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The Power to Transgress: Music across Borders - Introduction

> For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible.
>
> (Jacques Attali, *Noise*)

When Edward Said wrote about music and its power to transgress, he was probably thinking about the role of music in Western societies, but also, in a more personal tone, about the way he used musical language in his own work.[1] As in the wider practice of cultural studies, here music plays both a marginal and a crucial role. On the one hand, music features as object of study in a limited number of books and essays, never taking the limelight off literature as the main field of analysis (this is only partially true of Said's last and unfinished work, *On Late Style*, the first where music and literature actually are side by side).[2] On the other, music features prominently in Said's work as a critical instrument, and one of his most famous insights, the concept of 'contrapuntal reading', comes straight out of Bach. More than a field in its own right, music in Said's writing is a tool for interpreting the world, where the word "interpret" takes on the performative nuance that music lends to it. To interpret the world is to shape it, to continuously reinvent it – a lesson Said took from Adorno: "to interpret language means: to understand language. To interpret music means: to make music".[3]

This issue of *Anglistica*, the first dedicated to music in the long commitment of this journal to cultural studies and interdisciplinarity, follows Said's ambivalent attitude without trying to solve it. Music, considered as a peculiar human activity whose medium is sound, features here first of all as a topic of study, an activity with multiple social and cultural resonances; it also works as an access point for issues such as diasporic identities, subaltern writing, and contrapuntal reading of hegemonic narratives. It is not my intention to summarize the broad question of what music actually is, let alone to overview the different meanings it assumes in different social and cultural contexts. Among these, Jacques Attali's definition of music as "the organization of noise" seems to me the most appropriate for the articles collected in this issue.[4] Far from being self-referential and aloof from worldly concerns, the rules this "organization" follows are deeply ingrained in the power relations at work in the different times and places where music is produced, performed, and interpreted. Thus if Western classical music emerges, in Said's words, as "a remarkable

[1] See Edward W. Said, *Musical Elaborations* (London: Vintage, 1991), 70.

[2] See Edward W. Said, *On Late Style. Music and Literature against the Grain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

[3] Theodor W. Adorno, "Music and Language: a Fragment", in *Quasi una fantasia. Essays on Modern Music*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London and New York: Verso, 1992), 3.

[4] Jacques Attali, *Noise. The Political Economy of Music*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 4.

apparatus for producing and maintaining a discipline, protected by rituals of learning, traditions of pedagogy, display and so forth … a police regime of the signifier",[5] popular music too is subjected to much the same ideological constraints, what Pierpaolo Martino calls "the imperatives of mainstream pop".

On the other hand, cultural studies in particular has recognized a site of resistance in musical performance. Said famously wrote that "the transgressive element in music is its nomadic ability to attach itself to, and become a part of, social formations, to vary its articulations and rhetoric depending on the occasion as well as the audience, plus the power and the gender situations in which it takes place".[6] We may also mention Stuart Hall's use of the expression "cut'n'mix", borrowed from the musical milieu of the 70s, to describe "the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization … in short, the process of cultural *diaspora-ization*", in his pivotal 1989 essay on "new ethnicities", reprinted in the first issue of *Anglistica* New Series.[7] More generally, music has been identified as a language where the voice of the subaltern can resonate, albeit in attenuated and hybridized forms: as Iain Chambers writes, "music sustains an ethical resonance that permits us not so much to fully capture and comprehend the past as to recover fragments of its dispersed body … a re-membering that directs us elsewhere".[8]

"Voicings: Music across Borders" follows this tradition in cultural studies, as our title already indicