiti
pas une solution...

...breaks out and breaks the silver gong of -----

Esthétique des Fendue

Eliot
autumn is a season of gold
autumn is a season of age and decision
is a land of gold
is a land of cold decision
is the humble ever ironic?
is the humble ever clever?

music is not feeling
music is religion
all arts are religion
the four points meet (*P* 116).

Here the appearance of Eliot's name generates a poetic musing on autumn that is reminiscent of the tone of *The Waste Land* – with the anthropomorphisation of the seasons in “[autumn] is a land of cold decision” recalling “April is the cruellest month”. But Chiara Carpita also identifies a whole host of other allusions to Eliot here, centred around the words “four points”; a recurring image in the “Diario”, which Carpita identifies as deriving from “Burnt Norton”. She sees in a passage from “East Coker” “forti elementi di analogia” with the “Diario”, not only “per la presenza di alcune parole chiave [autumn, humble], ma soprattutto per la riflessione a carattere filosofico-letterario.”⁶¹⁸ Thus, Carpita explains,

Eliot è chiamato in causa per la ricerca di una nuova soluzione formale a partire dal legame musica-poesia, ma anche per il tema mistico che sarà al centro di tutta la prima produzione rosselliana. I due poli formale e contenutistico arrivano a fondersi in un verso che diventa simbolo e sostanza del ‘Diario in tre lingue’: ‘at the 4 pts. of the turning world’.⁶¹⁹

Joyce is mentioned twice more in the “Diario” too; in one instance, Rosselli refers to the remarkable quality of his *pastiches* in *Ulysses*:

lingua corrente? in all 3 languages (anyuse?)

⁶¹⁷ Carpita, “Dialogo e conflitto”.

⁶¹⁸ *ibid.*

⁶¹⁹ *ibid.*

Joyce and the imitation of styles – not superato

the trees and the dew are honey dust upon my breast (*P* 108)

and later she mentions both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*:

surréalisme

rouge-vert

rouge-vert-bleu

(pas d'intuition pour s'en aller)

oeuf

presque noir

rails du train

fleurs

Ulisse non è soluzione

brings to train-raies?

(Finnegan)

Montale?... (*P* 115).

In the following passage Rosselli lists her linguistic capabilities, perhaps measuring herself up to Eliot and Pound, who had at least a “smattering” of all of these languages too:

midi italien

Anglais-Américain

France littéraire

Italie Classique-Moderne

Le Chinois

smattering of German

Latin

Greek (*P* 74).

Chiara Carpita mentions a Poundian connection too: “*Diario in tre lingue* è un testo che per la sua natura frammentata, plurilingue e per i fenomeni di deviazioni dalla norma linguistica, ricorda i *Cantos* di Pound”, but she qualifies this by stressing that we must bear in mind (as Erminio Risso did with regard to Sanguineti) that “le differenze [sono] significative.”⁶²⁰ Rosselli herself said that the “pezzi” in *Primi scritti* “ricordano il lento decidersi per una lingua o l'altra, e per una ispirazione, piuttosto che il rieccheggiare prose e poesie baudelairiane-rimbaudiane o joyciane in francese e inglese”.⁶²¹

⁶²⁰ *ibid.*

⁶²¹ Rosselli, *Antologia poetica*, p. 160.

The Modernists in Rosselli's Cultural Criticism

Rosselli's absorption of the works and ideas of a very wide range of English-language authors, including the Modernists, is also apparent in her critical writings. In the late sixties and throughout the seventies Rosselli wrote many short articles and book reviews on literary topics for Italian newspapers. The great majority of the authors that she wrote about were anglophone, and among these many were American. Between 1967 and 1970 she wrote articles or reviews on Thomas Kyd, John Berryman, John Barth, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and on Black American literature. Her second period of journalistic productivity was between 1975 and 1978, when she wrote about Leonard Cohen, William Burroughs, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jack Kerouac, Robert Penn Warren, Robert Lowell, Emily Dickinson, Gregory Corso, Christina Stead, Henry James, Philip Roth, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, James Joyce, and also about contemporary English poetry. These articles demonstrate that Rosselli was acutely aware of the whole panorama of *contemporary* developments in English-language literature, but that she was also looking back to writers from a range of earlier periods, such as Kyd (sixteenth century), James and Dickinson (nineteenth century) and Woolf and Joyce (Modernism).

Rosselli's only essay which considered the Modernists directly was her review of a translation of Joyce's *Chamber Music*, entitled "Joyce giovane poeta musicale" (1978). She writes that this collection of poems "è fra quelli meno interessanti del Joyce". She was, unsurprisingly, like Sanguineti, drawn to Joyce's later, more experimental works: as we have seen it was Joyce's techniques of fragmentation and his stylistic imitation in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* which Rosselli noted in the "Diario". Nevertheless she considers that Joyce's early poetry is "preziosissimo per chi volesse analizzare le fonti formali-linguistiche delle opere succedenti".⁶²² She

⁶²² A. Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, (Novara, 2004), ed. F. Caputo p. 173.

accuses the translator of “tradurre troppo squadratamente, troppo letteralmente”, whereas, she says, in the Mondadori edition of Joyce's poetry (1961), which we considered in Chapter II, “poeti noti quale Sanguineti, Giuliani, Wilcock e lo studioso Alberto Rossi presentavano delle assai belle e più musicali traduzioni”.⁶²³

Rosselli reminds us that Joyce was only in his early twenties when he wrote the collection, and defines the poems – using the same terms that she used to describe her own “Diario” - as mere “esercizi letterari (pur bellissimi, finissimi e tecnicamente interessanti).”⁶²⁴ She describes them as a “serie di poemi pseudoelisabettiani, di stile alessandrino, musicali assai ispirandosi al Seicento inglese anche per un certo tipo di secca cantabilità ornamentata”.⁶²⁵ She sums up the theme of *Chamber Music* as “un amore immaginario e forse più realizzato, poi decaduto”, a theme which is “quasi del tutto artificiale e non intende confessare o accendere passioni”.⁶²⁶ Rosselli also notes that “il linguaggio è quasi del tutto monosillabico, frenato da polisillabi (l'inglese è lingua brusca anche se sottile)” and compares this to the Italian of the translation in which “forzatamente s'allungano i versi e s'inflatano le sonorità essendo l'italiano invece solitamente trisillabico e spesso polisillabico”.⁶²⁷ She mentions that the poems in *Pomes Penyeach*, written twenty years later, are “molto più mature e straordinarie” and “sconcertanti per la loro concentrata *dryness* (secchezza) e delicatezza, che mi pare di capire abbiano influenzato sia il Beckett poeta sia la Sylvia Plath”.⁶²⁸ Just as we found in the case of Sanguineti, then, Rosselli's engagement with Joyce's poems was not a very significant chapter in her intertextual dialogue with Modernism. But it is worth noting that Rosselli focusses at the end of this review on the fact that Joyce *influenced*

⁶²³ *ibid.*

⁶²⁴ *ibid.*

⁶²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 173-74.

⁶²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 174.

⁶²⁷ *ibid.*

⁶²⁸ *ibid.*

succeeding generations of authors, which, as we shall see, was a position that she would take in many of her critical essays.

Rosselli wrote no essays that dealt directly with Eliot or Pound, but both are mentioned very often in her essays on other writers, as, indeed, is Joyce. A reading of her essays, whether on English or non-English-speaking authors, reveals that Rosselli possessed a veritable armoury of English and American literary and artistic figures – including but by no means limited to the Modernists - that she could call upon in her literary discussions. These included writers from England (Blake, Shelley, Keats, Hopkins, Larkin and Ted Hughes), Ireland (Yeats, Joyce and Beckett) and America (Eliot, Pound, Whitman, Hemingway, Melville, Cummings, W. C. Williams, Olson, Faulkner, Allen Tate, Ginsburg, Dos Passos and Henry Miller). But while Rosselli *did* also write essays on Italian authors (e.g. Scipione, Calogero, Anedda, Ripellino) and on authors of other nationalities (e.g. Pasternak, Illyés, Jarry), and while she *did* also mention Italian and other authors in passing in her critical essays and reviews (e.g. Montale, Ionesco, Majakovskij, Maupassant), it is undoubtedly her profound and wide-ranging knowledge of *English-language* literature that comes to the fore in her collection of essays *Una scrittura plurale*, and the Modernists occupy a central role in this.

Just as she draws attention to Joycean features in Beckett and Plath, so Rosselli identifies a recourse to Joyce in William Burroughs' works in her essay “Gli sberleffi di Burroughs” (1975). Speaking of *Johnny 23*, Rosselli writes:

Manca la serietà del *pastiche* sistematico dell'*Ulisse* di Joyce, che però è l'autore che ovviamente ha suggerito l'idea compositiva di fondo di *Johnny 23* (così come per altri libri del Burroughs).⁶²⁹

In “Ferlinghetti e l'America sotterranea” (1970), Rosselli notes a Joycean quality to the language in *Lei*:

⁶²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 213.

un delirio talmente calcolato va attribuito a un'influenza direttamente joyciana, in ispecie per ciò che nel lontano 1921 Joyce si risolveva nel suo ultimo capitolo di *Ulisse* (introiezione di linguaggio pensato e non scritto o parlato; ritmi accelerati di un pensiero che non conosce gli spazi vuoti rappresentati solitamente da virgole, punti e virgole ecc.; tematiche intimamente sessuali concrete).⁶³⁰

Rosselli also mentions the importance of Pound for Ferlinghetti: “Ma è anche da Ezra Pound e da Henry Miller e perfino da Majakovskij (per la metrica) che il Ferlinghetti prende sul piano tecnico”.⁶³¹ T. S. Eliot is also in the foreground of “Sotto l'ala di Eliot” (1976), Rosselli's review of an Italian anthology featuring eighteen contemporary English poets who she describes as representing “la generazione da lui figliata”. Rosselli remarks that “Sul tutto volteggia la grigia ala del poeta Eliot: il suo tono disilluso pervade”, a “malinconico tono di fin di mondo, un ritirarsi appartati”.⁶³² Just like Joyce then, Eliot and Pound are posited by Rosselli as influential figures for a range of later authors.

In some of her essays, Rosselli refers to all three of the Modernists – Eliot, Pound and Joyce. In “Poesia d'elite nell'america d'oggi” (1976) she begins by discussing the Beat poets, observing the extent to which they dominate – disproportionately, in Rosselli's view – the discussions on twentieth century American poetry in Italy. One aspect of this which Rosselli laments in particular is the fact that “Il richiamo a Pound e Joyce è ostinatamente monopolizzato da questa scuola”.⁶³³ She says that Beat poetry is not “di tale levatura da meritare” the “univoca stima” of being considered Joyce's and Pound's primary poetic descendants. She goes on to posit that

poeti non di quest'ultima generazione, ma piuttosto della generazione 'di mezzo', a volte detti *ortodossi* per contrapporli alla urgente e chiassoso scuola *beat*, sono i veri, discreti eredi di Pound, Joyce e anche E. Cummings e William Carlos Williams.⁶³⁴

Rosselli lists John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Robert Penn Warren, Charles Olson,

⁶³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 208.

⁶³¹ *ibid.*

⁶³² *ibid.*, p. 165-66.

⁶³³ *ibid.*, p. 141.

⁶³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 141.

Sylvia Plath and Allen Tate as these descendants of Modernism.⁶³⁵ She considers various instances in which this “eredità” operates, for example she identifies Eliot's role in Berryman's *Sonetti*. Berryman attempts to overcome the “dicotomia tra la poesia accademica e la poesia *beat*”, and Rosselli states that “ne risultò una forzata simbiosi, un *pastiche* o burlesco di stili eliotiani (vedi *Terra desolata*) e stili volgarmente colloquiali o gergali”.⁶³⁶ She defines Eliot's impact on Lowell in terms of “objectivity”:

Nel Lowell invece l'isolamento si scioglie in parte: l'autore coraggiosamente insiste sull'“io” come perno del canto. Riscatterà quest'autobiografismo oggi fin troppo di moda con una obiettivazione dello stile che raggiunge per chiarezza quella di Eliot, e lo porterà a sviluppi stilisticamente colloquiali.⁶³⁷

Rosselli seems even to deem it necessary to clarify instances when a poet is *not* engaging with Modernism – for example she writes that Robert Lowell adheres to “un linguaggio sciatto e gergale che *non* si riconcilia con la tradizione poliglotta di Ezra Pound e Eliot”.⁶³⁸ Rosselli's essay on the English poet Paul Evans also stresses the *absence* of a Modernist derivation:

Da quale esempio parta Evans è infatti difficile dire: ricorda un certo tipo di poesia né americana né inglese (nessuna ispirazione da Eliot o Joyce), che forse è anche tipica della poesia *divertita*, italiano, tedesco o francese perfino.⁶³⁹

Rosselli does, however, see a Poundian inspiration in Evans:

all'intellettualismo di Pound, vorrebbe esserne seguace, ma salvando, rispetto al cosiddetto 'eccesso' di cultura poundiano – *divertito*, *mélangeur* - un tanto di cantabilità, di semplificazione naturalista, e di giocosità però hollywoodiana

and also here:

Di [Evans] però è anche tipico l'affiancarsi a tutti quegli scrittori che hanno recentemente sfruttato le possibilità del surreale, come è accaduto ad altri scrittori *pop* e *underground* (scuola del Black Mountain, linea Pound - William Carlos Williams - Olson), Ginsberg e *underground* americano.⁶⁴⁰

The other two essays included in *Una scrittura plurale* in which Rosselli

⁶³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 141.

⁶³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 152.

⁶³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 141.

⁶³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 154.

⁶³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 182.

⁶⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 184.

draws on the English-language Modernists are “L'accusa di provincialismo turba troppo gli italiani” (1967) and “Wirrwarr” (1973) in which she debunks the Neoavantgarde's Modernist-inspired *plurilinguismo*. In the earlier essay Rosselli accuses the Novissimi of

ripetere quasi in identico modo gli esperimenti dei linguisti stranieri, spesso producendo invece un'autentica “traduzione” o trasposizione di questi testi, in pasticcio adatto per il nostro pubblico ancora sorpreso e ignaro dei banchi di prova quali rappresentati dalle opere di Cummings, Pound, Eliot e Joyce.⁶⁴¹

Rosselli feels that the Neoavantgarde imitate Modernist techniques “senza un coerente autointerrogarsi circa i nostri propri fini artistici, i nostri debiti con la società in cui viviamo, le nostre proprie caratteristiche sia culturali sia razziali” and that often “testi di tipo *pastiche* quali quelli per esempio di Ezra Pound o a volte di Eliot, vengono mal compresi e digeriti (in quanto fra l'altro spesso letti in traduzioni)”.⁶⁴² And Pound's “tono leggero e ironico” in the *Cantos*, she says, is misunderstood:

nulla viene carpito dai nostri rapaci traduttori-autori, e del clima culturale degli anni 1900-60 della cultura anglosassone si colgono soltanto i procedimenti linguistico-tecnici, isolandoli da un contesto dalle caratteristiche ben diverse dalle italiane e anche internazionali odierne.⁶⁴³

Rosselli writes that “Pound derideva l'internazionalismo; a volte lo magnificava con un misticismo e con prove di erudizione che sono in ultima analisi di genere umoristico”, but that Guglielmi and other Neoavantgarde poets, including Sanguineti, misinterpret this and the results are snobbish and pedantic:

dell'internazionalismo colgono piuttosto il lato snob, poliglotta e individualistico, a volte pedantesco; e credono di operare, con il fondervi la loro angosciata problematica individuale tipicamente “provinciale”, un rinnovarsi delle belle lettere italiane secondo loro stagnanti in quanto troppo lontane dagli schemi dell'avanguardia internazionale.⁶⁴⁴

In her review of Sanguineti's *Wirrwarr* Rosselli also passes a severe judgement on Sanguineti's use of the same device which she calls “il solito *pastiche*”

⁶⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶⁴² *ibid.*

⁶⁴³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 80.

semicasuale di moda ormai da cinquant'anni in ogni paese dell'Occidente".⁶⁴⁵ She reiterates these sentiments once more in an interview in 1977, saying that the Neoavantgarde "usano tecniche superatissime", and explaining that in her view a poet must transcend their models:

è necessario passare per molte tecniche, ma è obbligatorio, prima di pubblicare i propri versi, conoscere quel che è stato detto e scritto nel passato prossimo e remoto. Il surrealismo è consunto. È bene aggiornarsi viaggiando e leggendo gli stranieri in lingua originale. Di quel gruppo apprezzo Porta per la serietà della ricerca e Pagliarani de 'La ragazza Carla', anteriore alla nascita dell'avanguardia.⁶⁴⁶

In her estimation, the Neoavantgarde poets have not yet *gone beyond* or *passed through* these Modernist techniques. As we saw in Chapter III, Sanguineti had a very different approach to intertextuality – he considered himself to be operating in a world in which “tutto è citazione”, and so, very consciously and openly, he dismissed the kind of “originality” that Rosselli seems here to be implying is the crucial quality of poetry.

Amelia Rosselli's collection of essays undoubtedly documents a much more pervasive knowledge of English-language literature than that held by Sanguineti or the other Novissimi, as well as a more wide-ranging and nuanced appreciation of the place of English-language Modernism within the tradition as a whole. This stemmed, as Rosselli herself stated, from her “formazione non italiana”, which also equipped her with the ability to position and embed *herself*, both as a critic and as a poet, much more thoroughly within this cultural landscape. Thus Rosselli's contact with the English-language Modernists - Joyce, Eliot, Pound - was of a different nature to that of her Novissimi peers. For Sanguineti and the other Novissimi, the absorption of English-language Modernism occurred through a studied process, as part of a consciously demarcated programme of intellectual importation. But in Chapter III we saw that this did not mean, as Rosselli argues, that Sanguineti assimilated the

⁶⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁶⁴⁶ Pecora, “Un incontro con Amelia Rosselli”, p. 153.

Modernists without developing their aesthetic programme. But, nonetheless, Joyce, Eliot and Pound did impact Rosseli in a very different way, as they were part of her *own* cultural heritage: she *grew up with them* and as a result they inflected the development of her poetics in a much more organic and visceral manner.

Langue “Douplesens/sationel”: È alla Joyce

douplesens
sationel
rationel
sens st sa son Zio Nello (P 86)

Rosselli's first critics derailed our understanding of her linguistic procedures quite dramatically with their interpretation of her “linguistic quirks”⁶⁴⁷ as *lapsus* (errors or slips), a view which sprang from Pasolini's essay “Notizia su Amelia Rosselli” which effectively launched her career. Many of Rosselli's more recent critics have struggled enormously with this.⁶⁴⁸ Indeed, Rosselli was very categorical that her linguistic quirks – her so-called *lapsus* – were intentional. She writes in the “Glossarietto esplicativo” that these “quirks” are

semplici invenzioni bilingue (o perfino trilingue). Di *lapsus* parlò per primo Pasolini, come sai. Ma, a mio avviso, il *lapsus* sarebbe dimenticanza mnemonica, mentre l'invenzione linguistica è di solito conscia.⁶⁴⁹

Elsewhere, Rosselli stated that she created “giochi distorsivi sulle parole praticati con il sovrapporsi di più lingue”, words that “si formavano sulla fusione e sulla deformazione di diversi apporti linguistici”.⁶⁵⁰ And reiterating this in another interview, she said that her “procedimento” in “Variazioni” was “conscio o quasi completamente conscio”, and that “è alla Gadda, è alla Joyce”.⁶⁵¹ So here Rosselli states very explicitly that her linguistic experimentation in “Variazioni” has a Joycean derivation, placing herself firmly within the tradition of Joyce-inspired authors that she defined in her journalistic writing.

Rosselli also drew attention to the English-language Modernist derivation of her linguistic experimentation in “Le Chinois à Rome” (1955), a French prose text

⁶⁴⁷ Re, “Introduction”, p. 21.

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. e.g.: M. Manera, “Devianze intralinguistiche nella poesia italiana di Amelia Rosselli”, in *Trasparenze. Supplement to Quaderni di poesia*, eds. G. Devoto and E. Tanello (Genoa, 2003), pp. 249, A. Snodgrass, *Knowing Noise. The English Poetry of Amelia Rosselli* (New York, 2001), p. 2, or Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 51.

⁶⁴⁹ Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 298.

⁶⁵⁰ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 54.

⁶⁵¹ Manera, “Devianze intralinguistiche”, p. 249.

published in *Primi scritti*. Rosselli defined this text as “una specie di estetica in francese [...] una prosa in tre parti che considero un punto fermo, per quanto concerne il contenuto; ancora un po' joyciano, ermetico, poundiano”.⁶⁵² See, for example, the following extract:

Voilà que vient la petite vanité, arrivée au coin de la rue que porte à la grande maison arcuata (arquée). Tout près du garage (étable). Tu te fermes. Tu annotes. (Annota.) Les carosses stand. Tu cliques tes doigts au chat. “Sembri semplicemente”. Le créatif, poof! On va te violer (seule à minuit) (P 54).

Various critics, most notably Emmanuela Tandello, have drawn attention to the Joycean and Poundian derivation of her linguistic experimentation in her early English writings. Tandello describes the language of the English texts in *Primi scritti* thus:

se la poesia rivela [una] essenza metafisica in una lingua intrinsecamente e deliberatamente elisabettiana nel lessico, nella sintassi, e perfino nella grafia, le prose rivelano invece una dichiarata eredità modernista, e perciò sperimentale, di derivazione poundiana e joyciana, alla quale va associata una lingua essenzialmente americaneggiante, qua e là marcata dallo *slang*, e dal gioco verbale spesso multilingue.⁶⁵³

And, as was the case for Sanguineti, Rosselli's adoption and development of Joyce's techniques of linguistic deformation mediates a Dantescan influence. Ettore Settanni questioned Joyce on elements of the “Anna Livia Plurabelle” episode in *Finnegans Wake*, and tells us that in response:

Joyce sorrise, si avvicinò alla biblioteca, poi venne verso di me e mi indicò il gioco dantesco di ‘Pape Satan Pape satan aleppe’. ‘Padre Dante mi perdoni, ma io sono partito da questa tecnica della deformazione per raggiungere un’armonia che vince la nostra intelligenza, come la musica’⁶⁵⁴

Thus Joyce acknowledged Dante as a direct source for the “technique of deformation” performed on the English language. Jacqueline Risset states that Joyce takes Dante up “direttamente, al livello dell’attività scritturale”.⁶⁵⁵ And Rosselli, with her word-

⁶⁵² Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue*, p. 82.

⁶⁵³ E. Tandello, “La poesia in inglese di Amelia Rosselli” in A. Rosselli, *Sleep: Poesie in inglese*. p. 213-18,, p. 215. Bisanti makes the same statement in *L'opera plurilingue*, p. 89: “echi poundiani e joyciani nella prosa [inglese]”.

⁶⁵⁴ J. Risset, “Joyce traduce Joyce”, in J. Joyce, *Scritti italiani*, ed. G. Corsini and G. Melchiori (Milan, 1979), p. 209.

⁶⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 211.

play “alla Joyce”, when she adopts Joyce's techniques of deformation, also engages with Joyce's “divine comic Denti Alligator”.⁶⁵⁶ The Dantescan element to Rosselli's poetry is an area of study that still, urgently, requires a thorough and sustained assessment. The Dantescan facet of Rosselli's Joyce, as a result, cannot be evaluated in this thesis, but should be considered once Rosselli's Dante has been studied in earnest.

⁶⁵⁶ J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London, 1992), p. 440. I will refer to this text parenthetically in the body of the text from now on as follows: (*FW* 440).

Rosselli's Portmanteaux

One of the major loci in which her English-language Modernist influence resides is Rosselli's punning practices, behind which Joyce lurks unmistakably. Rosselli coins neologisms, in English, French and Italian, which Lucia Re describes as “creative combinations and fusions of several words based on phonetic and semantic associations”.⁶⁵⁷ These neologisms had been considered as one of the areas governed by Pasolini's “lapsus”, but they have engendered various other names since this term has gone out of vogue with Rosselli's critics. Manera, for example, calls them “contaminazioni”,⁶⁵⁸ and Bisanti argues that we should return to Rosselli's own terminology which she used to designate them in the “Glossarietto” and call them “fusioni”.⁶⁵⁹ But because of the anglophone (and Joycean) context of our considerations here, I will use the word used by Tanello to describe them: “portmanteaux”.

A *portmanteau* is a sub-type of the pun; a “word formed by blending sounds from two or more distinct words and combining their meanings”.⁶⁶⁰ The term, which originally meant a kind of suit-case with two compartments, was first applied to this type of pun by Lewis Carroll who invented words like “slithy” in *Alice Through the Looking-glass*: “Well, ‘slithy’ means ‘lithe and slimy’... You see it's like a portmanteau”,⁶⁶¹ and “mimsy” which Carroll explains is “flimsy and miserable”.⁶⁶² Portmanteaux are discussed (without, of course, being named as such) in Freud's *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious*, in which he calls them “condensations with substitute-formation” and “composite words”.⁶⁶³ Freud quotes English examples

⁶⁵⁷ Re, “Introduction”, p. 24.

⁶⁵⁸ Manera, “Devianze intralinguistiche”, p. 231.

⁶⁵⁹ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue*, p. 148.

⁶⁶⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, [accessed online 3/08/11].

⁶⁶¹ L. Carroll, *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, cited in *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁶⁶² L. Carroll, *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, cited in *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁶⁶³ S. Freud, *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious* (London, 2002), p. 14.

of this process, such as de Quincey's "old people feel inclined to fall into 'anecdote'", which "fuse[s]" the "partially overlapping anecdote and *dotage*".⁶⁶⁴

For Freud, similar mechanisms occur unintentionally in speech, as he delineates in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. For example someone could mean to say "dauert", but be thinking "traurig", and accidentally utter a fusion of the two: "draut".⁶⁶⁵ These are *lapsus*, or "slips of the tongue". They are the expression, by means of condensation, of a "suppressed ulterior thought", and they produce an "unintended display of candour".⁶⁶⁶ Walter Redfern, however, insists on the distinction between these two phenomena: the accidental "bonds fortuits qu'on appelle lapsus", and the consciously-styled "entreprises volontaires telles que le calembour";⁶⁶⁷ and Rosselli's portmanteaux, which had previously been identified as "lapsus", are, as we have seen, in fact fully conscious and intentional portmanteaux.

Rosselli's portmanteaux operate both monolingually and plurilingually. Monolingual examples from *Variazioni belliche* include "vicissitudini" and "sgragnature", which Rosselli explicates in the "Glossarietto". The various associations contained within "vicissitudini" are teased out by the poet thus: "da 'vissitudini'; 'vicenda'; 'vicinanze': composto ironico", and she glosses "sgragnature" thus: "onomatopoeia e fusione di 'sgraffiatura'; 'sgranare'; allude anche a 'sgrammaticato'; 'sgranocchiare'; 'sgraziato' 'gragnolare' ('cader la gragnuola' = popo. per 'grandine')".⁶⁶⁸ An example of a Rossellian monolingual portmanteau in English is the neologism "homicile" which is used in *Sleep*. Rosselli does not spell out the verbal associations contained within this neologism, but it is relatively clear that it is a synthesis of "homicide" and "domicile", as well as of the latter's synonym "home".

⁶⁶⁴ Freud, *The Joke*, p. 16.

⁶⁶⁵ S. Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (London, 1975), p. 99.

⁶⁶⁶ Freud, *Psychopathology*, p. 169.

⁶⁶⁷ W. Redfern, "Traduction, Puns, Clichés, Plagiat", in *Traductio: Essays on Punning and Translation*, ed. D. Delabastita (Manchester, 1997) p. 262.

⁶⁶⁸ Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 69-71.

Indeed its poetic context conveys connotations of all three words:

A soldier wooden he
staked by the running homicide
flash-deep (S 36).

The violence suggested by “soldier”, “staked” and “flash-deep” chime with “homicide”, and the homely echoes are brought across in the concealed expression “running hom[e]”. The portmanteau word, then, in a condensed fashion, simultaneously expresses both the savage and the vulnerable nature of the soldier.

Many of Rosselli's portmanteaux are more complex, in that they fuse associations in various languages into one word. Rosselli draws attention to the plurilingual nature of much of her wordplay in *Variazioni belliche* in the “Glossarietto esplicativo”. One such example that she gives in the “Glossarietto” is “la *congenitale* tendenza (“congenita” + “congenital” (inglese per congenita) + “genitale”: fusione dei tre in senso grottesco-allusivo)”.⁶⁶⁹ Here Rosselli uses the English word “congenital” as a kind of stepping stone to generate the letter “l” and thereby justify the word association between “congenita” and “genitale”. “Ciangelli” features in the following passage from a poem in *Variazioni belliche*:

o dio che ciangelli
e la tua porta si fracassi – come un'
auto che varca il rosso cancello, passa la tua
severa ordinanza, ma io non posso! Seguirti!
Tu troppo ti nascondi troppo premi il tuo pistone da pericolo.
Tu non hai dolcezza? Tu non distribuisi caldamente le
Felicità?, come un puro flauto dal becco sì sottile è
la tua ostilità – tu attiri
per poi ripulsare le gioie barbare (P 194).

The neologism “ciangelli” which describes the actions of the “dio” brings its multiple associations to bear on the poem. The severe God stands on his fenced-in altar (chancel), behind a shattered door. He is changeable (cangiare), prohibitive (cancello), and his bird-like qualities (augelli) are revealed in his hostility which is “come un puro flauto dal becco sì sottile”.

⁶⁶⁹ Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 70.

There are plurilingual portmanteaux in the English poetry too, most importantly in Rosselli's mature collection *Sleep*, and these operate along much the same lines as those in *Variazioni belliche*. One example is the coinage “slittingly”, which contains associations in both English and Italian:

[...] Smell
the cool sweet fragrance of the incense burnt, in honour
of some secret soul gone off to enjoy an hour's agony
with our saintly Maker. Pray be away
sang the hatchet as it cut slittingly
purpled with blood. The earth is made nearly
round, and fuel is burnt every day of our lives (S 8).

“Slittingly”, as Tanello has noted, contains the Italian word “slittare” (to slide/skid). It also evokes a host of other English words, such as “splitting”, “flitting”, “fittingly”, “fleetingly” as well as, of course, the word “slitting” and perhaps even the quintessentially English word “spiffingly”. Thus the blade “slits” (cuts), “splits” (divides), and “slitta” (slides) through the flesh.⁶⁷⁰ The word “shind” appears in another poem in *Sleep*:

[...] bring
in your pain and keep it frozen to your own
essence, it might shind itself into
white light, if you but
dig into it (S 54).

“Shind” is also a portmanteau, fusing an anglicization of the Italian verb “scindersi” as well as the English word “shined”, which, as Tanello remarks, is a “word-play entirely justified by the context” of “white light”.⁶⁷¹ The word “scurries” appears in the following poem from *Sleep*:

The King and Queen sat beheaded firmly
embraced, enlaced in a fit of action troublesome
to their fitsome senses. A fire to my dandy
lover! Responded the Queen to her lover's
embraces, a fire to the wine which scurries
in the veins of my beheaded head! (S 70).

This word is used idiomatically in “October Elizabethans” in the phrase “and I must

⁶⁷⁰ Analysed by E. Tanello in “La poesia in inglese di Amelia Rosselli”, p. 216.

⁶⁷¹ E. Tanello, *An Enquiry into Post-war Italian Experimentalism. The Poetry of Amelia Rosselli*. D.Phil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1989, p. 157.

Scurry Home” (*P* 61), but it does not seem entirely appropriate to the image in the poem in *Sleep* cited here. La Penna identifies an instance of transference here - the Italian “scorrere” is much more appropriate to the context.⁶⁷² But this is not simply a morphological transfer, it is also a plurilingual portmanteau, as the English sense of “scurries” also contributes to the image of the blood coursing through the speaker's veins, and coheres with the general frenzied quality of the imagery in the poem as a whole.

The plurilingual portmanteaux with a *matrix language* of Italian, then, display elements erupting out of “gli inquieti sottofondi biografici dell’inglese e del francese”.⁶⁷³ They act as an “elemento di disturbo”⁶⁷⁴ by *embedding* themselves in the *matrix*, and thereby complicating and enriching the semantic connotations both of the coinage and of the poem as a whole. And the plurilingual portmanteaux with an *English matrix language* display an analogous process, with associations from Italian and French embedding themselves in the text. This is not *lapsus*: it is a highly developed experimental programme which Tanello calls Rosselli's “controllato poliglottismo giocoso”.⁶⁷⁵

Rosselli recognised her debt to an Italian punster, Gadda; as we saw above in her remark: “È alla Gadda, è alla Joyce”, and there is certainly more work to be done on her intertextual dialogue with Gadda. But throughout *Sleep* and also indeed in her Italian poetry, Rosselli also takes great advantage of the lessons of her English-language “punster” predecessors, producing monolingual coinages as subtle and as witty as those written by Donne, Shakespeare, Hopkins and Carroll, as well as

⁶⁷² D. LaPenna, “La mente interlinguistica. Strategie dell’interferenza nell’opera trilingue di Amelia Rosselli” in *Eteroglossia e plurilinguismo letterario, vol. II, Plurilinguismo e letteratura*, eds. V. Orioles and F. Brugnolo. Proceedings of the XXVIII university conference of Bressanone (6-9 July 2000) (Rome, 2002), p. 451.

⁶⁷³ D. La Penna, “Aspetti stilistici e linguistici della poesia italiana di Amelia Rosselli”, in *Stilistica e metrica italiana*, 2, 2002, p. 239.

⁶⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 240.

⁶⁷⁵ Tanello, “La poesia in inglese di Amelia Rosselli”, p. 216.

plurilingual ones as “polyglutlateral” (*FW* 117) as Joyce’s, and, although there remains a lot of work to be done on her relationship to Gadda and other exponents of the Italian punning tradition, it is her anglophone punning heritage that we will consider here. It is clearly Joyce who dominates this tradition for Rosselli: her portmanteaux smack unmistakably of Wake. It would, for example, not be difficult to attribute the Wakeese “marmorial” (*FW* 9), which fuses “memorial” and the Italian “marmo”, to Rosselli rather than to Joyce. And Rosselli’s portmanteaux, just like Joyce’s, embody in very condensed form Eco’s concept of “openness”.

Rosselli’s portmanteau programme is quite different to the Neoavantgarde poets Giuliano Gramigna and Alfredo Giuliani who, as we saw in Chapter I, also adopted this technique of Joyce’s. Indeed Giuliani’s punning practices form an interesting counterpoint to Rosselli’s which is worth considering briefly here. Rosselli does not seek to emulate the neologistic density of *Finnegans Wake*, but Giuliani, most dramatically in his poem “Invetticogia”, does precisely that. “Invetticogia” is the penultimate poem in *Povera Juliet e altre poesie* in the section entitled “Chi l’avrebbe detto” which was written in 1963-64:

sgrondone leucocitibondo, pellimbuto di farcime,
 la tua ficalessa sbagioca e tricchigna tuttadelicatura
 la minghiottona: ohi sottilezze cacumini torcilocchi
 presticerebrazioni, che ti strangosci polpando mollicume,
 arcipicchiando la voraciocca passitona, la tua dolcetta
 che alluccherà divanissimamente il pruggiculo;
 cagoscia vizzosaggini il bàrlatro grattoso:
 la tua merlosa irabondaggine e vita⁶⁷⁶

The grotesque portmanteaux that compose this poem are formed out of the fusion of words from the thematic domains of physical cruelty and violence, illness and depraved sexuality. “Invetticogia” displays a neologistic fabric as dense as *Finnegans Wake* itself – indeed it is even denser than the section of “Anna Livia Plurabelle” which Joyce “self-translated” into Italian, and on which Giuliani most

⁶⁷⁶ A. Giuliani, *Povera juliet e altre poesie*, (Milan, 1965), p. 93. Emphasis mine.

likely modelled his technique.

Joyce's remarkable Italian version of "Anna Livia Plurabelle" was published in *Prospettive* in 1940. Let us briefly compare the final section of the text, in Joyce's original Wakeese, with Joyce's Italian translation:

Can't hear with the waters of. The chittering waters of. Flittering bats, fieldmice bawk talk. Ho! Are you not gone ahome? What Thom Malone? Can't hear with bawk of bats, all thim liffeying waters of. Ho, talk save us! My foos won't moos. I feel as old as yonder elm. A tale told of Shaun or Shem? All Livia's daughtersons. Dark hawks hear us. Night! Night! My ho head halls. I feel as heavy as yonder stone. Tell me of John or Shaun? Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons or daughters of? Night now! Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm! Night night! Telmetale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night!

Here is the corresponding paragraph of Joyce's Italian self-translation, "Anna Livia Plurabella", which many have argued improves on the "original":

Non odo piú per le acque di. Le chiacchiericcianti acque di. Nottole qua, topi là fan pian. Oh! Non sei andata a casa? Che Renata la Masa? Non odo piú il nottolio, le liffeyanti acque di. Rio ci scampi! Al mio piè ledra v'è. Mi sento vecchia come l'elmo tasso. Fiaba detta di Gionni e Giace? D'Anna Livia i figlifiglie. Corvo scuro ode. Notte! Notte! Il mio cupo capo cade. Mi sento pesa come quel sasso. Dimmi di Giaco e Giaso! Chi fur Giac e Gion i vivi figli e figlie di? Notte addenso! Dimmi, dimmi, olm! Nottenot! Dimmifiaba d'alberoccia. Presso le frusciaque di, le quinciequindi acque di. Not!⁶⁷⁷

In both "versions", sentences and even words are truncated, infected by fatigue, as the washerwomen become heavy and rooted to the ground, literally and figuratively: one turns into a tree, and the other metamorphoses into a rock. With the process of self-translation, the language, in its alliterative fatigue, transfers from "My ho head halls" into Italian. As it does so, it becomes weighed down with Dantean allusion: "Il mio cupo capo cade", echoing the pilgrim's loss of consciousness in "E caddi come corpo morto cade" in *Inferno* V.⁶⁷⁸ Joyce announced the falling of night and the thickening of the darkness simultaneously in the condensed: "Notte addenso!". This is much more effectively expressed in his Italian version than in the English "Night now!", as it fuses "È notte adesso" and "La notte è densa", gesturing tangibly to the thickening of dusk.

⁶⁷⁷ J. Joyce, *Anna Livia Plurabelle nella traduzione di Samuel Beckett e altri* (Turin, 1996), p. 28-29.

⁶⁷⁸ C. del Greco Lobner, *James Joyce's Italian Connection: The Poetics of the Word* (Iowa, 1989), p. 85.

This Joycean self-translation is now notorious in the field of Translation Studies as it is considered, paradoxically, to be both the epitome and the greatest defiance of *untranslatability*.⁶⁷⁹ Joyce coins superb Italian agglutinative compounds and portmanteaux: “chittering” becomes “chiacchiericcienti”, “daughtersons” becomes “figlifiglie”, “telmetale” becomes “dimmifiaba”, and “rivering” and “hitherandthithering” become “frusciaque” and “quinciequindi”. There are many more astoundingly inventive Italian neologisms throughout the “Anna Livia Plurabella” translation, which would have seemed truly extraordinary to his Italian readers. Examples of these, to list merely a handful, are “mercimoniali”, “alpipennone”, “sposimare”, “ecquiquacquecco”, “coguarstarrosto”, “scassavillani”, “luciolanterna”, “pappapanforte”, “vezzeggiativini”, “freddosimpellettate” and “scioglilinguagnolo”.

As we have seen, Joyce relished grappling with the *Wake*'s fundamental “untranslatability” in his experiments with “Anna Livia Plurabelle”. Eco writes that Joyce's self-translation project was a means of “opening” his text still further:

qui ci troviamo di fronte a una duplice singolarità: non solo è l'autore che traduce se stesso [...] ma traduce se stesso un autore che ha concepito un' *opera aperta* e la più aperta tra tutte, e quindi fa di tutto per scatenare le libere associazioni del lettore.⁶⁸⁰

Giuliani, in “Invettocoglia”, veritably revels in these radical Wakean techniques in his attempt to “open” his own text to the utmost degree. In “Invetticoglia” Giuliani has essentially “translated” *Wakese* into a punning language with an Italian *matrix language* rather than a Hiberno-English one, as Joyce himself had done before him. Translating these “untranslatable” techniques into Italian must have seemed an irresistibly tantalizing challenge to Giuliani, to his Neoavantgarde peer Gramigna, and also to Rosselli, all of whom made Joyce their model in portmanteau punning.

But Rosselli's project differs from those of these Neoavantgarde poets in a

⁶⁷⁹ Alongside its French “sister”, in which Beckett collaborated.

⁶⁸⁰ U. Eco, “Ostrigotta, ora capesco”, in *Anna Livia Plurabelle di James Joyce*, p. xvii.

number of ways. Firstly, as we have seen, she does not seek to emulate the portmanteau density of Joyce's text. Secondly, Giuliani's consistent recourse to the vulgar and anatomical in his wordplay is not a major feature of Rosselli's portmanteau project, although this does stem from Joyce whose *Finnegans Wake* revels in this type of language, both in the original and "Italian" versions. For example, in "Anna Livia Plurabella", Joyce created obscene puns such as "alpipennone" which suggests a phallus as large as several mountain ranges. Eco noted that in the Italian "Anna Livia", Joyce even went out of his way to add further levels of obscenity that were not present in the English text, for example with the insertion of an additional river name "Mincio" so as to "permettersi un'altra allusione oscena" with "Minchioni".⁶⁸¹ This is an element of difference from Rosselli, who only had recourse to this type of discourse in the occasional portmanteau, like, for example, in "congenitale". But the third difference between Giuliani and Rosselli's respective portmanteau techniques is the fact that Rosselli's puns are often plurilingual, whereas Giuliani's Wakeese puns, in "Invetticoglia", remain firmly monolingual (as indeed do Joyce's in his Italian "Anna Livia Plurabelle").

English is a language famous for being "particolarmente adatto al *pun*", thanks to "la sua grande ricchezza di omofoni e omografi".⁶⁸² There is, of course, a very strong English-language tradition of wordplay in literature, which moves from Shakespeare, through the metaphysicals, Sterne, Lewis Carroll, and reaches its pinnacle with "the Supreme Puntriarch, Joyce".⁶⁸³ The French language also welcomes punning very readily, and its literature too is marked by punsters;

⁶⁸¹ Eco, "Ostrigotta, ora capesco", p. xx. Many of the Anna Livia Plurabelle puns are constructed around river names. In fact, the obscene (especially a focus on genitalia and scatology) is a major sub-category of the pun, identified by Freud and many subsequent critics of the pun. Cf. especially P. Farb, *Word Play*, cited in W. Redfern, *Puns* (Oxford, 1986).

⁶⁸² E. Tanello, "Alle fonti del lapsus: pun, portmanteau, wordscape. Appunti sull'inglese letterario di Amelia Rosselli" in *Trasparenze*. Supplement to *Quaderni di poesia* (Genoa, 2003), in eds. G. Devoto and E. Tanello, p. 175.

⁶⁸³ J. Culler, "The Call of the Phoneme: Introduction" in *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters* (Oxford, 1988), p. 6.

consider, for example, Hugo, Rabelais, Flaubert, Nabokov and Queneau. Italian, on the other hand, is not a language whose history and literature have seen so many punsters, and Eco considers this to be partly due to Italian's monosyllabic nature, which makes it a difficult language in which to pun.⁶⁸⁴ Stephen Ullmann attributed the scarcity of Italian punsters to the “conservative” nature of the Italian language, as compared to French and English.⁶⁸⁵

But Marina Yaguello assures us that “Toutes les langues autorisent le jeu”⁶⁸⁶, and, in the Italian “Anna Livia Plurabella”, Joyce incontrovertibly, and once and for all, proved that this was the case even for the jealously guarded Italian language. He transformed a language not naturally (or perhaps not historically) “docile al *pun*”,⁶⁸⁷ a language that is held to be “resistente al neologismo per agglutinazione”,⁶⁸⁸ into a language which embraced punning, and showed the Italians that their language need not be an ossified one. Eco wrote that Joyce succeeded in transcending Italian's monosyllabic nature by creating incredible portmanteaux which sought out a “ritmo polisillabico al massimo”.⁶⁸⁹ Serenella Zanotti declares that Joyce's Italian “Anna Livia Plurabella” opened up “new possibilities to the Italian language and was to have a great influence on the writers who were experimenting with language”.⁶⁹⁰ In reaction to the hackneyed and commodified language that experimental poets found at their disposal in the sixties, they “championed an alternative language capable of expressing ambiguity, estrangement, and disorder”.⁶⁹¹

Rosselli's portmanteau puns in her Italian works, as well as those coined by Giuliani in “Invetticogia”, are certainly very rich examples both of this alternative

⁶⁸⁴ Eco, “Ostrigotta, ora capesco”, p. xvii.

⁶⁸⁵ W. Redfern, *Puns* (Oxford, 1984), p. 160.

⁶⁸⁶ Redfern, *Puns*, p. 161.

⁶⁸⁷ Eco, “Ostrigotta, ora capesco”, p. xv.

⁶⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. xvi.

⁶⁹⁰ Zanotti, “James Joyce Among the Italian Writers”, p. 354.

⁶⁹¹ Picchione, *The New Avant-garde in Italy*, p. 7.

language, and of the response to Joyce's "opening" of new possibilities within the Italian language. And the difficulty of punning in Italian makes Rosselli's and Giuliani's achievements, and indeed Joyce's, all the more remarkable. These portmanteaux bring about the psychological "shock effects" that we discussed in the Introduction: cognitive dissonance or even, in extreme cases, double binds. Portmanteau words do this in a variety of different ways. One way is by fusing two or more words from different *semantic fields* – or what Alexieva Bistra calls "domains of human knowledge and experience".⁶⁹² Bistra explains that "puns result not only from the confrontation of two (or more) different meanings of an identical or similar string of letters or sounds", but also from "the clash between two (or more) domains of human knowledge and experience".⁶⁹³ So, for example, Joyce's "alpipennone" which fuses two words (evoking mountain ranges) from a geographical semantic field or "domain" with a word from an anatomical semantic field or "domain" (evoking a phallus). Bistra argues that the bigger the *distance* between the domains invoked, and the more tenuously the words are connected, the more extreme the "clash" effect (or "shock" effect, as we have been calling it).⁶⁹⁴

Another technique for generating "shock" through portmanteaux is to fuse words from different *linguistic styles* or discourses (thereby forming a highly concentrated instance of *pluristilismo*) like, for example, Giuliani's pun "invetticogia", which combines the formal word "invettiva" with the vulgar word "coglione". Another technique for generating "shocks" is to fuse words from different *linguistic codes*, like, for example, in Rosselli's "slittingly", which combines the *Italian* verb "slittare" with a number of *English* words, including "splitting". These varieties of portmanteau-formation all bring about cognitive dissonance. But some

⁶⁹² A. Bistra, "There Must be Some System in this Madness: Metaphor, Polysemy, and Wordplay in a Cognitive Linguistics Framework", in *Traductio*, p. 136.

⁶⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶⁹⁴ *ibid.*

portmanteaux even produce double binds, as the words in question are not just from “dissonant” contexts, but actually conflict with one another to the extent that they attempt to cancel one another out. An example of this is Rosselli's “homicile”, which fuses the incompatible evocations of murder and homeliness, or Giuliani's “minghiottona” which fuses the contradictory notions of bodily egress (“mingere”) and ingress (“inghiottire”).

We have seen that Rosselli does not use portmanteaux anything like as densely as Joyce did in *Finnegans Wake* where, in some passages, puns are the norm rather than the exception. Nor does Rosselli use sequences of portmanteaux like for example Joyce's “shoutmost shoviality” (*FW* 6), which grafts “shout” and “shove” onto “utmost joviality”. The Rossellian examples that we have considered above all display one portmanteau word embedded in a more linguistically “normal” context. Remember the portmanteau “shind” in the following poem, for example:

[...] bring
in your pain and keep it frozen to your own
essence, it might shind itself into
white light, if you but
dig into it (*S* 54).

But the portmanteaux in Rosselli's texts are, perhaps, all the more “douplesens/sationel” precisely due to their scarcity. Barthes would certainly argue so – he declares, in his discussions on the nature of *jouissance*, that “L`endroit le plus érotique d`un corps n`est-il pas là où le vêtement bâille?” - in other words that a momentary glimpse of naked flesh is more arousing than full-frontal nudity. It is “l'intermittance” that is erotic –

celle de la peau qui scintille entre deux pièces (le pantalon et le tricot), entre deux bords (la chemise entrouverte, le gant et la manche); c`est ce scintillement même qui séduit, ou encore: la mise en scène d`une apparition-disparition.⁶⁹⁵

And so, equally, moments of extreme disruption in a text that is otherwise less experimental *flash out at us*.

⁶⁹⁵ Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, IV, p. 223.

Rosselli and Plurilinguismo, Pluristilismo and Citazionismo

This section will be quite different to the sections in Chapter III which dealt with the techniques of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* in Sanguineti's poetry. This is for a variety of reasons, firstly because the main part of this chapter will focus not on these techniques, but on the technique of *idiomatic manipulation* in Rosselli's works. What will be argued here is that the *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo* really come into their own when they are put to the service of two of Rosselli's other techniques: her *portmanteau punning* that we have already discussed, which, as we have seen, condenses effects of *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo* within single words, and her *idiomatic manipulation*, which also, at times, exploits *plurilinguismo*, and which we will argue forms the site of Rosselli's most radical *citazionismo*. One other manifestation of her *pluristilismo* – namely her conflictual engagement with Petrarch – will also be reserved for a later part of the chapter. But first, it will be useful to introduce the notions of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* in Rosselli's work, as well as the critical debates that surround them. We will not reiterate the Modernist backgrounds to these techniques, as the sections in Chapter III that dealt with these will serve adequately here.

Rosselli versus the Neoavantgarde

Amelia Rosselli, as we have seen, was rather scathing about the poets of the Neoavantgarde, considering their poetry to be, on the whole, derivative and unoriginal. But Rosselli, in spite of her protestations, did actually use much of the same repertoire of techniques as the Novissimi poets in order to radicalise poetic language, and many of these techniques were appropriated from the English-

language Modernists by both Rosselli and the Neoavantgarde poets. As we have seen, these techniques are *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo*, *citazionismo*, and *portmanteau punning*. Rosselli and Sanguineti's projects are, as we saw in the Introduction and as we have seen in the discussion thus far, in many ways, analogous and alignable, especially along the lines of the English-language Modernist intertextuality that we are interrogating here. And indeed their individual developments of these techniques can also serve as interesting counterpoints in an evaluation of their own poetic projects.

Caputo described Rosselli's attitude *vis à vis* the Neoavantgarde as “di moderata apertura e tiepido interesse”,⁶⁹⁶ and Bisanti writes that

le problematiche e le soluzioni proposte dalla neoavanguardia, infatti, non erano affatto estranee ad Amelia Rosselli, che aveva partecipato alle riunioni del Gruppo 63 a Palermo in un momento cruciale del proprio percorso poetico. Ma essa ribadì sempre con veemenza la propria distanza dagli esperimenti dei 'Novissimi': la sua posizione all'interno del gruppo è rimasta sempre 'un po' marginale', i suoi rapporti con gli altri rappresentanti erano 'buoni ma non fanatici', e la loro influenza sulla sua opera irrilevante, fatta eccezione per Antonio Porta.⁶⁹⁷

Most Rossellian critics seem to toe this party line drawn by Rosselli herself. But Niva Lorenzini, whilst addressing a conference on the Neoavantgarde in 2003, declared that although “Amelia Rosselli non si lascia identificare” with the Neoavantgarde, Lorenzini believed that,

al di là di prese di posizione più o meno polemiche o bisognose di venire contestualizzate, la Rosselli abbia un suo posto importante in queste nostre giornate, dal momento che il suo linguaggio si può a buon diritto confrontare con le linee sperimentali che stanno emergendo nelle letture di questi giorni.⁶⁹⁸

Lorenzini is right, and this is particularly true, as we are discovering in this thesis, where Rosselli's and the Novissimi's linguistic experimentation stems from English-language Modernist sources. Carbognin is also correct when he writes that the intricacies of Rosselli's relationship to the Neoavantgarde is “un problema critico a

⁶⁹⁶ F. Caputo, “Cercare la parola che esprima gli altri”, in Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 17.

⁶⁹⁷ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 280.

⁶⁹⁸ *Il gruppo 63: quarant'anni dopo*, eds. R. Barilli, F. Curi, and N. Lorenzini (Bologna, 2005), p. 66.

tutt'oggi non affrontato nella sua effettiva complessità”⁶⁹⁹, and Rosselli's poetry certainly has more in common with the Neoavantgarde than Rosselli herself would have us believe.

Bisanti discusses various affinities between Rosselli's approach to language and poetry and the Neoavantgarde's approach. She argues that “la scomposizione del soggetto lirico” (i.e. Giuliani and the Novissimi's “riduzione dell'io”) is one of the points at which their projects overlap, and explains that “l'eliminazione dell'io fosse il punto di arrivo verso cui orientare la sperimentazione poetica” also for Rosselli, who consistently strove to move away from the “confessional” mode of lyric poetry.⁷⁰⁰ Carpita sees an Eliotic derivation in this urge, which she terms Rosselli's “anticonfessional” attitude:

Anche l'avversione più volte dichiarata dall'autrice per la poesia *confessional* e il tentativo di liberarsi dell'io poetico coincidono con l'“impersonal theory of poetry” espressa da Eliot in “Traditional and Individual Talent”.⁷⁰¹

Bisanti also argues that another “punto di contatto fra la lirica rosselliana e la neoavanguardia, in particolare nella persona di Sanguineti, è la prassi plurilingue.”⁷⁰²

Rosselli's Plurilinguismo

Bisanti describes Rosselli's poetry as “una scrittura espressionistica nel senso continiano del termine, una scrittura che, attraversando tutti i registri della lingua, può definirsi plurilingue a tutti i livelli”.⁷⁰³ But Rosselli's is, of course, in many ways a very different manifestation of *plurilinguismo* from that found in Sanguineti, partly due to her pluricultural *formazione* which she allows to erupt in a number of ways in her poems in highly distinctive ways. Bisanti highlights the main distinction,

⁶⁹⁹ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 280.

⁷⁰⁰ *ibid.*

⁷⁰¹ Carpita, “Dialogo e conflitto”.

⁷⁰² *ibid.*

⁷⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 163.

which we have already referred to, that while Sanguineti and his Novissimi peers' *plurilinguismo* is “di natura essenzialmente colta e volutamente sperimentale”, “un gioco altamente intellettualistico e una scrittura da 'iniziati’”, Rosselli's *plurilinguismo* is not a “vuota scelta programmatica dell'avanguardia o l'applicazione esteriore di uno schema astratto”, rather, it is a “fattore genetico, componente endogena antecedente all'espressione e generatrice, essa stessa, dell'enunciazione poetica.”⁷⁰⁴

Rosselli's *plurilinguismo* is very different, then, from Sanguineti's. Although she was well versed in how they used their “smattering of languages”, Rosselli's use of the Modernist technique does not seem to stem from Eliot and Pound's *plurilinguismo*. Instead, it seems to be a result, on the one hand, of her own unusual multilingual upbringing, and on the other hand of an engagement with Joyce's highly experimental employment of his own “smattering of languages”. This emerges, as we have seen, very strikingly in her Wakean polyglot *portmanteau puns*, and also, as we shall see later in this chapter, in her equally Joycean and equally radical *idiomatic manipulations*. Tatiana Bisanti, in her monograph *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli* (2007) has recently outlined in a very comprehensive fashion many of the features, strategies and nuances of Rosselli's multifaceted plurilingual programme. What this thesis seeks to add to this thorough assessment is an exploration of the Joycean element to her plurilingual techniques.

⁷⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 9.

Rosselli's Pluristilismo

Sanguineti's texts display not only *plurilinguismo*, but also *pluristilismo*, and the same is true of Rosselli's. A major and constant feature of Rosselli's works - both in English and in Italian - is the co-existence of different levels of language. Tanello speaks of the kinds of "lessico familiare", the speech of émigrés in which "the forms of the colloquial, the regional, mingl[e] with the static, normative monolith of the literary language".⁷⁰⁵ Rosselli transposes, to startling effect, such *mingling* into her poetry. Critics of the Italian works have spoken of the "illiterate" features of Rosselli's "italiano popolare", juxtaposed against which is her literary and archaic language. We also find in her poems, just as we did in Sanguineti (and in Dante, Eliot, Pound and Joyce), what Bisanti calls "tecnicismi": "vocaboli tratti da linguaggi settoriali, soprattutto dal lessico della medicina, ma anche della botanica, della musica, ecc" which serve to further "ampliare [...] il quadro dei registri adottati".⁷⁰⁶

Lucia Re writes regarding Rosselli's "italiano popolare" that the poet

feels particularly close to the *analfabeta* or illiterate individual [and] her literal inability to feel at home in Italian (or any other language) makes this more than just a literary or ideological posture.⁷⁰⁷

Examples of this type of language include what Rosselli calls her "intercambi [...] di generi", such as "*la sua fallimenta*" (*P* 272) or "*una olocausta*" (*P* 305), or her incorrect adjectival agreements, for example in "*le mucosa sempre aperta*" (*P* 305), her misuse of compound prepositions, for example in the unelided "*quel inverno*" and "*buon anime*", and her misspellings, often double-letter blunders such as "*addombrare*" (*P* 602). Examples of archaic or literary words used by Rosselli include "*avea*", "*speme*", "*augelli*", "*angiolo*" and "*lagrima*". Archaic spellings and grammar which she includes in the "Glossarietto" are: "*l sole* = "il sole" (abbreviazione poetica

⁷⁰⁵ Tanello, "Doing the Splits", p. 365.

⁷⁰⁶ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 155.

⁷⁰⁷ Re, "Introduction", p. 24.

arcaizzante)”, “*de la indifferenza* (de la: lett. tosc. vedi Campana)” and “*infra; intra* (latinismi).”⁷⁰⁸ Rosselli also invents Latinate forms such as “pulchritudine” and pseudoarchaisms such as the portmanteau “magniloquace”.

These archaisms, Bisanti writes, “non sono usate esclusivamente in funzione aulicizzante, ma rivelano in alcuni casi un intento antiretorico”.⁷⁰⁹ The elevated poetic language is razed to the ground when it clashes with the conversational tone and the “illiterate” words, for example in the following passage, which displays the coexistence of Rosselli’s “lingua analfabeta” (e.g. “il suo fronte”) and her archaic literary language (e.g. “cangiammo”):

[...]L'eletta compagnia
sepole Elettra, essa cinse il suo fronte di allori
imbiancati di polvere di lacrime; il rosa e il sale,
la pietà e il gridare agli attenti! Sinonima della
paura, iena della valle umanissima – lei, io ed
essa cangiammo ogni pietà ricoprimmo la più piccola
cicatrice di erbe flessibili bianche e gialle, rosse
di vendetta e il sorriso sulle labbra (*P* 243).

The English works are also *pluristilistici*, in them “illiterate” and “archaic” linguistic elements are also juxtaposed against one another. Examples of Rosselli’s illiterate English include miss-spellings (e.g. “layed” for “laid”), incorrect use of prefixes (e.g. “disattentive” for “inattentive”), verbs transformed into nouns (e.g. “divisioned”), and “illiterate” words coined, such as “attirement”. Examples of her archaic vocabulary include “alas”, “upon” “begot”. And, just as she does in Italian, Rosselli also coins some more creative “pseudo-archaisms” in English, such as “fitsome” and “benixt”.

But the effect of the archaisms in English is somewhat different to the effect that they create in the Italian works. In part, this is due to the divergent histories of the Italian and English languages. For centuries after the codification of the Italian language as a literary artefact, the “poetic” language remained relatively unchanged,

⁷⁰⁸ Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 69-71.

⁷⁰⁹ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 143.

and so in Italian poetry we find similar “poetic” vocabulary from Petrarch through to Leopardi and beyond, until twentieth century poets began to chip away at and “revivify” this rigid language. Rosselli’s Italian archaisms are thus, in a sense, not specific to a particular period, but belong to this almost “ageless” poetic language. In her English works, however, what is striking is that Rosselli adopts, as well as features of a more generally “formal” language, a particular historical *mode* of discourse, the Elizabethan one; one which has its own very characteristic vitality. Indeed the English of this period was *itself* an unstable language in a state of change and constant flux, and Rosselli appropriates its shifting and inconsistent nature (for example by including the spelling variants “furthest” and “farthest” in one poem).

As we saw in the “Diario”, Rosselli mentioned Joyce's “imitation of styles”. There is certainly a Joycean element to Rosselli's *pluristilismo*, both in her Italian and English poetry, and indeed also a general Modernist element to it, stemming undoubtedly from Eliot and Pound's stylistic juxtapositionings too, and also absorbing these three writers' mediations of the intensely *pluristylistic* Dante. And in *Sleep* Rosselli fuses, most extraordinarily, these Modernist stylistic processes with the Early Modern linguistic ones that we have just discussed. This is a very different use of the Elizabethan mode than that which Rosselli drew attention to in Joyce's poetry. Joyce, at that very early stage of his literary career, was simply *trying on* the Elizabethan voice for these poems which Rosselli defined as “*esercizi letterari*”; a voice which then became one of a multitude of literary and non-literary voices that were juxtaposed in his later works. Rosselli, unlike the younger Joyce, yet in a fashion that is certainly akin to Joyce's later stylistic experiments in his prose, adopts the Elizabethan mode in *Sleep* in order to desecrate it, and juxtaposes it against an intensely Modernist mode.

Rosselli's Citazionismo

For Sanguineti we considered not only his *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*, but additionally the intertwined technique of *citazionismo*. This is a technique also used by Rosselli, although Rosselli's own conception of intertextuality was more traditional than Sanguineti's. As we saw when we looked at her journalistic articles, she speaks in terms of “influence” and, as we deduced from her criticisms of Sanguineti's appropriation of English-language Modernist techniques, she seems to consider, in fairly Bloomian terms, that the role of the poet is to learn from poetic predecessors but pass through this phase and develop an “original” stance. Rosselli and Sanguineti's positions on *citazionismo* can, in spite of these differences of approach, be united along the lines of their shared focus on using it as a strategy for “alienation”.

Often in Rosselli's works citation is used in conjunction with the “lingua aulico”, and is thus intimately connected with *pluristilismo*. As Bisanti explains:

il registro oscilla fra quei due stili che si è visto essere i due poli contrapposti eppur complementari del discorso poetico rosselliano: quello aulico, che si manifesta fra l'altro attraverso l'inserimento di citazioni letterarie, e quello colloquiale.⁷¹⁰

Bisanti says that there are “moltissimi” “richiami e gli echi letterari” in Rosselli's poems, “a dimostrazione della densa intelaiatura intertesuale del testo”,⁷¹¹ and she mentions Campana, Montale, Rimbaud, Cavalcanti, Dante, Petrarca, Foscolo, Leopardi, D'Annunzio, Proust and Pasolini. In line with the “lingua aulico”, these citations are, “talvolta [...] oggetto di ribaltamento ironico o esercitano una funzione di straniamento all'interno del contesto poetico”.⁷¹² The word “talvolta” here is crucial, because, as we shall see, the citations do not always serve to “straniare”, for as Emmanuela Tandello exclaims

⁷¹⁰ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 155-6.

⁷¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 186.

⁷¹² *ibid.*, p. 156.

Rosselli launches derisive invectives against the 'holy fathers' of tradition, the sustained practice of (mis-)quotation and allusion constituting as much a searing critique of tradition as a strategy to find one's own place within it.⁷¹³

It is only in the last eight years or so that Rosselli's critics have begun mining her citational (or intertextual) practices in earnest,⁷¹⁴ in spite of the fact that Rosselli herself wrote in a note to the 1985 edition of *La Libellula* that there are “vari poeti da me utilizzati come spunti, e poi sviluppati, manipolati, in senso del tutto soggettivo, per l'intera durata del poema”.⁷¹⁵ It is this poem, *La Libellula*, in particular which is densely citational.⁷¹⁶ Baldacci identifies in it “citazioni e alterazioni della parola di Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Shakespeare, Scipione, Montale, Campana, D'Annunzio e Rilke, Mallarmé”,⁷¹⁷ and describes the technique thus:

La citazione in quanto luogo dell'altro, della parola altrui, diviene il punto di partenza per l'eccentrica costruzione di una voce e di una identità propria. Parodia dell'autenticità dunque, e autenticità come parodia: appropriazione con procedura quasi cannibalica del corpus della tradizione.⁷¹⁸

Tandello speaks of Rosselli “engag[ing] with” and “deconstruct[ing]”, in *La Libellula*, texts by “Rimbaud, Campana, Montale, as well as several other poets, including Dante.”⁷¹⁹

The Modernists are notable for their absence from these lists of authors that feature in her poetry through citation, which might seem surprising given what we have argued here regarding the importance of the Modernists in her *formazione*, and their presence in the “Diario”. But various critics, in the last few years, have begun to remedy this, and to trace allusions to Eliot in her poetry. Bisanti, for example, cites an Eliotic allusion in *Variazioni belliche*:

⁷¹³ Tandello, “Between Tradition and Transgression”, p. 309.

⁷¹⁴ Carpita writes that “L'interesse della critica per la presenza di fenomeni intertestuali nella poesia rosselliana è emerso con particolare evidenza nel 2003 con il numero monografico di *Trasparenze* a cura di Emmanuela Tandello e Giorgio Devoto. È stata Tandello a proseguire negli anni successivi il discorso sull'intertestualità nell'illuminante volume *La fanciulla e l'infinito* e nel saggio sulla presenza della fonte petrarchesca in *Serie Ospedaliera*”.

⁷¹⁵ A. Baldacci, *Amelia Rosselli* (Rome, 2007), p. 45.

⁷¹⁶ Carpita writes that “La scelta di aggiungere delle note di commento al poemetto sembra seguire il modello delle glosse eliotiane a *The Waste Land*”.

⁷¹⁷ Baldacci, *Amelia Rosselli*, p. 45.

⁷¹⁸ *ibid.*

⁷¹⁹ Tandello, “Between Tradition and Transgression”, p. 309.

La mente che si frena e si determina è un bel gioco.
La cosmopolita saggezza è forse la migliore delle
nostre canaste. La mente che si determina è forse
un gioco fastullo? Convinta del contrario ponderavo
le crisi interne del paese e osservavo affluire nell'
gran fiume della città una scatola di sardine (P 212).

Bisanti says that “in uno scenario che ricorda l'Eliot di *Wasteland*, [il fiume] si fa simbolo di una civiltà in decadenza”,⁷²⁰ and Bardin identifies an Eliotic influence behind the Cavalcantian strain in the following poem:

Perché non spero tornare giammai nella città delle bellezze
eccomi di ritorno in me stessa. Perché non spero mai ritrovare
me stessa, eccomi di ritorno fra delle mura. Le mura pesanti
e ignare richiudono il prigioniero (P 316).

Here the “ascendenza cavalcantiana” is not direct, but “mediato attraverso l'Eliot di *Ash-Wednesday*”⁷²¹. But it is not until Chiara Carpita's essay that we begin to see the extent to which Eliot's words and imagery permeate Rosselli's poetry.

We already considered Carpita's work on Eliot's role in the “Diario in tre lingue”. Her article goes on to identify *La Libellula* as “un'opera ricca di riferimenti a Eliot”, not just to *The Waste Land*, but also to the *Four Quartets* and *Ash Wednesday*.⁷²² Indeed Carpita goes so far as to say that “Nel caso della *Libellula* il primo strato o anello è quello modernista, la lezione di T.S. Eliot su cui in un secondo momento si innestano le fonti italiane”.⁷²³ Carpita identifies intertextual dialogue with Eliot in the presence of patterns of recurring key-words of Eliotic derivation (e.g. “carità”, “pietà”, “peccato”), in thematic concerns and imagery (e.g. drought, burial, time, the cyclical nature of the seasons, mysticality), and in formal concerns (e.g. repetition). Carpita also notes that at times Rosselli's recourse to Dante is mediated by Eliot: “in alcuni casi i riferimenti a Dante ricalcano proprio i versi eliotiani”.⁷²⁴ Indeed Carpita relates that Rosselli's intertextual practices do not simply

⁷²⁰ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 205.

⁷²¹ *ibid.*, p. 215.

⁷²² Carpita, “Dialogo e conflitto”.

⁷²³ *ibid.*

⁷²⁴ *ibid.*

involve dialogue with other authors, but that there is also “un dialogo con gli autori e con le fonti con cui loro stessi hanno a loro volta dialogato fino alla scoperta dell'arche’, della fonte originaria che molto spesso è la Bibbia.”⁷²⁵

More generally, Carpita states that Rosselli shares with Eliot “scelte formali e di poetica come il frammentismo, la moltiplicazione dell'io poetico e la ricerca dell'oggettività, l'uso dell'ironia e della riflessione metaletteraria”, and that even the writers “da lei più amati fanno parte del canone eliotiano: da Dante, Shakespeare, i metafisici, Milton, Hopkins fino a Baudelaire, Rimbaud” which, Carpita says, demonstrates that her “sistema intertestuale non è assolutamente casuale, ma modernista.”⁷²⁶ Then, echoing Tanello, Carpita writes that “la giovane poetessa impara dai maestri della tradizione in modo anche irriverente, rovesciando più che citando la loro lezione”; the Eliotic intertexts that Carpita identifies in the “Diario” and in *La Libellula* are “estratti dal loro contesto e sottoposti ad un processo di straniamento”. Carpita exclaims that in *La Libellula* and *Variazioni belliche* Rosselli expresses “la stessa diagnosi della società contemporanea contenuta nella *Waste Land*: ‘siamo l'ultima specie umana, / siamo il cadavere che flotta’.”⁷²⁷ But the point at which Rosselli and Eliot's visions diverge is “la speranza nel religioso”. While Eliot's vision is bleak but allows space for a future redemption, Rosselli's does not. For Rosselli,

Nonostante sia presente nella sua poesia l'utopia politica di una società basata su carità e compassione, non esiste una consolazione nella fede perché non è possibile distogliere lo sguardo dall'orrore della violenza.⁷²⁸

Although Rosselli's technique of *citazionismo* must derive from, among other sources, an awareness of the English-language Modernist uses of this technique, this does not emerge in any overt way. But, as Carpita's essay has displayed, Rosselli does

⁷²⁵ *ibid.*

⁷²⁶ *ibid.*

⁷²⁷ *ibid.*

⁷²⁸ *ibid.*

include Eliot himself in her intertextual system – we could say that Rosselli “mummifies” Eliot as Sanguineti does, although Rosselli certainly does so with a little more reverence for this “padre” of Tradition. Chiara Carpita's study of the intertextual dialogue between Rosselli and Eliot is most valuable in its own right, and it also serves to draw attention to the lack of corresponding studies on the roles of Pound and Joyce within Rosselli's complex intertextuality. There is undoubtedly much work still to be done on the role of Pound and Joyce in Rosselli's intertextual systems, and these analyses must also be considered alongside any future analysis of Rosselli's engagement with Dante.

The remainder of this chapter will go some way towards filling the critical lacuna of Rosselli's relationship with Joyce's writings. We have seen in this section that for Rosselli the Modernists function, to a lesser extent than for Sanguineti “come spunti” (to use Rosselli's word) for her *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*. But Joyce, as we have seen, functions much more significantly “come spunt[o]” for her portmanteau technique. Intimately connected to Rosselli's portmanteau punning practices is another technique which we will see also has a strong Joycean precedent, and that is her manipulation and distortion of idioms, clichés and proverbs. This technique is an embodiment of *citazionismo*, residing at the other end of the *pluristylistic* spectrum to the “lingua aulico” of her literary *citazionismo*. Rosselli's plundering and desecration of the idioms and expressions of popular speech is, we will argue, the most radical – and the least explored – facet of her *citazionismo*.

The ensuing sections of this chapter will consider this element of Rosselli's multifaceted English-language Modernist engagement. This is particularly interesting as here Rosselli departs from the more familiar territory of Modernist engagement covered by Sanguineti (*plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo*, *citazionismo*),

elements of which she shared. With her manipulation of idioms, Rosselli takes the Modernist stimuli in a direction that the Novissimi did not, and in order to do this she takes impetus from Joyce. The results are very much in line with Rosselli's punning “*langue doublesensational*”, and both techniques of Joycean derivation were put to the service of radicalising literary language. Indeed, we argue here, the sites of idiom manipulation provide loci where Rosselli's *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* become particularly innovative. The next section of this chapter will give a definition of *idiomatic manipulation*, before turning to consider Joyce's technique. Then we will be equipped to analyse how this is developed by Rosselli, and how she uses the technique to create Benjaminian “shock effects” and to enact the thematic conflicts that govern the world of her poetry.

Rosselli and Idiomatic Manipulation

*This whole delightful world of clichés and refrain –
What would you have, my dear? The same again?⁷²⁹*

Finnegans Wake is best known for being composed of vast quantities of plurilingual puns, as we have seen in relation to Rosselli's portmanteaux. But the *Wake* also desecrates virtually every other domain of the English language, including that of idioms, clichés and proverbs. Rosselli, too, experimented with and manipulated idiomatic expressions. This type of experimentation is connected to her *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*, and, in some cases, also to her *plurilinguismo* – and in fact it is in her manipulation of idioms that her techniques of mingling languages and styles and of plundering other peoples' "texts" become particularly innovative.

The only Rossellian critic who has drawn attention to the idiomatic manipulations in her works is Tatiana Bisanti, who mentions it only with regard to her Italian works and has not interrogated her English works along these lines. Nor has Bisanti, or, indeed, any other critic, examined the body of critical literature on this rhetorical device, categorised the precise techniques used by Rosselli, or investigated its Joycean derivation. Before considering Rosselli's manipulation of idioms we shall first consider the phenomenon as a whole, and then examine Joyce's own use of the technique.

The Rhetorical Device

The story of the classification and analysis of idiomatic manipulation, like many good stories, begins with Freud. He writes about the "modification of familiar sayings" in *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious*, asserting that the

⁷²⁹ L. MacNiece, "Homage to Cliché", in *Collected Poems*, (London, 2007), p. 60.

“rediscovery of the familiar is pleasurable”, and traces this claim back to Aristotle who “saw the basis for the enjoyment of art in the delight we take in recognition”. Freud then goes on to say that since recognition arouses pleasure, we could “expect that mankind will start thinking of exercising this capacity for its own sake, that is, of experimenting with it in play”. Wordplay, Freud explains, can even “intensify [...] our delight in recognition” by “putting obstacles in its way, that is, by bringing about a `psychical damming-up`, which is removed with the art of recognition”.⁷³⁰ Ultimately, Freud decided that this rhetorical device was not dignified enough to be fully admitted into his classification of wordplay, but it is nevertheless crucial that he considered it.

These terms used by Freud, however - *pleasurable, delight, familiar and recognition* - call to mind more recent theorists than Freud, most notably Roland Barthes. But let us come back to Barthes later, after we have considered some post-Freudian theorists who studied the manipulation of idioms. Andrejs Veisbergs, in his essay “The Contextual Use of Idioms, Wordplay, and Translation”, defines an idiom as “a stable word combination with a fully or partially transferred meaning”.⁷³¹ As a rule, what makes an idiom an idiom is its *stability*. Idioms are, by nature, “unchangeable entities”.⁷³² Yet sometimes idioms are not used in exactly their dictionary form, and, in fact, some idioms allow more variation than others.⁷³³ As Veisbergs writes, some idioms are “structurally `frozen` and strongly metaphorical”, for example “*to kick the bucket* whose original meaning has faded from linguistic consciousness and is actually a matter for speculation even to professional linguists”.⁷³⁴ But some idioms, such as “*feel (all) (the) better for (having done)*”

⁷³⁰ A. Veisbergs, “The Contextual Use of Idioms, Wordplay, and Translation” in *Traductio*, p. 118.

⁷³¹ *ibid.*, p. 156.

⁷³² *ibid.*, p. 159.

⁷³³ *ibid.*, p. 156.

⁷³⁴ *ibid.*

something” are “much more transparent semantically and permit greater structural variation”.⁷³⁵ In English more than in most other European languages, changes to tense, number, gender and person in idioms are tolerated, but, as Veisbergs writes, these changes are “entirely rule-governed” and so “fail to produce any surprise in the reader and have no stylistic value”.⁷³⁶ But what concerns us here, in relation to the use and abuse of idioms in literature, is precisely the type of changes which *do* have a stylistic value, and which *do* produce surprise in the reader.

Veisbergs writes that this phenomenon is “relatively well-documented in linguistics”.⁷³⁷ Idiom manipulations involve “intentional, subjectively and stylistically motivated transformations of the meaning of the idiom in its contextual use”.⁷³⁸ Veisbergs provides a list of terms that others have used to define it, including “the *nonce use*”, “*creative adaptation*”, “*modification*”, “*destruction*” and “*renewal*” and he favours “*contextual transformation*”⁷³⁹ of idioms. However, as explained in the Introduction, the term “idiom manipulation” will be used here, and the term “idiom” will serve as an umbrella term for all types of “phraseological units”: idioms, clichés and proverbs.

The manipulation of idioms is a widely used rhetorical device. Andrejs Veisbergs writes that “Authors at various times and in a multitude of languages and genres have subjected idioms to some semantic or structural transformation for the sake of creating wordplay”.⁷⁴⁰ The results can be hilarious, for example in “Any stigma will do to beat a dogma”, “There's no police like Holmes”, “A wife's description of her husband: for whom the belle toils”,⁷⁴¹ or in Oscar Wilde's “Work is the curse of the

⁷³⁵ *ibid.*

⁷³⁶ *ibid.*

⁷³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 155.

⁷³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 156.

⁷³⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 155.

⁷⁴¹ P. Hammond and P. Hughes, *Upon the Pun: Dual Meaning in Words and Pictures* (London, 1978), p. ix.

drinking classes”. Idiom manipulations are often used in journalese which, as Veisbergs says “is hardly surprising in view of their extreme verbal economy, offering as they do two meanings per phrase plus the pleasure of solving the puzzle into the bargain”,⁷⁴² and indeed they also suit advertising very well because, as Redfern says, “modern advertising copy depend[s] on familiarity with the hackneyed in our language”.⁷⁴³ But it is in literature where this phenomenon becomes much more complex and interesting.

Other critics have also drawn attention to the *stability* of idioms. For example, Kristeva describes them as one of the “simplest forms [of] signifying operation”, and speaks of “the 'understood' nature of *idioms* (understood by the population, the clan, 'our kind' - the family)”.⁷⁴⁴ Redfern calls them “the automatic features in language”; in them, he says, “things are as expected”.⁷⁴⁵ And so, of course, they can be a wonderful resource for linguistic play, for, as we have seen throughout this thesis, if you *manipulate* the “expected”, the “understood”, you introduce ruptures or “shocks” into the experience of hearing or reading them. Veisbergs writes that idiomatic manipulations create “a contrast with the 'normal' reading of the idiom in its unchanged form and so defeat [...] the reader’s or the listener’s expectation”.⁷⁴⁶ In this way a manipulated idiom functions just as a pun does, juxtaposing two layers of meaning, and often two semantic and experiential “domains” as well; in fact Veisbergs also calls these idiomatic manipulations “idiom-based puns”.⁷⁴⁷ Hughes and Hammond, in their little book *Upon the Pun*, also identify the act of “revitali[zing] a cliché, proverb, or truism” as a form of punning.⁷⁴⁸ Veisbergs goes on

⁷⁴² Veisbergs, “The Contextual Use of Idioms”, p. 160.

⁷⁴³ Redfern, *Puns* (Oxford, 1984), p. 138.

⁷⁴⁴ J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York, 1984), p. 93.

⁷⁴⁵ Redfern, “Traduction, Puns, Clichés, Plagiat”, p. 267.

⁷⁴⁶ Veisbergs, “The Contextual Use of Idioms”, p. 157.

⁷⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 157.

⁷⁴⁸ Hammond and Hughes, *Upon the Pun*, p. ix.

to elaborate that

When an idiom is [manipulated], its standard or dictionary variant is lost neither formally nor semantically, but it will remain present in the minds of the author and the reader or listener. Thus, two scripts [...] i.e. segments of semantic information, are evoked, one being the idiom in its usual form and meaning, the other the changed form and meaning. The contrast between the two creates the effect of a defeated expectation, on top of the singular and unique semantic clash produced by the specific idiom change in its particular context.⁷⁴⁹

Thus, when an idiom is manipulated, it brings about a “defeated expectation” - things are no longer *as expected* – which is, as we saw, precisely the word which Redfern used to describe idioms. Veisbergs confirms this

The effect of a defeated expectation is usually strong as idioms are perceived as unchangeable entities, so that the recognition of one element of the idiom gives a strongly predictable character to the subsequent text segment.⁷⁵⁰

Indeed, this “clash” produced in the mind of the reader that Veisbergs and the other critics describe seems to resemble very closely the Benjaminian “shock effect” which we discussed in the Introduction and identified as being at the root of Sanguineti's linguistic and stylistic experimentalism. Rosselli's approach, as we shall see, is different to Sanguineti's – her use of the “shock effects” is not such an overtly political one, and Rosselli did not speak about Barthes and Benjamin like Sanguineti did, although we know that she did own (and presumably also read) their major works.⁷⁵¹ Nevertheless, the discourse of “shock” that we have employed thus far certainly helps us to understand the linguistic conflicts in Rosselli's poetry, and, especially, those created by her manipulation of idioms.

Idioms (and especially clichés) can act as powerful sirens for authors, particularly for “bad” authors, luring them into the morass of the formulaic and the trite. Redfern, who discusses the phenomenon of idiomatic manipulation using a more impressionistic approach than Veisberg's linguistic one, outlines a strategy that some authors use for overcoming this temptation. Redfern explains that you can

⁷⁴⁹ Veisbergs, “The Contextual Use of Idioms”, p. 158.

⁷⁵⁰ Veisbergs, “The Contextual Use of Idioms”, p. 159.

⁷⁵¹ Cf. F. Carbognin, “La biblioteca personale di Amelia Rosselli”, in *Trasparenze*, p. 135.

“twist[...]” and “pervert” idioms as ways of providing a “rejoinder” to them. He argues that the “obvious motive for twisting” clichés or proverbs “is the desire to be a wise guy, undeceived or less deceived: showing off”, but that

less obvious but more crucially, when we make a pun, when we play with words, we are making them our own. The twist we effect wrenches them out of their comfortable, allowed context.⁷⁵²

Redfern cites Zijderveld who, in his 1979 study *On Clichés*, writes that “in our mirthful playing with traditional and routinised meanings [...] we have a chance to subdue clichés to our ingenuity and wit, and thus to relativise their power”. Thus the defeated expectation shunts the reader into an uncomfortable, unsettled state, while the writer engages in a power struggle with language. Much later, in a different essay, Redfern again discusses the device of idiomatic manipulation, calling it the “recycling of set expressions” and “*lexical revitalization*”, and describing it as a way of “extracting the maximum juice from words.” Making reference to the French writer Michel Tournier's strategy, Redfern suggests that “Perhaps the best response to clichés is to satirically, knowingly recycle them. [...] To ironize them”.⁷⁵³

As we saw earlier, these theoretical musings on idiom manipulation invoke Roland Barthes. In the Introduction, we discussed the opposition which Barthes set up between *plaisir* and *jouissance*. Since *undisturbed* idioms, as we have seen, embody *stability* (Veisbergs), the “comfortable, allowed context” (Redfern), and are “as expected” (Redfern), they align very well with Barthes' notion of *plaisir*. The domain of *manipulated* idioms aligns equally well with *jouissance*, as these perverted formulae, conversely, embody instability and discomfort and shock and unsettle the reader.

Perloff, writing in her book *Unoriginal Genius* about techniques of defeating a reader's expectation, gives examples from contemporary American poetry, one of

⁷⁵² Redfern, *Puns*, p. 153.

⁷⁵³ Redfern, “Traduction, Puns, Clichés, Plagiat”, p. 267.

which contains a manipulated idiom. This is from Diane Ward's poem "Limit" (1989):

at the end of delight, one
who or that which revolves

more than chests have
to heave "... where gold,
dirt and blood flow
together"! : margins

the family, not personal
fallibility leads

to instrumentality
in self-restraint ⁷⁵⁴

Perloff notes that "Ward's 'At the end of' anticipates a noun phrase like 'the day' or 'the journey' but not 'delight'"⁷⁵⁵. And this is where Perloff calls "the defeat of reader expectation" a "kind of cognitive dissonance", as we mentioned in the Introduction. As we have seen, cognitive dissonance, alongside its more extreme cousin, the double bind, is a term which defines, in *cognitive* terms, the "shock effect". We have seen thus far in this thesis that this can be brought about using techniques of *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo*, *citazionismo* and *portmanteau punning*.

Idiom manipulation can also be used as a technique for bringing about cognitive dissonance or, in extreme instances, a double bind, in the mind of the reader. And, as we shall see, Rosselli induces cognitive dissonance and double binds through her manipulation of idioms. For the cognitive scientists, this experience is a wholly negative one, and one which the subconscious strives to remedy. But for Barthes, this is an experience to be relished as *jouissance*. We have seen that for Sanguineti this unsettled but heightened and exhilarating experience was part of his strategy for bringing about a new kind of reader – the reader-turned-activist - and it is one to "godere". Let us see whether this is also the case for Rosselli. But first, let us take a look at Joyce's use of the rhetorical device.

⁷⁵⁴ Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius*, p. 7-8.

⁷⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 9.

Joyce's Idioms

The trajectory of Joyce's literary career moves from an attempt to *expose* the "worn coins" of language - described in the Introduction as the Modernist "crisis of language" - in his earlier writings to an ingenious *exploitation* of them in his final work: *Finnegans Wake*. *Dubliners* portrays a city that is as paralysed and deadened linguistically as it is spiritually, and the speech-patterns of the characters are either riddled with ellipses, euphemistic and clichéd turns of phrase, or they proceed in relentless repetitive cycles. Stephen in *Stephen Hero* initially claims to value the language of "the literary tradition" over that of "the market place"; the words of the latter, he says, have "a debased value".⁷⁵⁶ Yet he soon learns to absorb and savour popular forms of language:

As he walked thus through the ways of the city he had his eyes and ears ever prompt to receive impressions. It was not only in Skeat that he found words for his treasure-house, he found them also at haphazard in the shops, on advertisements, in the mouths of the plodding public. He kept repeating them to himself till they lost all instantaneous meaning for him and became wonderful vocables.⁷⁵⁷

But Stephen Dedalus feels oppressed by the language of "tradition" in *A Portrait*. He is caught in a binary grip with language which he describes as being both "so familiar and so foreign" to him.⁷⁵⁸ This phrase will prove most pertinent to Joyce's later poetics, as his manipulations of both the language of "tradition" and of idiomatic speech, the latter of which we will be assessing here, force the English language into a liminal space between familiarity and foreignness – between the domains of *plaisir* and *jouissance*, as Barthes would have it.

Various episodes of *Ulysses* make use, each in their own distinctive way, of the linguistic realm of clichés as a major feature of what Laurent Milesi calls the "systematic attempt at depleting styles, idioms and idiolects".⁷⁵⁹ For example,

⁷⁵⁶ J. Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (London, 1944), p. 36.

⁷⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁵⁸ Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London, 1916, 1996), p. 215.

⁷⁵⁹ L. Milesi, "Introduction" to *James Joyce and the Difference of Language*, ed. Milesi, L.

“Cyclops” is said to contain “bloated whimsical journalese”⁷⁶⁰, a language composed, like that used in “Aeolus” of worn-out, clichéd turns of phrase. Anthony Burgess defines the style of “Nausicaa” as “cliché-ridden and euphemistic [...], the style of a woman’s magazine of the Edwardian period”,⁷⁶¹ and Richard Ellmann writes that “late in the evening at 7 Eccles Street, the English language is as worn-out as the day and can produce only clichés”⁷⁶², a comment which applies particularly to “Eumaeus”. Anthony Burgess states that in “Eumaeus” Joyce “seems to have reached the limit of humiliation of English prose” and asks “What is there left for him to do now?”⁷⁶³. Joyce found, in *Finnegans Wake*, that there was in fact an awful lot “left for him to do” with these clichés and other fixed speech patterns that he had so trenchantly exposed in his oeuvre from *Dubliners* through to *Ulysses*.

Katie Wales, in her book-length study *The Language of James Joyce* draws attention to the final development of Joyce's approach to idioms. In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce manipulates idioms (and the other phraseological units such as clichés and proverbs which this umbrella-term covers) tirelessly:

Joyce’s word-play incorporates more than just the single word: it encompasses phrase and sentence. Hundreds of puns are set in the context of Joyce’s beloved heteroglossic parodies: of proverbs, clichés, quotations, snatches of song and liturgical chants [...]. Each parody preserves differing degrees of lexical similarity; often only the rhythmical and syntactical ‘mould’ remains.⁷⁶⁴

Joyce could “defamiliarise” a phrase while ensuring that it nevertheless retained just enough of its essence to remain “familiar”. Joyce was committed to *variation* on particular clichés or proverbs, as we can see in the following examples of proverbs which generate multiple imaginative variants in the first book of the *Wake*:

(Cambridge, 2003), p. 5.

⁷⁶⁰ A. Burgess, *Joysprick: An Introduction to the Language of James Joyce* (London, 1973), p. 98.

⁷⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷⁶² Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce* (Oxford, 1982), p. 146.

⁷⁶³ Burgess, *Joysprick*, p. 106.

⁷⁶⁴ K. Wales, *The Language of James Joyce* (London, 1992), p. 140.

- **Proverb: “There’s many a slip betwixt cup and lip”**

Wakeese Manipulations:

But there’s many a split pretext bowl and jowl (FW:161)

fame would come to you twixt a sleep and a wake (FW:192)

to hear him twixt his sedimental cupslips (FW:171)

- **Proverb: “Time and tide wait for no man”**

Wakeese Manipulations:

Temp untamed will hist for no man (FW:196)

telling them take their time, yugfries, and wait till the tide stops (FW:170)

turfentide and serpentyme (FW:206)

These examples corroborate Wales’ assertion that “each parody preserves differing degrees of lexical similarity” to its originating idiom. Distortions like these, which have not received adequate attention from scholars, saturate the text of *Finnegans Wake*. There are patterns within these mechanisms of distortion, but their real richness lies in the fact that they are also infinitely varied, and thus inherently unclassifiable.⁷⁶⁵

Wales’ analysis continues: “Their ‘double voice’ means that the reader appreciates their familiar resonance at the same time as delighting in their ingenuity”.⁷⁶⁶ The “double voice” of these parodies, then, creates for the reader a tension somewhat akin to Stephen’s state between recognition of their “familiarity” and awe at their ingenious “foreignness”. Joyce’s “double voice” was theorised by Margot Norris in her book *The Decentred Universe of Finnegans Wake*, in which she identified a major feature of “Wakeese”, which she called “double talk”. She stated that

⁷⁶⁵ Elsewhere, in an unpublished essay, I analysed and schematised the techniques of experimentation with clichés, idiomatic phrases and proverbs in *Finnegans Wake*, drawing my examples from Book One (p. 3-216). Subsequently, with recourse to genetic critical techniques, I examined instances of such manipulations as they develop through various pre-publication manuscript drafts of the *Wake*.

⁷⁶⁶ K. Wales, *The Language of James Joyce*, p. 140.

the language is “riddled with “errors” – misspellings, nonsense words, malapropisms”,⁷⁶⁷ and identified one of Joyce’s most frequently used “errors” in *Finnegans Wake* as the “klang-association”, in which

the sound of a word or phrase instantly recalls another, similar in sound but not necessarily in meaning. The density of klang-associations in the *Wake* frequently generates a line of 'double talk', in which the line of discourse in the *Wake* recalls an association, a silent second line of discourse in the reader’s mind.⁷⁶⁸

Norris continues that the “two conversations are generally at odds”, and create a “contrapuntal tension”, residing “between the written word and the resonating line of thought”.⁷⁶⁹ Norris’ theory of “klang-associations” generating tension applies very readily to the manipulations (or “parodies”) of idioms which concern us here, and is in line with Veisberg's statements on the way that idiomatic manipulations function linguistically. And indeed this “contrapuntal tension” is precisely what we have identified throughout this thesis as “cognitive dissonance” and Benjaminian “shock”.

⁷⁶⁷ M. Norris, *The Decentred Universe of Finnegans Wake: A Structuralist Analysis* (Baltimore and London, 1976), p. 101.

⁷⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 101.

⁷⁶⁹ M. Norris, *The Decentred Universe*. p. 102.

Rosselli's Manipulation of Idioms

While we all use clichés, not everybody knows how to reuse what have been called `duck-billed platitudes`⁷⁷⁰

Amelia Rosselli's position as a linguistic exile would seem to make her particularly susceptible to this type of wordplay. Redfern writes that

when we straddle two languages, we develop an alien eye, a binary perspective (or strabismus), a foreign ear. Lewis Carroll [...] enjoined: `And learn to look at all things / With a sort of mental squint`.⁷⁷¹

Redfern continues that

the exile can see the more mechanical aspects of his or her native, or adoptive, tongue. [...] Linguistic exiles, in the process of familiarizing themselves with a new culture and new tongue, defamiliarize both these and their own.⁷⁷²

These statements do indeed apply very readily to Rosselli's relationship to language that resulted not only from her engagement with the Modernist "crisis of language" but also from her unusual multilingual upbringing which was outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

Several Rossellian critics have commented on a technique which she applies to idioms, but this is *not* the kind of manipulation that we have just outlined, instead it is the creation of *idiomatic calques* or idiomatic "loan translations", i.e. the more or less literal translation of an idiom from one language into another language. In "My Clothes to the Wind", for example, we find calques from French into English: "white nights" (from "nuits blanches", sleepless nights), and several examples from Italian into English: "Two years before the eighteen" (P 5) (which Tandello "back-translates" into the idiomatic Italian "due anni prima dei diciotto"⁷⁷³), "so we cut with our grandmother" (ibid.) (which La Penna suggests is from the Italian expression "tagliare i ponti")⁷⁷⁴, and "full bosom" which Tandello suggests is from "col petto

⁷⁷⁰ Redfern, *Puns*, p. 138.

⁷⁷¹ Redfern, *Puns*, p. 162.

⁷⁷² ibid.

⁷⁷³ Tandello, "Doing the Splits", p. 366.

⁷⁷⁴ La Penna, "La mente interlinguistica", p. 447.

gonfio”.⁷⁷⁵ These idiomatic calques are examples of what Catherine O’Brien sees as experimentation which pushes the English language “in directions which reflect expressions more typical of French and Italian but which sound decidedly strange though nevertheless comprehensible in English”.⁷⁷⁶ We find examples of this same technique in her Italian works too, for example in *Variazioni belliche* she writes “fil di panno” (*P* 315) which is, as Lucia Re indicates, “a literal rendering of ‘clothesline’”.⁷⁷⁷

Yet until recently, Rosselli's critics have not dealt with her technique of manipulating idioms along the lines described above, and this must be remedied, particularly since the kind of idiomatic manipulation that we have been discussing is in fact much more pervasive in her works than are the idiomatic calques. As we have seen, Tatiana Bisanti, in 2007, does identify Rosselli's use of this technique, and briefly demonstrates the way that it functions in her Italian poetry. But it is in her English works, which Bisanti does not consider, that this technique really comes to the fore. The subsequent sections of this chapter will build on Bisanti's work, categorizing and analysing Rosselli's manipulation of idioms in her English works, and considering this in relation to the use of the technique in her Italian works. Rosselli's use of the technique will also be aligned with the theoretical/linguistic context outlined above and with Joyce's use of the rhetorical device, and conclusions will be drawn on how this technique contributes to Rosselli's conflictual or “bellic” discourse.

Bisanti relates the use and abuse of idioms to the well-known tension in Rosselli's language which we explored above in the section on Rosselli's *pluristilismo*, the tension between the “due poli antitetici della letterarietà e

⁷⁷⁵ Tanello, “Alle fonti del lapsus”, p. 177.

⁷⁷⁶ C. O’Brien, “Amelia Rosselli” in *Italian Women Poets of the Twentieth Century*, ed. C. O’Brien (Dublin, 1996), p. 118.

⁷⁷⁷ Re, “Introduction”, p. 25.

dell'analfabetismo”.⁷⁷⁸ Bisanti sees, at one of these extremes, archaic and poetic language, and at the other end the “voci del lessico quotidiano e gergale, locuzioni, frasi idiomatiche, luoghi comuni, quelli che si porterebbero definire cliché linguistici”.⁷⁷⁹ Bisanti calls this a “*pastiche* (o, detto in termini sociolinguistici, uno *style shifting*) in cui vari registri entrano in attrito fra loro all'interno dello stesso segmento testuale”.⁷⁸⁰ The archaic and literary language

danno al testo una patina letteraria, la quale tuttavia è fatta oggetto di straniamento e di ribaltamento ironico. Questo avviene [...] tramite l'accostamento ad elementi attinti dal lessico informale e gergale o a locuzioni e modi di dire.⁷⁸¹

This ironic overturning and alienating use of idioms or “modi di dire” is, to go back to Redfern's words, Rosselli's “rejoinder” to them; this is her way of “satirically, knowingly recycl[ing]” idioms in order to “ironize them”.⁷⁸² Bisanti continues in relation to the alienating effect brought about by the mixing of styles that:

Alla poetessa, consapevole della tradizione, non interessa infatti la lingua letteraria o arcaizzante in sé, quanto la possibilità di usarla a fini stranianti. Le forme arcaiche o desuete, straniate nella bocca dell'analfabeta, non vanno pertanto lette come il mero recupero di una tradizione letteraria, ma come la riscoperta di una lingua caduta in disuso e la creazione di un codice personale.⁷⁸³

La Penna also speaks of an “effetto straniante” caused by the insertion of the “frasi o espressioni colloquiali o basse” into Rosselli's poems, such as “una grande cafonata” (*P* 274), “fregarsene” (*P* 142) and “un gran che” (*P* 314).⁷⁸⁴ Thus Bisanti and La Penna have both described an effect of alienation or “straniamento” at work in relation to the use of idioms, and at one point Bisanti, echoing the terms we have been using throughout the thesis, speaks of this mix of the “analfabetismo” and “letterarietà” as creating “potenti effetti di *dissonanza*”.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁷⁸ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 152.

⁷⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁷⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 141.

⁷⁸² Redfern, “Traduction, Puns, Clichés, Plagiat”, p. 267.

⁷⁸³ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 141-42.

⁷⁸⁴ D. La Penna, D. “Aspetti stilistici e linguistici della poesia italiana di Amelia Rosselli”, in *Stilistica e metrica italiana*, 2, 2002, p. 251.

⁷⁸⁵ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 142, italics mine.

Bisanti reminds us that Rosselli herself draws our attention to precisely this technique in the “Glossarietto”, in her comments regarding the following poem:

l'iddio che bruccia tutto tra furgoncino e la pietà, il
gran salame il gran universo oh tu sei un unico essere con
una punta sì fine ch'io cangio colore al solo
considerarti ma l'uomo con le sue variegata variopinte pene
(o gran varietà del tutto!) mi
stringe in un rapporto al crescente o sì duro a patirsi sì
estremamente colpevole, ch'io ne ritardo ogni usata usanza
siccome troppo hanno i miei usati sensi visto del mondo che si stende
come una lunga farina, tra monti, spiagge, alberi, albicocchi, ogni genere di
saliva ai tuoi piedi, e tu che ne capisci niente e non (e non
potrai mai) connettere le variegata vicissitudini in un
unico andare in un unico flagello di dio perché
lui si nasconde dietro le ombre (P 185).

Rosselli writes that “qui lo 'stile leopardiana o romantico italiano' è usato 'ironicamente, per contrasto con *furgoncino*; *il gran salame*; *lunga farina*; e tu che ne capisci niente”.⁷⁸⁶ Bisanti says that “Il cliché linguistico e il registro comico” which is “adottato a fianco del testo poetico”, is seen to “strania[rlo] o deforma[rlo] sotto una luce ironica.” Bisanti gives another example of this in “Stesa a terra pugnalavo il mio miglior amico. Ma gli affari”:

Stesa a terra pugnalavo il mio miglior amico. Ma gli affari
restavano quelli che erano. Risollevarono il miglior amico
ed egli mi piantava una grana che non finiva più, luce
negli orecchi che non si scandalizzavano. Finiva la gran
gloria in una bottiglia di cognac. [...]

Chiudiamo un occhio su delle camorre dei pittori. Chiudiamo
le palpebre su delle camicette delle signore. Chiudiamo
bottega e spariamo. Spariremo nella bruma con la revolverata
discesa a terra (P 200).

Here, Bisanti says,

espressioni come *piantare una grana*, *chiudere un occhio* e *chiudere bottega* in un contesto altamente drammatico di tradimento, sangue e violenza generano un contrasto stridente all'interno dello scenario apocalittico e spezzano la coerenza drammatica del discorso poetico.⁷⁸⁷

These idioms are used in their “correct” forms, in that they are not manipulated. Other examples of intact idioms in the Italian works include “io me ne lavo le mani” (p. 143, *La Libellula*), “a quattro'occhi” (“Variazioni”, p. 209), “cadere

⁷⁸⁶ A. Rosselli, “Glossarietto eplicativo per 'Variazioni belliche’”, in *Una scrittura plurale*, p. 69.

⁷⁸⁷ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 152-53.

dalle nuvole” (p. 276, “Variazioni”), “imbrogliare / le carte” (p. 326, “Variazioni”). Bisanti writes “Per quanto riguarda la fraseologia, le locuzioni sono generalmente conformi, dal punto di vista morfosintattico, alle strutture dell'uso corrente”.⁷⁸⁸

Bisanti does, however, also draw attention to the fact that Rosselli, at times, manipulates idioms: “talvolta invece ne riprendono gli elementi lessicali, modificandone la forma”, and this is precisely the kind of idiom manipulation that we discussed above. Bisanti gives the following examples: in a poem in *Variazioni belliche*, an idiom appears *unmodified*: “rinascivo a miglior vita” (P 306), and then later in the poem it appears in a *manipulated* form, “con rovesciamento ironico della locuzione”, as: “rinascivo a peggior vita”.⁷⁸⁹ In another example provided by Bisanti, from *Documento*, we find that two different idioms are combined to become one phrase: “sono fuse ossimoronicamente due locuzioni dal significato quasi antitetico, *tirare via e tirare per le lunghe*): “tirai via per le lunghe” (P 544).⁷⁹⁰

As we have seen, Rosselli's English texts display a similar range of linguistic styles and registers to that found in her Italian poetry. We saw that, in Bisanti's estimation, Rosselli used idioms more often following the “strutture dell'uso corrente”, and that she manipulated or “modifica[va] la forma” only occasionally (“talvolta”). The analysis that ensues will show that Rosselli certainly manipulates idioms more often than “talvolta” in her Italian works, and will show that in the English poems in *Sleep* Rosselli abuses idioms much more readily than she uses them intact.

Indeed Rosselli manipulates idioms even in her very earliest English texts, in the prose pieces “My Clothes to the Wind” (1952) and “A Birth” (1962), and in “October Elizabethans” (1956). In fact the very title of “My Clothes to the Wind” is

⁷⁸⁸ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 153.

⁷⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 154.

⁷⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 155.

already an indicator of Rosselli's skill with this technique, as it is a manipulation of the idiom "to sail close to the wind" (to undertake something risky) with the near homophones "clothes" and "close" acting as the pivots between the "stable" idiom and its perverted Rossellian form. Another very early example, from "A Birth", is Rosselli's phrase "coupole raining shine" which obliquely but unmistakably evokes the expression "come rain or shine". But our focus here will be on her more mature collections *Sleep* and *Varizioni belliche*.

Categories of Manipulation: Omission, Addition, Substitution

Throughout *Sleep* idioms are very rarely left unscathed. The collection's unmanipulated idioms include "to fight for a good cause", "to face the fight", "the power and the glory", "the decline and fall", "there is a point to the story" and "they set you free". Much more often, though, and indeed much more interestingly, we find that Rosselli does not so much *use* common idiomatic expressions as *abuse* them.

One way in which she does this, without going to the lengths of actually *distorting* the idiom, is to allow unmanipulated idioms to enter into the process of "gioco con variazioni". For example, in a poem in *Variazioni belliche*, the idiom "rompere il ghiaccio"⁷⁹¹ is related intact, but subsequently it generates the use of another idiom, "rompere il cuore" later in the poem:

Nel tuo occhio sornione io scorgevo l'irrepetibile
abitudine al vuoto. Con una lancia mischiata al
sangue tentavo di *rompere il ghiaccio*. Ma dalla
polvere sollevata al tuo primo apparire cantavo
a me stessa menzogne! Con una lancia mischiata al
sangue tentavo l'irrepetibile.

Se dalle tue brevi risposte e dalle mie chiacchiere
sorgeva dunque un affare era tardivo. Per le lacrime
che scendevano dal mio cuore polveroso io portavo all'oste
le tue membra. Scesa come un cristallo nelle più larghe
tenebre di un inferno artificioso io tradivo ogni dovere,
e la forza di *rompere il cuore* era mia (P 319).

⁷⁹¹ "muovere i primi passi in una conoscenza, in una amicizia, in un affare", *Per modo di dire*, p. 134.

This has the effect of subtly reminding us of the arbitrariness of language, even in its most “fixed” forms. Other unmanipulated idioms are allowed to trigger instances of wordplay, thereby demonstrating their instability. For example, in *La Libellula*, the idiom “essere più morto che vivo”⁷⁹² generates a cascading “gioco con variazioni”: “Più morta / che viva, più viva che savia. Più morta che savia. / Più reale della tua luce improvvisa” (*P* 150-151).

But these examples are much less dramatic than the instances in Rosselli's poetry where she actually *alters* one or more component of an idiom. As Veisbergs explained, idiomatic expressions operate very rigidly, and to change one word, even a seemingly insignificant one such as a preposition or a conjunction, disrupts the idiom's inherent “stability”. This defeats the reader's expectations, rendering the idiom immediately jarring, shunting the reader into a state of cognitive dissonance. We find instances of idiomatic manipulation in her Italian works too, but less often than in *Sleep*. However, the techniques used by Rosselli for manipulating idioms are the same in both languages. Let us now tease out the various techniques that she used.

Rosselli abuses idioms following various patterns: *omitting* elements, *adding* superfluous elements, or *substituting* one element for another. For example, in a poem in *Sleep* she *omits* a preposition in “If my mind were *fit a king's*”, dropping the “for” from the expression “fit for a king” (*S* 130). There are many more instances where she *adds* an extra word or words to abuse the idiom. In “saving *the* face of the devil” (*S* 48) Rosselli adds an article to the expression “to save face”. In “ringing or wringing hearts / out” (*S* 182) the expression “it wrung my heart” is undercut by the addition of “out”, and two further idiomatic expressions are suggested by this preposition: “to ring out” (ie. of a sound) and “to wring out” (i.e. to twist and remove

⁷⁹² “ridursi all'estremo delle forze, della salute e della vita [...] anche nel senso d'essere senza forze per una paura”, *ibid.*, p. 169.

the water from), with the second of these expressions, and its mundane connotations, reducing the angst-ridden image of “wringing hearts” to the level of mere domestic chores. In “seeking the entrance / out” (S 76) Rosselli manipulates the expression “to seek out” (to search for) by adding in the extra words “the entrance”, which create a further shock by their semantic contrast with “out”. In “And have you called on your neighbor’s visions?” (S 184), the added word is “visions”. The expressions “to call on” (to draw upon) and “to call on someone” (to visit, often used in relation to neighbours) are fused, and the latter is broken as “neighbor” slides into a possessive form, and by the addition of the word “visions” which becomes the new object of the sentence.

In the following examples, one or more words, whether key words or seemingly incidental words, have been removed and *substituted* by another or others. Substitution is used much more often than omission and addition, and indeed this category of Rosselli's technique demands its own subdivisions, as we shall see shortly. Let us consider an English example and an Italian example, in which one noun is substituted for another noun. An example from *Sleep* is: “I / collapsed into fits of apology” (S 90), which suggests the idiom “fits of *laughter*”, into which one is indeed often said to “collapse”. An example from *Variazioni belliche* occurs here:

L`arido orizzonte
è un gioco di ombre: non seguirlo, non
tirare il sasso nell`acqua, - che tutto si
faccia da sé, anche nell`agonizzante silenzio (P 190)

where the noun “acqua” replaces the noun “colombaia” from the idiom “tirar sasso in colombaia”.⁷⁹³

⁷⁹³ “parlare o comportarsi in modo da daneggiare se stessi, familiari, o amici”, *ibid.*, p. 75.

The Mould Substitutions

These examples, in which Rosselli manipulates idioms through *substitution* of one word in the idiom, follow a technique often employed by Joyce in the *Wake*. In Katie Wales' statement that we considered above, in which she highlighted the “differing degrees of lexical similarity” in Joyce's manipulated idioms, she identified this mechanism in particular. While one or more of the idiom's components of these fixed speech patterns is distorted, Wales notes that Joyce ensures the retention of “the rhythmical and syntactic 'mould'”. Dina Sherzer in her essay “Words About Words: Beckett and Language” identifies similar proverb modifications in Beckett's language, and she has recourse to the same word - “mould” - in order to characterise them, saying: “the mould or structure of the proverb is recognisable while the content is parodied or deformed”.⁷⁹⁴ This process can be seen at work in Joyce's “versions” of the following proverb:

- **Proverb: “between the devil and the deep blue sea”**

Wake Manipulations:

bedoneen the jebel and the jypsian sea (*FW*:5)

between Druidia and the Deepsleep Sea (*FW*:37).

Here the rhythm and the majority of the articles and conjunctions (and, the) are maintained, but many of the keywords (between, devil, deep blue) are replaced, with new words (indeed neologisms) being “poured” into the mould. Each manipulation acquires its own connotations relative to its textual contexts, and each one challenges both the phonic and semantic content of the expression, while nevertheless leaving the structure intact and instantly recognisable. Although the Rossellian examples

⁷⁹⁴ D. Scherzer, “Words About Words: Beckett and Language”, in *Beckett Translating / Translating Beckett*, eds. A.W. Friedman, C. Rossman and D. Sherzer (London, 1987), p. 51.

that we have just considered display less extreme linguistic distortion, they do follow this “mould” pattern.

Further examples using this “mould” technique of substituting one element of an idiom occur in *Sleep* as well as in *Variazioni belliche*. Here, for example, Rosselli substitutes one verb for another in the idiom “fare castello in aria”:⁷⁹⁵

Contro dell`erba tramavo inganni e ingiurie e a nessun costo
avrei seguito la strada più semplice delle fortitudini. Contro
tutto e tutte le miserie *ergevo castelli in aria* presto demoliti
dalla mia mano sagace. Contro della notte *ergeva* confini e
sempre agonizzava il nostro signore Jesù cristo tomba sepolcrale (*P* 288).

Rosselli uses “ergere” rather than “fare”, echoing the other “er” sounds that appear in this section of the text (italicised), and thus she links the manipulated idiom into the web of aural echoes which bestow a pattern onto the poem. In another example, Rosselli extracts the idiom from its verb, and substitutes “ventate”, a derivative of “vento”, for “vento” in the idiom “andare/navigare col vento in poppa”:⁷⁹⁶

Calmati e le ventate in poppa separeranno la tua firma dalla mia,
il tuo disdegno dal mio farraginoso chiedere, disobbedire,
salvare, domandare (*P* 206).

The same idiom is manipulated in another, equally minimal way, in the same poem, where it appears as “Calmati e avrai il vento in poppa”. In both of these manipulations Rosselli frustrates our expectation by offering phrases which closely resemble the idiom, but which are just alien enough to challenge our sense of familiarity. Indeed Bisanti comments on this example, stating that the idiom is used ironically, as the prevailing sense at the end of the poem is not one of proceeding triumphantly, carried on the winds of good fortune, as the idiom would have it, but rather “quello di un'insormontabile e paralizzante stanchezza”.⁷⁹⁷

In other instances Rosselli substitutes one part of speech for another. For example, in

⁷⁹⁵ “fare progetti campati in aria, che non possono essere realizzati ed esistono solo nell`immaginazione; lavorare di fantasia”, *Per modo di dire*, p. 58.

⁷⁹⁶ “procedere nelle migliori condizioni, con sorte favorevole; avere fortuna”, *ibid.*, p. 357.

⁷⁹⁷ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 173.

No solution to your feeling to your thinking of everything a pearl of choice of damnation in the white streets of Sunday. The post, long prepared by the barrel, waits: you must go, throw the letter down the steps which declaim events, decisions, *foam at your mouth proclaims disquisitions*. Decide against every even spent understanding that three are the scales: preparation morality and turpitude. When the descent to the *foaming* steps revealed unnecessary error you were ready to exchange all your land for deity (*S* 106, italics mine).

the phrase “foam at *your* mouth proclaims disquisitions” reveals the underlying expression “to foam at *the* mouth”. The substitution of “your” for “the” does not merely personalise the expression, but also transforms the nature of the word “foam”, from verb to noun. Here we see that three lines later the word “foaming” appears, thus the manipulated idiom is involved in creating webs of intratextual echoes along the same lines as those created in the “ergere” example considered above.

In the following poem we find two instances of this “mould” technique:

Who am I talking to? Who asks me
anything? What rebel use have you
for my jargon? Why cry, why stamp
your feet on this hot ground, rain
ridden, of the tears which fall beloving
on your hot head.

Why stamp your feet? Why cry in
fragile night, if angels watch and
stamp their feet, on the bottom
of your heart, fragile and forgiving?

Oh my hot soul: they, the rich, in
mind and matter, would quiet you
would prefer you keep safe out of
the way of eventual murder.

In the ways of the rich (their poor
jargon) lies this brilliant thirst:
to forgive you, and pass on then
to thirsty revenge, if you will
but allow me to even *shake your
tips, your cold and warm hands*, clasping.

Since you tried out in many myriad
shaped angles this thirst for anger,
this your murder: you gave in: be
poor, do not mismanage things flowing
along your red roots.

(He sits and cries but won't give
in to solace, the mother of the
prince, as he rolled along, slumbering
on warm cushions: your gift, your
promenade, *your bearing with me*,
along with all red roots) (S 156, italics mine).

In the lines “your gift, your promenade, your bearing with me”, we find a manipulation of the idiom “to bear with someone” (to tolerate, to listen patiently to), which is usually used in spoken language with “me” as “bear with *me*”. But Rosselli has performed a “conversion”, changing the part of speech, thus simultaneously making “bear” a present participle (“bearing” with me) and changing the verb “to bear” into the noun “bearing” (“your gift, your promenade, your bearing”), so that the word “bearing” becomes a pivot on which multiple senses revolve.

Earlier in this same extract, in the lines “if you will / but allow me to even shake your / tips, your cold and warm hands, clasping”, the word “hand” is removed from the idiom “shake your hand”, and is replaced by the incongruous word “tips”. But the word “hand” then appears a few words later. Ann Snodgrass identifies an example of what she terms “verbal slippage” here, saying that the manipulated idiom “suspend[s]” the sense of the conventional “allow me to shake your hand”.⁷⁹⁸ This “suspension” is, to some extent, relieved or *resolved* by the subsequent appearance of the word “hand” - and here Rosselli exploits what Freud described as the “psychical damming-up” by placing “obstacles” in the way of the act of recognition. By removing these obstacles Rosselli modulates this instance of cognitive dissonance into a quasi-harmonious experience.

⁷⁹⁸ A. Snodgrass, *Knowing Noise. The English Poetry of Amelia Rosselli*. (New York & Berlin, 2001), p. 16.

The Filling Substitutions

This “mould” technique accounts for many of Rosselli's idiomatic manipulations, but there is one other major technique which she employs, and this technique also has a Joycean precedent. Let us consider the following Joycean reworkings of the idiom “chip off the old block” to exemplify this. “Chip off the old block” generates various different Joycean distortions in the *Wake*; one of which functions like those discussed above by retaining the “mould”, and one of which employs the new mechanism:

- **Cliché: “chip off the old block”**

Wake Manipulations:

for a chip off the old Flint (*FW:83*)

chips chepped from that battery block (*FW:25*)

The first variation of “chip off the old block” maintains the framework or “mould” in the manner that is by now familiar to us, and simply replaces “block” with its near-synonym, “flint”. The second variation, however, operates by the reverse mechanism, *maintaining the key-words*, “chip(s)” and “block”, but translating them into a radically different syntactic context. Similarly, the following proverb also produces Joycean derivatives of each variety; one which retains conjunctions and distorts or replaces key-words, and one which translates some of its key-words into new contexts:

- **Proverb: “Marry in haste and repent at leisure”**

Wake Manipulations:

married with cakes and repunked with peasure (*FW:131*)

the portlifowlum of hastes and leisures (*FW:83*)

This second group of manipulations (which Joycean critics do not seem to have discussed) discards the syntactic and rhythmic framework, but *retains* - either verbatim or distorted - and *re-contextualises the idiom's key-words*. Thus it is the reverse of the “mould” substitution mechanism, and therefore we will dub it the “filling” substitution mechanism. Joyce stated regarding his attempt to create a “dream-language” for the *Wake* that “[he] found it could not be done with words in their ordinary relations and connections”.⁷⁹⁹ The manipulations we are looking at here dissolve precisely the fixed “relations” and “connections” of the most “ordinary” and rigid forms of speech, plunging the reader into a state of tension between familiarity and alienation – a state that we have come to understand as “contrapuntal tension”, “shock” or cognitive dissonance.

Rosselli experiments with various forms of this “filling” technique in her poetry. Indeed, like Joyce, at times she manipulates the same idiom in a variety of different ways. In this poem, she applies both the “mould” technique and the “filling” technique to the idiom “essere il rovescio della medaglia”:⁸⁰⁰

Mare del bisogno, Cassandra
dagli istintivi occhi blu la mia prigionia tranquilla
è *un rovescio del destino* assai dolce assai implacabile.
Con tristezza indovino negli occhi del profeta *una medaglia che si rovescia* al tocco d`uomo. O Cassandra
le tue occhiaie sono le mie preferite celle di rassegnazione
e le tue labbra non suggeriscono altri tormenti che
tu non possa conoscere altrove che per questo mio
fragilissimo pensare (*P 330, italics mine*).

With the first use of “rovescio”, Rosselli invokes the structural mould of the idiom in question (essere il/un rovescio di/della...), but she substitutes “destino” for “medaglia”. In the next example, both “medaglia” and “rovesci(a)” are maintained, but they are removed from the “mould”, re-ordered and re-contextualised.

In some instances of Rosselli's experimentation with this “filling” technique,

⁷⁹⁹ Ellmann. *James Joyce*, p. 546.

⁸⁰⁰ si dice dell`aspetto negativo che presenta una cosa, una persona, un fatto dopo la prima impressione o apparenza positiva, *Per modo di dire*, p. 189.

she uses just one recognisable element divorced from its usual idiomatic context, for example in:

La stanchezza riposava su due guanciali e la notte era
una olocausta molto vicino alla pazzia: la stanchezza era
una follia di vivere secondo i dogmi cristiani che io non
sentivo vicino alla maturità (P 305).

The words “due guanciali” are extracted from their idiom “dormire/tenere il capo tra due guanciali”.⁸⁰¹ The pillows are taken away from their usual human agent, who is replaced by an abstract noun: “la stanchezza”. Nevertheless, the connotations of security and calm which the idiom carries with it are injected into the poem, only to be overthrown almost immediately by the words “olocausta” and “pazzia” in the following line. As this example shows, even just one element of an idiom can be sufficient to evoke an idiom effectively, and to bring about cognitive dissonance.

More often though, Rosselli uses more than one element of the idiom, and at times she uses all of the elements, and reorders or scatters them throughout her text. In the following example she uses the idiom “fare orecchi da mercante”⁸⁰² more or less unscathed, but tags the verb “fare” (which would ordinarily precede the key-words) on to the end as “fecero”, thereby turning the “orecchi” into the agents:

Severamente ammonita
dal pescatore tornai a casa buttandomi bocconi
sul letto passatempo. *Orecchie di mercanti*
fecero i topi silenziosi e la baracca si
chiuse istantaneamente. Lamentele di fiori
s'udirono, la porta quasi aperta (P 329).

In the following two examples, Rosselli extracts the key-words from their verbs and conjunctions. Elements of the idiom “entrare nella tana del leone / del lupo”⁸⁰³ are included here:

Dopo il dono di Dio vi fu la rinascita. Dopo la pazienza

⁸⁰¹ “essere tranquillo, non avere preoccupazioni o timori per quanto riguarda una certa cosa”, *ibid.*, p. 142.

⁸⁰² “far finta di non sentire, come i mercanti (oggi i negozianti) che sentono solo quello che torna loro comodo”, *ibid.*, p. 150.

⁸⁰³ “affrontare una persona particolarmente temibile; affrontare un nemico sul suo terreno; decidersi ad andare incontro a una difficoltà, a un pericolo, ecc.”, *ibid.*, p. 329.

dei sensi caddero tutte le giornate. Dopo l`inchiostro
di Cina rinacque un elefante: la gioia. Dopo della gioia
scese l`inferno dopo il paradiso il lupo nella tana (P 204).

And elements of “stare coll'arco teso”⁸⁰⁴ are found in this phrase: “Trappola tesa ad
arco rialzati e perdona / con un grido di allarme” (P 207). In the following poem

hangs clatter on the bough, as
if all despondency came from
within, and *sunshine were a ray*
of freedom exorbitant of your
body. Hangs clatter on the spot
you choose to frequent, sore
point in the general plan of
things, cutting risks out of
matter (S 136)

the idiom “ray of sunshine” is scattered through “sunshine were a ray / of freedom”.
The word “freedom” is substituted for “sunshine”, which, in turn, is not discarded but
is shunted into a different role in the phrase.

The key-words from the idiom “cercare la quadratura del cerchio”⁸⁰⁵, which, of
course, evokes Dante's *Paradiso* XXXIII, are divorced from their verb “cercare” but
are otherwise used unmodified (except for the substitution of “cerchio” with its
synonym “circolo”) in:

Io ero tremante d`invidia
ma il raggio solare sollevava anch`esso storie d`amore tenue
come il pero con i suoi fiori incantati, come il pane di
sera che s`ingrana nelle faccende nostre d`amore e di pietà
e di fame e di *quadratura del circolo* infame che noi solleviamo
al di sopra di ogni sapienza (P 210).

A few pages earlier in *Variazioni belliche*, the same idiom was evoked much more
obliquely:

[...] Nel naufragio della
grande rondine che sorvolava su della mia testa veramente
tonda era il segreto della mia misantropia. Cantavo storie
e scendevo di un gradino ad ogni mal passo. Su della mia
testa veramente *tonda* nasceva *il quadrato della certitudine*.
Se nella testa veramente *tonda* nasceva il ritorno impossibile
alle antiche maniere allora nella mia testa veramente
tonda cadeva il grano il sale di Dio, l'ultima maniera (P 205, italics mine).

⁸⁰⁴ “stare attenti, guardinghi per non farsi sorprendere; usare cautela, vigilare”, *ibid.*, p. 110.

⁸⁰⁵ “cercare, volere una cosa impossibile; adoperarsi per ottenere una soluzione a un problema
insolubile; voler risolvere una situazione che non offre possibilità d`uscita”, *ibid.*, p. 277.

Here the word “quadratura” is suggested by the word “quadrato”. The word “cerchio” has been replaced by the word “certitudine”, which occupies the exact location that “cerchio” would ordinarily occupy in the idiom, and also echoes its first syllable, “cer”. But the sense of the word “cerchio” is also present in the word “tonda”, which appears twice elsewhere in this section of the poem.

The following section of a poem from *Sleep* plays in two different ways with the word “weight”:

You will have no purpose
from it save that it cannot afford to waste such
time and weight as you propose. It affords no
somnia but that you have won the party. It
allows all geese loose in the dormitory, till
they light up in a flight of images. And then
sits still, taking calmly the drug of best behaviour
from your tawny hands which persevere in calling
it reversible, without claim, till it hangs,
suffocated, as if in a cellar were not best wine.

If you take a sip at it it will die, beset by
insomnia, long-lived girlhood peeking at night.
If it will hang it with all your might to
some tree whose weight will bear the might, which
turned loose revealed itself without a crêpe
save that you touched it (S 130, italics mine).

The second use of the word “weight” here occurs in a phrase in which Rosselli fragments, scatters and recontextualises the idiom “to bear weight”, in “If it will hang it with all your might to / some tree whose *weight will bear the might*” (S 130). Here rather than having *might* bearing *weight*, as logic (and the idiom) would have it, Rosselli has inverted it to *weight* that bears *might*. The first use of the word “weight” in this extract also plays with the word “weight”. But here, in “save that it cannot afford to *waste* such / time and *weight* as you propose”, the word on the one hand poses as a noun (“time and weight”), and on the other hand it also sounds out as its homophone “wait” which bolsters the semantic context of “cannot afford to waste such time”.

Variations on both of these manipulations of “weight” idioms occur in later

poems in *Sleep*. In

She waits and bears the weight of an electric
lightning swinging in the poor troublesome
semi-tired heart of her apparel: a juice
poured out fully: her even chance, to
scorn fellow men (S 166)

the idiom “bears the weight” appears in its unadulterated state, but Rosselli plays on the wait / weight pun. Rosselli uses the verb “to bear” and the word “weight” at other points in the collection too. Here the word “weight” occurs twice, once in conjunction with the verb “bear”, in a “correct” variation on the idiom “to bear weight”:

No answer? No demise? no wonder you're
not here, not there: he made you fill
your pockets with crumbs, then make
a cake: helpless, bitten into by red
nosed swamps, mice, men, filigrees
turnpikes, swamps again, all *trees*
bearing down with massive weight. You
have no love affair? with which to
thin our chance's *weight*? you have
no soul, no God, no love, no help no
stringing in the bushes? (S 180, italics mine).

But in the following extract, Rosselli manipulates “to bear weight” by putting “weight” in the plural, which, although it is a subtle change, nevertheless alienates the idiom quite considerably:

Am I a turnip? a string of pearls
or the safe ground on which to *bear*
weights?(S 162, italics mine).

This set of recurring variations on the idiom “to bear weight” occurs across different poems in the collection, which coheres with Rosselli's overall strategy in *Sleep* of building complex sets of overarching intratextual echoes, and which also follows the Joycean example of “variation on an idiom”. Indeed Bisanti describes what she calls the “gioco con le varianti, condotto a tutti i livelli” as a major trait of Rosselli's whole oeuvre:

Sia nel francese della Rosselli, con il suo sondare le possibilità combinatorie della lingua fino all'effetto surrealistico, sia nel suo inglese, con la sua rielaborazione parodistica dello stile elisabettiano in poesia e i suoi echi poundiani e joyciani nella prosa, si ritrovano quell'ansia sperimentalistica e quell'inventività ludica che si realizzano in primo luogo attraverso il gioco della variazione. Quest'ultimo viene praticato sia a livello monolinguitico nel francese e nell'inglese, ma soprattutto

nell'italiano, sia a livello plurilinguistico con il sovrapporsi di più lingue.⁸⁰⁶

The domain of idiom manipulation is by no means immune to this game, as we have seen in particular with the “weight” and “cerchio” examples.

The idiom “to have a clean slate” is also manipulated in two ways in different poems in *Sleep*:

Would you shoot it back into the world?
Would you encourage it to kill you?
Would you smile and say thanks? *He*
will with his slate wipe you clean
of desire's desire, matter's matter
and brotherhood's snare (*S* 182).

Here the idiom's subject and object are inverted, as it should read “wipe the slate clean” rather the action of wiping being carried out *with* a slate. This same idiom is manipulated in a different way in this next passage, with the key-word “slate” being replaced by a seemingly arbitrarily selected noun:

You would not take responsibility: *you would not*
wipe the hinge clean, you would not be a body
rocking through life, or slenderly rapping out
withering tunes. You would be a body, meddling
with traps, and sorrows overshadowing your
own traps (*S* 200).

In fact, one instance of idiom manipulation even scatters elements of an idiom throughout the *collection*, and we only piece the idiom together if we have an overview of *Sleep*. The idiom in question is “the road to hell is paved with good intentions”, evoked in “i cut a road to hell” (*S* 14), which maintains the key-words “road” and “hell”, as well as much later in the collection in “the way is paved with bad intentions” (*S* 154), which maintains the key-words “paved”, “intentions” and the antonym of the key-word “good”. Thus, between these two instances, Rosselli uses (or suggests, in the case of “bad”) all of the idiom's key-words.

⁸⁰⁶ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 89.

The Recombinations (or “Idiom-Based Puns”)

Some of Rosselli`s “abused” idioms are constructed out of more than one idiom, and here too there is a Joycean precedent. Joyce's idiom manipulations, whether of the “mould” or “filling” type, very often occur not in isolation but in *combinations*, a fact which adds further layers of complexity to the phenomenon. Many of his hybrid manipulations are produced by a technique that we will refer to - with recourse to a term from genetics which describes the *crossing-over* of chromosomes to produce new chromosomes - as the “recombination” of two or more idioms. These “recombinations” cause the two layers of Margot Norris’ “double-talk” to multiply exponentially, shuttling the reader into a state of Barthesian plurality, and creating even greater cognitive dissonance. In fact, these “recombined” idioms are very much like phrasal extensions of portmanteaux, with two or more *phrases* (rather than words) recognisable in the end-product – they are, as Veisbergs said, “idiom-based puns”, and therefore represent instances of extremely intense “openness” *à la* Umberto Eco.

Some straightforward examples from *Finnegans Wake* will help to demonstrate this technique. “From the foot of the bill” (*FW*:6) recalls both “to foot the bill” and “the foot of the hill”, and “till wears and tears and ages” (*FW*:116) crosses the Anglo-Irish phrase “tare and ages” with the common idiom “wear and tear”. These examples both conserve something of the syntactic frameworks of *each* of the phrases from which they are derived, whereas the following two examples conserve the syntax of *only one* of their two components. The phrase “jesuit bark and bitter bite” (*FW*:182) contains both “his bark is worse than his bite” and “the biter bit”; and “remember that golden silence gives consent” (*FW*:192) “recombines” the two proverbs “Silence is golden” and “Silence means consent”. The phrases “to the

manor born” and “all manner of” are recombined in the condensed “all manorwombanborn” (*FW:55*), which also contains echoes of “man or woman” and “womb”. An extreme example which “recombines” three idioms is “schlook, schlice and goodridhirring” (*FW:7*), which conjures up “hook, line and sinker”, “neither fish, flesh nor good red herring”, and “good riddance”, preserving, remarkably, something of the syntactic framework of all three idioms.

Let us consider the Rossellian instances of this “recombination” of idioms. We already saw one instance of this, where she fused the idioms *tirare via* and *tirare per le lunghe* to produce “tirai via per le lunghe” (*P 544*). A very simple example from *Sleep* is the phrase “and are at once more deluded” (*S 54*) in which the idiom “at once” slides into the idiom “once more”. Another example occurs in this poem:

gone my love negates
disremembers. *Otello has taken*
the wheel in hand, his
broken fingers icily clasp
the silver pumice. O land of Sicily my heart
is sick with hoping, mows
the tavern its clanging bell
rust-fouled, and the grey
cloak of love tenderly
dies anew (*S 18*).

In the lines “*Otello [sic] has taken / the wheel in hand*”, Rosselli fuses “to take the wheel” and “to take something in hand”.

There are also some rare instances of plurilingual recombinations, for example in the following section of *La Libellula*:

Vuoi ch'io
mi chiarisca la gola tra queste quattro pittoresche
mura, fra la bottiglia di un latte divenuto rancido,
ed una vanità ben stufa, di sgranare le lucide
sue perle di sorrisi ancora non distribuiti (*P 143*).

The phrase “mi chiarisca la gola” combines, in a multilingual recombination (or portmanteau), the English idiom “to clear your throat” and the Italian idiom, which has the same meaning, “schiarirsi la voce”.

Now that we have categorised Rosselli's techniques, let us consider what effect

these idiom manipulations – whether they are formed using techniques of omission, addition, “mould” substitution, “filling” substitution or “recombination” - have in Rosselli's overall poetic project, and how they interact with her thematic concerns.

Staging Conflict in Rosselli's Poetry

In one of the examples that we considered above, which recombined the idioms “to take the wheel” (to take control of something) and “to take something in hand” (undertake, begin work on something) in the phrase “Otello / has taken the wheel in hand”, the two idioms have more or less the same meaning. Each of these idioms implies an act of initiating something with intent and determination, albeit with varying nuances, and so they pose analogous layers both of *meaning* and of *domains of experience* onto one another, and this serves to fortify the image in the poem. This is also the case in the plurilingual example we just considered, “mi chiarisca la gola” in which the two idioms carried the same meaning in two different linguistic “codes”. Other examples work along similar lines. For example, in the following “mould” manipulation,

[...] Oh
pause then my heart in search of livery, pause
your breath on these twin steps: the history, the
failure and the bitter joy of blind friendship (*S* 106)

“to *hold* your breath” is clearly the underlying idiom behind “pause / your breath”, and the substituted word “pause” contains within itself the meaning of “to hold your breath”. In this manner, the simple substitution serves, in a sense, to *enact* the thematic material, acting almost like a caesura within the poem. Another similar example occurs in the following section of a poem from *Sleep*:

The children were scrambling by the nearby road
reaching a steady level, then letting loose. They
talked all night, of things pathetic, cumbersome,
pathological, sordid, pornographic, at last spiritual
as if the forces you let loose were preface to
preface. They found you'd not lost the host or
the power: only the life, which had lasted too
long. Then they set aside even pride, and banged
upon their hammers to remind you their truth: no
tragedies in their living, save that it may be
surmised. Setting aside all pride *their hearts*
gave bent to long sighs which showing upon the
surface of the moon reflected strong eyes, ties
balloons of ability. In the void of mortal power

all change must take a turn: kill you down and
suffer you be the host (*S 140, italics mine*).

The phrase “their hearts / gave bent to long sighs” evokes the idiom “to give *vent* to”, which the windy word “sighs” corroborates. And so the manipulated idiom encapsulates the other connotations already contained within these lines of the poem.

Yet much more often, Rosselli's manipulated idioms actually partake in precisely the opposite process, *foregrounding a sense of conflict* in the poetry, and *reinforcing tensions* that are apparent in the poem's imagery and themes. In this way, the manipulated idioms bring about cognitive dissonance or double binds in the reader *not only* through the defeat of *linguistic* expectations (like in the examples that we have just considered), but also through the defeat of *semantic* expectations. We can see this at work in two more examples of recombinations which also centre around the word “hand” (indeed, curiously, there are an extraordinary amount of idioms which involve hands in the English language).

One example, which combines three idioms, occurs in the following poem:

Pardon in the shape of mother with
her pale pink lipstick sticks out
its tongue at me: you do not follow
it, the prince who sits, eating jam.
She overrules your bread-hot band
of pearls round the brain, will
not give in to princely pride, or
its hot intershade: your jam.

She overrules? She bends your pride;
the warm lispig barrel, the cavalry
rushing, are all but princely gifts
towards sheep, grazing in the grass
their bended eyes follow you hence.

And yet a lamb insists he be remembered:
grow your beard, put on whiskers,
*you'll never have me out of your
hand*. (And thrice she shifted rule
into comfort; beast into play, browsing
contemporaneously with the great
but feeling the field, lispig the
three-hatched gum-stuck hole of
a home: your teats, your mother-
attitude, your smallest worms, giants

in the passion) (*S* 160, italics mine).

Here in “you’ll never have me out of your / hand”, we find evocations of the idioms “To eat out of someone’s hand”,⁸⁰⁷ “out of someone’s hands”⁸⁰⁸ and “to get into someone’s hair”.⁸⁰⁹ These idioms, together, serve to reinforce the tension between the themes of *submission* and *control* which run through the poem. The sheep follow submissively with their “bended” eyes, and yet the lambs “insist”; the female character “over-rules” and does “not give in”, and yet the interlocutor does “not follow”. The fusion of these idioms expresses, then, in highly condensed form, the questions and thematic concerns of the poem, *staging* the tension and dissonance contained within the situation enacted in the poem, and generating linguistic and semantic dissonance for the reader.

An even more extreme example also involving “hand” idioms occurs here:

Well, so, patience to our souls
the seas run cold, 'pon our *bare necks*
shivered. *We shall eat out of our bare hand*
smiling vainly (*S* 12).

“We shall eat out of our bare hand / smiling vainly” recombines “to eat out of someone’s hand” and “to do something with your bare hands”.⁸¹⁰ This is an example of the creation of a double bind rather than of cognitive dissonance, as the connotations of submissiveness and subservience found in “to eat out of someone’s hand” contrast so sharply with the fierce autonomy suggested by “to do something with your bare hands” that they cancel each other out semantically, leaving the reader in a bind. This effect is further reinforced by the two appearances of the word “bare”, which in fact recurs very often throughout *Sleep* as a major *leitmotif*, always carrying negative connotations rather than denoting nudity as an attribute of

⁸⁰⁷ i.e. to be completely docile or compliant to another person’s wishes

⁸⁰⁸ i.e. out of or beyond someone’s control

⁸⁰⁹ i.e. to annoy someone - often used in spoken language in the negative sense: “Get out of my hair!”

⁸¹⁰ i.e. without tools

liberation or a cause for celebration.⁸¹¹ Here the word “bare” appears first in the phrase “pon our bare necks / shivered”, where it designates vulnerability, which contrasts sharply with its attributes in the “bare hands” idiom which is then evoked in the subsequent line.

Another example, this time multilingual, which generates this same thematic tension that is so important to *Sleep*, occurs in the following section of a poem from “Variazioni”.

Se nella montagna
vi è chi guarda e chi sogghigna, non è per niente ch`io
cado ai piedi del primo venuto (*P* 277).

Here the phrase “io cado ai piedi del” seems to be an idiomatic calque of the English expression “to fall at someone’s feet”⁸¹² which is in turn fused with the Italian idiom “cadere in piedi”⁸¹³. The fusion of the submissive and degrading act of falling *at someone’s feet* with the controlled and triumphant act of falling *on your feet* creates another case of double bind. The instance of semantic ambiguity in this multilingual idiomatic portmanteau, then, condenses the thematic *leitmotif* of tension between control and submissiveness which characterises not only of this passage but Rosselli’s entire oeuvre.

Another idiomatic manipulation occurs in the following section of a poem from *Sleep*, in which the idiom’s elements are divorced from their original contexts, thereby reinforcing the thematic vacillations contained within the poem:

We pointed inflationed hands towards a
new dark grey purple spot: its lunacy, that
it should so swear at liveliness. Withheld
from fame, turning to marshes, holding
back its pistol, grabbing at the air with
its unwithheld hand: it swore; never to
parley with angels, nevermore: *but bring
the spirit of turmoiling lovingly into
the rest of the place: a point in space*

⁸¹¹ Cf. *Sleep* p. 74, 190 and 192.

⁸¹² i.e. to put yourself at someone’s mercy

⁸¹³ “cadere in piedi (come le gatte): uscire da una disavventura, da una disgrazia, nel modo migliore, col minimo danno (come chi fallisce con i soldi in tasca)”, *Per modo di dire*, p. 254.

a sharp whistle, and two doors standing
ajar, clapping down the thunder, aggravating
desire of death (S 152, italics mine).

Behind the lines “bring / the spirit of turmoiling lovingly into / the rest of the place” lurks the expression “to bring to rest” (to control something so that it reaches a final position). This idiom is drastically fragmented and redistributed, with the word “rest” taking on an entirely new meaning. The manipulation means that we are *promised* but simultaneously *refused* the closure of “to bring to rest”, and so the manipulated idiom embodies and enacts the poem's concerns - the doors in the poem are left ajar, and passions and adventures are left unrequited and unresolved.

A particularly ingenious instance of this occurs in the following poem from *Sleep*:

The marshes came to an end. We strove on a-glittering
with *hoped fuel*. The light shone strong
on limbs too weak to protest. Fire is the
light in my dandy's eyes, while he strives
on to attitudes.

Right in the middle of the eye, swung a
battle, too *hopeful* to be lost. Right on
the right side of things, swung a *hope*,
too weak to be admitted. She *sloped* conveniences
into a shaft of righteousness, till it

admitted defeat (S 148, italics mine).

Rosselli inverts the idiom “to fuel hope” in her phrase “with hoped fuel”, which would read *correctly* as “with fuelled hope”. The resulting manipulation “hoped fuel” is also a near-homophone for “hopeful”, which occurs later in the poem. The word “hope” is picked up once more by shunting the word “rope” out of the idiom “swung a hope”, and “hoped” is echoed again in its rhyme-word “sloped”. This dense chain of aural reprises accompanies, highlights and binds together the tension in the imagery between hope - in the striving, the strong light, the protest, the righteousness, and the fire - and despair - in the weakness, the evocations of loss and defeat, and the connotations of suicide in the swinging rope.

A much more subtle instance of idiom manipulation also carries out this function and plays on the tension between hope and despair, in the following extract from *La libellula*:

Vuoi ch`io
mi chiarisca la gola tra queste quattro pittoresche
mura, fra la bottiglia di un latte divenuto rancido,
ed una vanità ben stufa, di sgranare le lucide
sue perle di sorrisi ancora non distribuiti.
E l`estetica non sarà più la nostra gioia noi
irremo verso i venti con la coda tra le gambe
in un largo esperimento (*P* 143-44, italics mine).

The idiom “tornare con la coda tra le gambe”⁸¹⁴ is used almost un-modified, except that Rosselli changes the directional force from returning (tornare) to departing (irremo), which actually overturns the whole sense of the idiom. The original idiom usually implies hope and ambition that is then deflated when the subject returns with their “tail between their legs”. But here, humiliation befalls the poem's characters not on their *return*, but already during the act of departing, and so the subtle but perverse manipulated idiom serves to reinforce the sense of futility - the “vanità” - which infuses the passage.

A similar thematic tension is generated in the following passage:

Are you not great? Would you not study?
Then bid the fair its stay; you shall swing
on till daylight, over your books... to
say this night's too long, we've broken
our backs a-flirting (*S* 198, italics mine).

Rosselli scatters some but not all of the elements from the idioms “to bid farewell” through “then bid the fair its stay”, playing on the homophonic fair/fare, and on the contrasting ideas of departing and staying. This is a double bind, because the two impulses do not just *conflict* with one another (as they would in an instance of cognitive dissonance) but actually *negate* one another, and so set up a situation of psychological *impasse*.

⁸¹⁴ “partire, cominciare con grandi idee, promesse o pretese, e tornare scornato, battuto, umiliato, senza aver concluso nulla”, *ibid.*, p. 61.

Many of the manipulated idioms, especially the recombinations or “idiom-based-puns”, therefore, serve to hammer home the conflicts that structure Rosselli's individual poems, her separate collections, and even her oeuvre as a whole. Indeed, this is also the function of many of her portmanteaux, as we saw, for example, with “homicile”. The tensions identified here – of departing versus staying, of hope versus despair, of control versus submissiveness – are just some of the thematic conflicts which run through Rosselli's poetry, which is always intensely *bellica*. Rosselli's poetic subjects engage in never-ending struggles between the painful poles separating the extremes of human experiences. At a textual level, these conflicts manifest in highly experimental techniques such as *idiomatic manipulation* and *portmanteau punning*, and also in the other manifestations of her techniques of *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*. These idiom-based-puns are, in the Benjaminian, Barthesian and Sanguinetian sense, also an extreme example of *citazionismo*. We must recall that in their world-view, “tutto è citazione” - even the words that we use when we speak - and indeed idioms, proverbs and clichés, these eternally recycled phrases, are perhaps the most inherently “citational” of utterances available to us.

Rosselli uses these simultaneous and inter-dependent techniques of “opening” out her texts, at the “micro” level of the word and the phrase (with her *pluringuismo*, *pluristilismo*, *citazionismo*, *portmanteaux* and *idiom manipulations*), and at the “macro” level of her thematic concerns. Together, then, the techniques which Rosselli learns from the Modernists are developed into a sophisticated method for *staging* not only the *linguistic* conflicts that came about as a result of her unusual upbringing, but also her *existential* conflicts.

The Portmanteau and the Idiom-Based Pun: Transgressive Agents?

*La langue étrangère [...] en fait, c'est comme dans le calembour – langage saisi comme étranger.*⁸¹⁵

As we have already discussed, the manipulation of idioms consists of authors wresting back the power from the triteness of a corpses, cliché-ridden language. The action of manipulating idioms “dislocat[es] established discourse and truths”,⁸¹⁶ and this can be a subversive activity: Zijderveld stated, as we saw earlier, that “in our mirthful playing with traditional and routinised meanings [...] we have a chance to subdue clichés to our ingenuity and wit, and thus to relativise their power”. Rosselli's manipulated idioms, in this sense, would then seem to be linguistically subversive just as Sanguineti's plurilingual code-switches were. Manipulated idioms, particularly those that work through “recombination” of more than one idiom (the ones we called “idiom-based puns”) are akin to puns in this respect, and create much the same effect of extreme semantic “openness” as Rosselli's portmanteaux.

Indeed theorists of the pun often see puns as being loaded with a *transgressive* charge, and many have associated the pun with the “underground”.⁸¹⁷ Often, in fact, language of revolution is used to describe the expressive potential of puns; for example Batlay writes that “Le jeu de mots est une petite révolution: il provoque souvent l'explosion d'une vieille structure et y installe, en son lieu, de nouvelles formes possibles”.⁸¹⁸ This language of revolution describes a revolution within language, which creates the conditions for intellectual freedom and release. As R.B. Martin claims, “puns may be a formidable weapon against the tyranny of language”.⁸¹⁹

⁸¹⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, cited in Redfern, *Puns*, p. 162.

⁸¹⁶ D. Delabastita, “Introduction”, in *Traductio*, p. 11.

⁸¹⁷ Cf. Redfern, *Puns*, p. 10 and p. 125.

⁸¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 59.

Punning, at times, also actually intersects with politics, and puns can be used as highly subversive or polemical instruments, even in the face of tyrannies more concrete than those embodied by language. Throughout history, in fact, repressive or despotic political regimes or religious institutions have feared the pun. In England during the Restoration period there was a “backlash bent on banning puns from sermons, journalism and literature”.⁸²⁰ The French classicists also despised the pun; indeed a French minister is said to have “wanted to put a tax on puns”. Similarly, shortly after Prohibition, an American “proposed a constitutional amendment to ban puns”, aligning the punning practice with other societal “evils” such as “drinking, gambling, [and] whoring”.⁸²¹ People have always been suspicious and fearful of puns and punsters, and perhaps they are right to be so, as puns do tend to “fleurissent pendant les guerres de religion, sous la Révolution, sous l'occupation, et plus près de nous, dans la plupart des régimes policiers” - consider, for example, the *Flüsterwitze* or whispered jokes of Nazi Germany.⁸²²

Why, though, are puns seen to be dangerous? And what political gesture can they make? One critic writes that they can be a means of satirising: “Les jeux de mots constituent une des principales armes de la satire politique sous les dictatures.” Frederick Ahl explains that authors cannot easily be chastised for satire or other forms of subversion expressed in the form of puns which “leave their readers helpless to explain what they have noticed without appearing to indict themselves for suggesting the taboo meaning”, and so the “writers protect themselves during political and moral censorship” by punning, hence “making it dangerous or embarrassing for others to prove their subversion”.⁸²³ Puns and portmanteaux rely, as we have seen, on ambiguity and instability. So “anti-punsters” in politics and

⁸²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 51.

⁸²¹ *ibid.*, p. 176.

⁸²² *ibid.*, p. 125.

⁸²³ Ahl, “Ars est caelare artem (Art in Puns and Anagrams Engraved)”, in Culler, *On Puns*, p. 23.

religion fear the subversive nature of the pun because the pun reminds them of language's instability, or, as Jean-Paul Richter puts it, of the fact “that words can come adrift of their bases”.⁸²⁴ This ambiguity on which their technique rests is threatening, and “tyrants” fear this linguistic revolution seeping into real politics and bringing about more tangible forms of revolution.

Freud saw wordplay as a potential release from social and rational conditioning, a chance to “escape the pressure of critical reason”.⁸²⁵ The intellectual is particularly in need of wordplay as he “progressively loses” his “freedom of thought [...] in the course of his academic training” and must rely on alcohol to temporarily disable “the critical attitude which has repressed the pleasure in nonsense”.⁸²⁶ Recourse to wordplay destroys logic and removes inhibitions. Freud writes that wordplay can be a way of “restoring old freedoms and of disburdening us from the compulsion of our intellectual education”,⁸²⁷ and he summarises regarding wordplay: “Reason – critical judgement – suppression – these are the powers it fights one after the other”.⁸²⁸ In short, for Freud, puns radically undermine the status quo.

Shoaf suggest that it is not only tyrants who fear the pun, but critics too:

puns are about power – puns *are* power – and they unsettle those who want to be in control, who want to be on top of things. A pun, like Bottom's dream, often 'hath no bottom', and therefore no top either (no 'inside' or 'outside', for that matter, too), and this indeterminacy and uncertainty vex most critics, leave them uncomfortable as to who's in charge. After all, what *would* they do if, in fact, language itself were 'in charge'?⁸²⁹

This, perhaps, was the kind of fear which led Pasolini to dub Rosselli's puns “lapsus”. The capacity of puns to unshackle the mind and generate instability, or in Shoaf's words, unpredictability and indeterminacy, is what is feared. Their “openness”, or “bottomlessness”, as Shoaf dubs it, is “unsettling”, and makes the pun dangerous. So

⁸²⁴ Redfern, *Puns*, p. 57.

⁸²⁵ Freud, *The Joke*, p. 122.

⁸²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 122-23.

⁸²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 124.

⁸²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 134.

⁸²⁹ R. A. Shoaf, “The Play of Puns in Late Middle English Poetry: Concerning Juxtology”, in Culler, *On Puns*, p. 44.

it follows that it was easier for Rosselli's early critics to assume that her linguistic quirks stemmed from confusion rather than from a radical programme of transgression brought about by a conscious strategy for staging linguistic, stylistic and thematic conflicts.

Transgressing the Lyric Mode

Another source of tension or conflict in Rosselli's poetry, which we have already discussed to some extent in the sections on *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo*, arises from her relationship to the poets of "tradition", and particularly to those who employ the lyric mode. In order to home in on this tension, let us consider another manipulated idiom. We saw that Rosselli divorces *hands* from various idioms, but she also does the same for other body parts, extracting them from the formulaic imagery with which they are commonly used in idioms. Consider the following poem:

no i did not love you i see this clear again or think i *do*
find my heart fundamentally cold yet
it was before a stone of heat, begging
to aid you come to the final point
between us, and so again i part from you and
never must i seek again to find you helpless
in my grasp, never more shall i put the
ax between us never shall i run to you crying
see this music! (S 42, italics mine).

In the lines "i do / find my heart fundamentally cold yet / it was before a stone of heat" the idioms "heart of stone" and "stone cold", are both evoked, but the image is fragmented and complicated by the association of "stone" with the idea of "heat" rather than with "cold". This poem approaches the tropes and language of the traditional love-lyric, but at every juncture, Rosselli thwarts this impulse. And by calling into play these heavy-handed clichés and abusing them by fusing them together, Rosselli deflates the traditional discourse of love-poetry. To a similar end, elsewhere Rosselli defeats our expectations by writing "heart of steel" (S 172), *implying* but ultimately *denying us* "heart of stone" yet again, and fusing it with the idiom "nerves of steel". Elsewhere in *Sleep*, continuing this mission of deflating the tropes of love poetry by divorcing human body parts from their appropriate idioms, Rosselli gives us, rather than the formulaic idiom "on bended knee", which expresses the utmost position of a lover's submissiveness, two parodic reworkings in *Sleep*:

“bended eyes” (*S* 160) and “my bent ears” (*S* 58).

Bisanti discusses the “ricorrere ossessivo dei *topoi* della lirica amorosa”, which she says are both used and abused by Rosselli, and which bring about a “corto circuito della comunicazione tradizionale”. Bisanti shows how in *Variazioni belliche*, words like “‘amore’, ‘cuore’, ‘passione’, ‘occhi’, ‘lacrime’” or “dolce” and courtly love clichés such as “gli sguardi che si incrociano, la melanconia, il desiderio, la canzone” are all in some way undercut.⁸³⁰ We have two oppositional drives here, both “un richiamo alla tradizione” and “un suo rovesciamento”. Rosselli has been described by Dario Bellezza (1987) as “soprattutto una ‘poetessa d’amore’”, and Bisanti comments on this that:

nelle prime raccolte sono infatti frequenti le poesie dedicate ad un tu lontano e oggetto di un desiderio impossibile e inappagato. Ma anche laddove la tematica amorosa sembra prendere il sopravvento, essa non sfocia mai in abbandono lirico e sentimentale, ma è frenata e controllata dal rigore formale, o sottoposta a ironia e dissacrazione. L’azione di recupero e di ribaltamento ironico della lingua poetica della tradizione [...] si esercita quindi anche su alcuni dei motivi prediletti della lirica amorosa⁸³¹

Rosselli herself stated that “ho cercato di non ripetere la formula donna-poesia d’amore”; and she did this by turning it on its head.⁸³² In Bisanti’s discussion of this “rovesciamento” of the language of the love-lyric, she also pin-points one instance where the manipulation of an idiom contributes to this – in the “uso ironico delle espressioni idiomatiche in ‘tetto / coniugale con tutte *le carte in ordine*’, ripreso e capovolto poi in ‘cuore di uomo con *tutte le carte in / un disordine*/”.⁸³³ And these examples of manipulated idioms in *Sleep*, such as “heart of stone” and “on bended knee”, cohere perfectly with this context of ironic overtuning of love *topoi*.

As we saw in our chapter on Edoardo Sanguineti, however, the overturning of the lyric mode in experimental postwar poetry is never quite as simple as that. Once

⁸³⁰ Bisanti, *L’opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p. 251.

⁸³¹ *ibid.*, p. 248.

⁸³² *ibid.*, p. 168.

⁸³³ *ibid.*, p. 161-162.

more this question revolves around the simultaneous and paradoxical problematising and embracing of elements of Petrarch's legacy. Two recent essays - by Alessandro Baldacci and Emanuela Tanello - have traced an intertextual dialogue between Rosselli and Petrarch, and just as it was for Sanguineti, it seems that this is a relationship that is *secret, difficult, paradoxical* and *transgressive*.⁸³⁴ Tanello writes that Rosselli's "poetic topographies" - and, we could add, particularly the Dante-Eliot-Pound-Joyce one that we are considering in this thesis - would "appear to place" Rosselli

very far from what is known as the 'Petrarchan' line of the *Novecento*. Rather, her radical, sustained linguistic experimentation would appear to place her, jointly with a poet like Sanguineti, closer to Dante; and her avowed opposition to a solipsistically central poetic of self can sound positively anti-Petrarchan.⁸³⁵

But in fact Rosselli's poetry actually demonstrates, as Emanuela Tanello argues, one of the "most extreme, even unlikely, examples" of twentieth century Italian poetry's "difficult and often unacknowledged debt" to Petrarch.⁸³⁶

Alessandro Baldacci's essay identifies many Petrarchan key-words (e.g. *chioma, lauro*) and phrases (e.g. "chiare fresche e dolci acque" and "passi tardi e lenti") that recur, in manipulated forms, in Rosselli's works (as, for example, "chiare acque e fresche ombre", "fresche e dolci case", "a passi ancora lenti", "chioma trapassata dalla passione", and "dormire su questi lauri / con l'arena di uno sgradevole pallore").⁸³⁷ And these Petrarchan *reprises*, for Baldacci, are part of Rosselli's strategy of overturning the lyric: "La ripresa petrarchesca vale per l'autrice quale esplicitazione di una poetica che martella ottusamente sul lirico, cortocircuitando però le fondamenta".⁸³⁸ But Rosselli does not actually *escape* either

⁸³⁴ Cortellessa: "Petrarca è di nuovo in vista", p. xi-xii.

⁸³⁵ E. Tanello, "Between Tradition and Transgression: Amelia Rosselli's Petrarch" in *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators, and Translators over 700 Years*, ed. M. McLaughlin (Oxford, 2007), p. 303.

⁸³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 302.

⁸³⁷ A. Baldacci, "Il Petrarca di Amelia Rosselli: da Mallarmé verso Celan", in *Un'altra storia*, p. 272.

⁸³⁸ *ibid.*

Petrarch or the lyric mode through this transgression – she displays a “petrarchismo dissonante”, and is, as Baldacci explains, “contemporaneamente [...] dentro e fuori il lirico, sulla sua soglia estrema, dove agiscono contemporaneamente la memoria del *Canzoniere* e la sua più radicale contestazione”.⁸³⁹

For Emmanuela Tandello, however, there is more than a “memoria” of the *Canzoniere* in Rosselli's poetry – there is an “ultimate allegiance to the lyric”, and, alongside the transgressive impulse, a veritable “reaffirm[ation]” of lyric discourse itself.⁸⁴⁰ The “essence” of Rosselli's poetry, for Tandello,

remains, notwithstanding her ‘intentions’, essentially lyrical. It revolves, in other words, around the mythic construction of a universal subjectivity caught at the moment of loss, mourning for an absence, and in that absence seeking – and failing to find, - meaning and self-definition.⁸⁴¹

Rosselli's *petrarchismo* manifests, for Tandello, in the poetic subject's “ren[unciation] of centrality”, which allows it

to move between the traditional positions of lyric discourse, and establishing itself as necessary Otherness, thus guaranteeing the dialogue with death that for the poet is the true purpose of poetry.⁸⁴²

And so here, inevitably, Rosselli must “engage with lyric discourse at its source” and “create her own powerful personal myth”, with Petrarch figuring, as Tandello argues, as “the not-so-secret ghost in her machine, truly inevitable – if irretrievably remote”.⁸⁴³

The manipulations of the clichés of lyric discourse that we have examined are part of a complex dialogue with tradition. Berardinelli asks, rhetorically, “quale poeta d'amore sfugge a Petrarca?”.⁸⁴⁴ And it appears that Amelia Rosselli, in spite of her highly individual project of alienating and ironising the inherited discourse, remains firmly within its confines. And this inevitable and often shunned inheritance, even

⁸³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 275.

⁸⁴⁰ Tandello, “Between Tradition and Transgression”, p. 303. This is particularly true of *Serie Ospedialiera*, as Tandello demonstrates in this article.

⁸⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁸⁴² *ibid.*, p. 317.

⁸⁴³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴⁴ Berardinelli, “Il fantasma di Petrarca”, p. 41.

for the most radical and transgressive postwar poets – including Amelia Rosselli and Edoardo Sanguineti - in some ways “rende impossibile il dantismo e ci rende tutti, anche controvoiglia, piuttosto petrarchisti”.⁸⁴⁵

These arguments, like the analogous one for Sanguineti, problematise and complicate much of the existing critical discourse on Rosselli, as well as the positions laid out in this chapter. Yes, Rosselli did learn from the English-language Modernists, and she did develop their techniques in order to produce highly experimental poems which revel in the very “Dantescan” modes of *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*. But for Rosselli, to whom everything is subject to the inevitability of contradictions and unresolvable tensions, her poetic project cannot simply *align itself* with these modes, it must also simultaneously *engulf their opposites*.

⁸⁴⁵ *ibid.*

Who's “in preda ad uno shock violentissimo”?

In preda ad uno shock violentissimo, nella miseria e vicino al tuo cuore mandavo profumi d'incenso nelle tue occhiaie. Le fosse ardeatine combinavano credenze e sogni – io era partita, tu eri tornato – la morte era una crescita di violenze che non si sfogavano nella tua testa d'inganno (P 208).

The technique of overturning and ironising idioms - those most familiar, hackneyed, recycled modes of expression - is perhaps the most innovative way in which Rosselli radicalises language in her poetry. She uses the same repertoire of strategies to form idiom manipulations in both her English and Italian works, but many of the more sophisticated examples that we have seen are found in her English-language poems. As we have seen, many Joycean examples can easily be aligned with Rosselli's idiomatic manipulations and this is, arguably, the area in which Rosselli is the most heavily indebted to James Joyce. Of course Joyce's idiom perversions go much further than Rosselli's, often distorting the idiom almost beyond recognition through plurilingual play, as for example in “celescalating the himals” (*FW* 5) which conceals the idiom “scaling the heights”.⁸⁴⁶ Rosselli adopts a variety of Joycean techniques, most notably *portmanteau punning* (which includes in its repertoire of strategies *plurilinguismo* and *pluristilismo*) and *idiom manipulation* (which employs the modes of *plurilinguismo* and *citazionismo*), but, as Tanello states, she does not ever allow her language to undergo a complete “Joycean surrender to the polyglot stream”.⁸⁴⁷ But even though Rosselli does not go to these lengths, the Joycean derivation is palpable in her manipulation of idioms, and this, alongside her experiments with *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* with which the portmanteaux and manipulated idioms are intimately linked, places her firmly in the line of heirs to the Modernist legacy which she outlined in her own critical essays and

⁸⁴⁶ “Scaling” and its near synonym “escalating” are contained in “celescalating”, which also evokes “celeste” which, combined with “himals” [“himmel” and “Himalayas”] evokes “heights”.

⁸⁴⁷ Tanello, “Doing the Splits”, p. 373.

reviews.

Ann Snodgrass uses the passage “i do / find my heart fundamentally cold yet / it was before a stone of heat” (which, as we saw, ironically evokes various clichéd idioms) to illustrate her point that Rosselli’s is “a poetics in which expectation is met on a hairpin curve of its opposite”. Language, she adds, “spins on a meaning’s very uncertain axis which allows no centralised position to be made, or at least not to remain unrevised”.⁸⁴⁸ Linguistic (and cognitive) *expectations* are indeed challenged in perverted idioms, in Joyce, in Rosselli, and in any other author who uses this rhetorical device, as they are in portmanteaux and other types of pun. As Freud, Weisbergs and Redfern related, an idiom’s “stability” is shattered through manipulation, which means that the figurative level of language inherent to idioms is stripped of its usual authority, and is revealed to be precarious and volatile. This breaking down of idioms, clichés and proverbs forces us to consider them not as units but as constructs made up of distinct semantic building blocks. These building blocks take on new meanings and new grammatical functions in their altered contexts, thereby generating for the reader either dizzying polysemy and “openness” and the inevitable cognitive dissonance that accompanies it, or, in extreme cases, a paralysing effect of double bind.

The defeated expectations caused by Rosselli’s manipulated idioms and portmanteaux shunt the reader into an uncomfortable, unsettled state, as the poet engages in a power struggle with language. The reader, at the mercy of Rosselli’s linguistic quirks, finds him or herself “in preda ad uno shock violentissimo”; subjected to the discomfort, crisis and fragmentation that characterise the state of Barthesian *jouissance*. And this “shock violentissimo” functions, in some ways, like the Benjaminian “shock effect” which encapsulates Sanguineti’s linguistically

⁸⁴⁸ Snodgrass, *Knowing Noise*, p. 13.

transgressive techniques so readily.

Rosselli's radicalisation of language certainly does put the reader in a state of “shock”, but her personality and motivations are very different to Sanguineti's. For one thing, Rosselli's poetry is simply less dramatic and extrovert than Sanguineti's – Rosselli would never *stage* personal or societal conflicts through the “shock” appearance of, say, a giant phallus, as Sanguineti did. And while the linguistic perversions in Rosselli are undoubtedly conscious and deliberate – the accidental nature of the so-called *lapsus* has, as we have seen, been thoroughly debunked - they are not *programmatically intended* to have an effect on the reader in the way that Sanguineti's linguistic perversions are. Rosselli's linguistic quirks stem from an overall project that is much more *personal* than it is *political*, though, of course, it constantly shuns the “confessional” mode.

Rosselli did have relatively radical left-wing political views, stemming from the assassination of her father Carlo and uncle Nello – the founders of the antifascist movement *Giustizia e libertà* - at the hands of the Fascists in 1937. She enrolled in the *Partito Comunista Italiano* in 1958, and believed that one role of poetry was to engage in a useful way with the political realities of the day: “sul piano sociale la poesia può servire se tocca la collettività, non tanto l'esperienza personale”, and she stated that “in poesia mi esprimo anche politicamente”.⁸⁴⁹

Rosselli did not, however, believe, as Sanguineti did, in the potential for poetry to actually *become* political praxis. In fact she had no truck with the attitude that reduced poetry to a political tool, and said:

sento troppo la musica per accettare la prosodia politica della poesia. Mi dà fastidio, stilisticamente, la gente che della politica è passata in letteratura impegnandosi in politica attraverso la letteratura.⁸⁵⁰

Rosselli's task was to *express* existential and societal conflict and dissonance rather

⁸⁴⁹ Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, p.167.

⁸⁵⁰ *ibid.*

than to *induce it* in the reader in order to enable them to engage with political realities. Her role was to *expose* the realities inherent in her society, and to *bear witness*, rather than to *create change*. In this sense we could say that her poetry has an *ethical* intent more than an overtly *political* one: “in poesia e in qualche saggio spero di essere riuscita, indirettamente, ad esprimere un mondo anche morale-politico, che sembra mancare in molta poesia 'tornata al privato’”.⁸⁵¹

The manipulated idioms, portmanteaux, *plurilinguismo*, *pluristilismo* and *citazionismo* in Rosselli's English and Italian poetry encapsulate the instability of language – of her own grasp of language, that of language in general, and also, specifically, of the language of poetry. The dissonance that these transgressive techniques engender mirrors the existential instability of the poetic subject as it struggles with the medium of expression and oscillates between the conflicting poles which demarcate human existence. The shock experienced by the reader is, then, for Rosselli, a *by-product* of the existential and ethical conflicts embodied in her poetry – conflicts in her dialogue with the constantly metamorphosing “other” - rather than a means to an end in its own right. Nevertheless the effect on the reader is potent. As Carpita states, “la poesia rosselliana spinge il lettore a misurarsi e superare la difficoltà dell’interpretazione per scoprire nell’attacco alla legge dei padri, la verità del dubbio – di fatto, e significativamente, l’aporia.” And so the reader, alongside the poet herself, ends up “supina come una mosca imbrattata di miele”, suspended in an aporetic state of cognitive dissonance or double bind - wanting the honey, but without the flies.

⁸⁵¹ *ibid.*

CHAPTER V: Conclusion: 'Disarmonia perfetta'?

Here form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something, it is that something itself.⁸⁵²

Ciò che la poesia fa è precisamente il suo contenuto [...] E nei periodi di crisi il modo di fare coincide quasi interamente col significato.⁸⁵³

This thesis has posited Italian postwar experimentalism as an important episode in the reception history of English-language Modernism. Edoardo Sanguineti, Amelia Rosselli and some of their peers appropriated elements of the radical projects of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce and employed them as tools in the resuscitation of their own language and literature. This is a stepping stone in the trajectory described by Marjorie Perloff which leads from Modernism to contemporary poetics which has been largely overlooked until now. This thesis hopes to provide a starting-point for a wider study of this complex but highly stimulating instance of intertextual exchange.

We have seen that Sanguineti and Rosselli's poems represent postwar Italy as a Hell. In spite of their respective recourse to Petrarch, Rosselli's *locus amoenis*, shaded by an “albero che copre la miseria” (*P* 238) and marked with a “cicatrice di erbe” (*P* 243) is an utterly “devastated [...] sterile desert”⁸⁵⁴, and Sanguineti's is a “crudele orto botanico” (*L* 148) filled with “pietre disperate” (*L* 163). Their poetic universes are distinctive versions of the modern hell represented in other works in

⁸⁵² Beckett, “Dante... Bruno, Vico... Joyce”, p. 27. This is Beckett commenting on the language of *Finnegans Wake*.

⁸⁵³ A. Giuliani, “Prefazione ai Novissimi”, in *Gruppo 63: Critica e teoria*, p. 34.

⁸⁵⁴ Tanello, “Between Tradition and Transgression”, p. 309.

the late fifties and sixties. One such depiction that is particularly memorable appears in Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Deserto Rosso* (1964), which is set in the blighted urban wasteland of an intensely industrialised and polluted Ravenna. The film's protagonist Giuliana experiences an extreme form of psychological disintegration. Giuliana cannot reconcile the different elements of the dizzying plurality of modern life – the plurality that we have been describing in this thesis as Barthesian polysemy.

The Modernist-inspired linguistic and stylistic techniques used by Sanguineti and Rosselli for generating polysemy, as we have seen, *enact* the alienating plurality that they see in the external world of society as a whole, as well as in the individual's psyche. But these techniques also serve to *bring about* further instances of alienation (“shock effects”/cognitive dissonance/double binds) in the reader/spectator, through a concerted project of defamiliarising language and defeating expectations.

We have seen that there are differences in the ways in which these effects are modulated in Sanguineti and in Rosselli, and we have also seen that these effects stem from different motivations and experiences for each poet: for Sanguineti they come from an overt drive to politicise poetic language along the lines of the conflicts that he sees in society and in the individual, whereas for Rosselli they are more a consequence of her own internal conflicts. Yet in spite of these interesting counterpoints, both poets *stage* these conflicts in their poems by means of recourse to much the same repertoire of linguistic and stylistic techniques, and both Sanguineti and Rosselli, as a result, bring about analogous effects on the reader. As a result, readers of both poets need to find ways of inhabiting these conflict-riddled poetic worlds.

Cognitive dissonance experts have shown that we have an innate propensity to strive to resolve dissonance – humans resort to all kinds of desperate conscious and unconscious measures in order to approach a state of cognitive harmony. But are

these not the kind of psychological measures that would be taken by a reader who chooses to curl up with the kind of mind-muffling book that Barthes would term a “texte de plaisir”? Perhaps the readers of Rosselli and Sanguineti's texts, as they are transformed into “activists”, can learn to exist within this dissonance rather than strive to resolve it. Perhaps the new reader-turned-activist knows that a state of true harmony is not one to be desired since it would actually jar with both the internal and external realities of life in the *inferno* of modernity.

In fact there is a satirical literary representation of this cognitive act of resolving dissonance that will help to give a little perspective here: George Orwell's “Doublethink” from *Nineteen Eighty Four*. “Doublethink” is:

The power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them... To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just as long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies — all this is indispensably necessary. Even in using the word doublethink it is necessary to exercise doublethink. For by using the word one admits that one is tampering with reality; by a fresh act of doublethink one erases this knowledge; and so on indefinitely, with the lie always one leap ahead of the truth.⁸⁵⁵

This act of accepting two mutually contradictory beliefs, is, for Orwell, a mode of thinking imposed by a tyrannical regime. It is the enforced resolution of cognitive dissonance or double bind. It is a method for ensuring that the human mind colludes in the masking of oppressive structures and hegemonies. Gramsci, Benjamin, Barthes and Eco would certainly disapprove.

Many people read Antonioni's *Deserto Rosso* as an indictment of the inhumanity of society which leads to Giuliana's alienation. But for Antonioni, Giuliana's surrender to neurosis is not the only way to respond to modernity – others face it with more resilience:

It's too simplistic to say - as many people have done - that I am condemning the inhuman industrial world which oppresses the individuals and leads them to neurosis. My intention [...] was to translate the poetry of the world, in which even

⁸⁵⁵ G. Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London, 1949) p. 32.

factories can be beautiful. The line and curves of factories and their chimneys can be more beautiful than the outline of trees, which we are already too accustomed to seeing. It is a rich world, alive and serviceable... The neurosis I sought to describe in *Red Desert* is above all a matter of adjusting. There are people who do adapt, and others who can't manage, perhaps because they are too tied to ways of life that are by now out-of-date.⁸⁵⁶

Giuliana's psychological mechanisms are “out of date”: she has clearly not experienced the psychological paradigm shift that would allow her to carry out a sophisticated “reading” of her environment and enable her to embrace its polysemy. This shift in perception which began with Modernism and intensified after World War II was described, as we have seen, by Benjamin, by Barthes and by Eco, in their theorisations on the modern reader-turned-activist. It was also described by Sanguineti himself – both when he spoke of the “trasformazione delle strutture mentali” which led to a different assimilation of Joyce by his own generation and by Moravia, and when he spoke of acquiring a “chiave” that allowed him to “read” the ubiquitous citationality of art. Giuliana did not manage it, but it seems that the reader-turned-activist can learn to overthrow the hegemonies of the mind.

This psychological paradigm shift is also described most aptly by David Osmond-Smith in his discussion of Berio's Joyce-inspired textual layering, and he too acknowledges the Modernist derivation of this new readerly experience. He describes a “complementary mode of perception”:

Berio reactivates one of the central experiences of the 'modernist' tradition. The listener, troubled by the rich confusion of what he has heard, may well seek refuge in the score; but there he will discover a maze of allusions to things beyond the score. The more avidly he seeks to pin these down, the more clear will it become that there is no logical end to his activities. But this moment of scholastic exasperation (richly familiar to students of Joyce, or Pound, or Borges) serves to underline the necessity of coming to grips with that initial confusion in another, and complementary way – that of learning to be receptive to the peculiarly vivid aesthetic impact of the half-understood.⁸⁵⁷

And so, the kinds of “shocks” generated by Modernist writings and by Rosselli and Sanguineti do not offer what Osmond-Smith calls “gratuitous mystification”, they

⁸⁵⁶ S. B. Chatman and P. Duncan, *Michelangelo Antonioni: The Investigation* (London, 2004), p. 91-95.

⁸⁵⁷ Osmond-Smith, *Playing on words*, p. 90-91.

actually provide a “survival kit against the facile nihilism that so easily informs attempts to analyse a disjointed, relativistic environment in which 'the unexpected is always upon us’”.⁸⁵⁸ And with this “survival kit” we can learn to inhabit the dissonant polysemy and challenge our natural propensity towards “doublethink”.

But can there be more than survival to the experience of reading these texts, and, by extension, of the “monde comme texte”? Jenny Diski, in her book “The Sixties”, which analyses the era through the lens of her own experiences as a young adult in London, writes that her generation's parents

kept things separate and appropriate: art in galleries, certain clothes for particular occasions, work marked off from play, private walled away from public, formal dissociated from casual. Their mores derived from old rules, the strictures of Leviticus: *Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee.* That ancient terror of mixing things up, of losing the order of things. One thing must be one thing, never another too.⁸⁵⁹

But Diski's own generation *revelled* in this mixing: “record covers became art, art became tea towels. Things got mixed up in a way that was original and amusing to us.” This assessment is perhaps a little naïve, but it does hit on precisely the paradigm shift in perception between the two generations that we have been describing.

The fact that Jenny Diski and her peers in the sixties found this mixing “amusing” aligns with Sanguineti's idea of the polysemy being a source of enjoyment (“godere”). From Aristotle's day to Diski's parents' day, the “delight we take in recognition” was the “basis for the enjoyment of art”, but in the sixties we had to learn to seek delight elsewhere. According to Sanguineti we can learn to inhabit, to exploit and even to enjoy the discordant montage that is modern life. This is a challenging, unsettling, uncomfortable state, as we have seen, but it is also a heightened state of awareness that can generate ecstatic moments of intense

⁸⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 91.

⁸⁵⁹ J. Diski, *The Sixties* (London, 2009), p. 21.

exhilaration. We have been entrusted with the “chiave” and asked to re-write the text, and this fuels a fierce independence and sense of autonomy. We have discovered the tools and determination to stop Doublethink from artificially smoothing over the cracks in our minds, in our lives and in our world.

This is Bakhtinian carnival. When we read Sanguineti and Rosselli and embrace their linguistic perversions we are overturning the dominant structures that oppress us, and revelling in linguistic and psychological rupture and perversity. This is not only carnivalesque, but also a radical state of “anarchy”, understood, as Sanguineti stressed, “nel senso etimologico”. Sanguineti and Rosselli’s texts require the reader to negotiate between the many conflicting poles within them, and to confront the clashes - at the *macro* level of the text as a whole, and at the *micro* level of the individual word - between the different linguistic codes of their *plurilinguismo*, the different registers and discourses of their *pluristilismo*, and the different cultural and historical modes evoked through their complex strategies of *citazionismo*. This interpretive freedom bestowed upon the reader is anarchy, in its etymological sense.

This can be described using a different frame of reference to the ones used throughout this thesis. We could describe the anarchic space into which the “shock” effect of Sanguineti and Rosselli’s poetry shunts us, with recourse to Hakim Bey, a much more recent anarchist theorist than Antonin Artaud, as a “Temporary Autonomous Zone” or TAZ. The TAZ is Bakhtin's carnivalesque re-written for a radical twentieth century audience. Bey describes a polymorphous socio-political or artistic strategy of creating temporary spaces which elude formal structures of hierarchy, control and hegemonies. The TAZ is “a conscious radical tactic”⁸⁶⁰ which

⁸⁶⁰ H. Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York, 1991), p. 130.

brings about ways of “living intensely”.⁸⁶¹ There is an unmistakably carnivalesque quality to the TAZ. Bey describes the

festal quality of the moment which is uncontrolled, and which adheres in spontaneous self-ordering, however brief. It is “epiphanic” - a peak experience on the social as well as individual scale.⁸⁶²

Bey's ideas have been used to analyse socio-political happenings such as those staged by the “Reclaim the Streets” movement born in the nineties, which aims to resist the corporate take-over of the high-street by taking temporary ownership over public spaces. But Bey's ideas apply to poetry too. He speaks, in terms that are by now very familiar to us, of “trigger[ing] aesthetic shocks”⁸⁶³ within poetry in order to jolt the reader or spectator out of complacency. For Bey the poet should go beyond even the tactics of Theatre of Cruelty and Situationism and should produce a very strong “aesthetic-shock” in the audience: a fusion of “powerful disgust, sexual arousal, superstitious awe, sudden intuitive breakthrough, dada-esque angst”.⁸⁶⁴ For Bey, if a poem “does not change someone's life (aside from the artist's) it fails.”⁸⁶⁵ Bey condemns conceptions of poetry in Western culture that have led us to “read under the influence of a cartesian anaesthetic gas”.⁸⁶⁶ In the West, he says, “the link between poetry and the body dies with the bardic era”, but in some other cultures poetry can still “plunge” the reader or audience into a state of ecstatic “trance” or “fits of dancing”.⁸⁶⁷ Bey recommends that we break through the anaesthesia, “take the risk”, he says, and “dance before you calcify”.⁸⁶⁸

The thrill-seeking reader invoked by Bey is our reader-turned-activist, refusing to fill their mind with cotton-wool. And this defiance in the face of passivity,

⁸⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 124.

⁸⁶² *ibid.*, p. 132.

⁸⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 21.

both in the author and in the reader, is the real legacy of the English-language Modernist on Italian postwar experimentalists. Poetry - as Sanguineti and Rosselli knew – can, like life, be hellish, violent, frighteningly hallucinogenic, but in its gaps and interstices it can equally be orgasmic and ecstatic. Life in the modern Neo-Capitalist *inferno* is energized through Sanguineti and Rosselli's radicalisations of language. The reader-turned-activist might be “supina come una mosca”, but at least they are stuck in *honey*, and not in Dantescan pitch – they can, at least, escape their torment momentarily through the occasional sugar-rush. The reader-turned-activist also finds themselves confronted with the following “supine” situation:

Io che cado supina dalla croce m'investo della
sua mantella di fasto originario. Bellezza armonia che scintilli
anche per i prati ora secchiti: marmo che non cade, curva
di spalla sepolta e rinata, con la spala che intacca i geroglifici
del mondo. Forma cunea, alfabeto -triangolo, - punta al cielo
le tue dita sporcate di terriccio (*P* 273).

The final lines of this Rossellian passage manipulate the idiom “toccare il cielo con un dito”, which means “sopraggiungere una gioia grande e inaspettata”. But here, the poem's interlocutor has muddy fingers, and is “pointing” rather than “touching”. The muddy fingers are apt – the “melma” of the Neo-Capitalist swamp cannot be evaded, but, nevertheless, there remains the possibility of accessing fleeting moments of intense and unexpected joy. In fact, this mud can lead us anywhere we like – it is up to us to define our own path, as Sanguineti exclaims:

[...] morbido fango! un volto un segno
conduce et modicae verso il cielo et infirmae et il medesimo tamen
può condurre (segnovolto) all'inferno. sunt piscis boni
il mio fosso tu stessa! (*L* 300).

Indeed, if we can we learn - from Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Sanguineti and Rosselli - to accept and embrace the inevitable dissonance in our minds, in our lives and in our world, we can build our own *locus amoenus*. This may well only be a *temporary* space, but it will certainly be one in which we are *autonomous*, and one in which we can experience ecstasy in a *zone* of our own making. A zone that is neither hell nor

heaven nor earth. A zone that, at least momentarily, allows us to experience a “totale
disarmonia perfetta” in spite of the avalanche of screams:

[...] riposato sulle erbe
tranquille dei né paradisi né terra né inferno né normale
convenienza con te ho cercato l'immenso e la totale
disarmonia perfetta, ma basse corde risuonano anche se tu non
le premi anche se tu non sistemi le valanghe i gridi e
le piccole sgragnature in quell'unico
sicuro scialle (*P* 191).

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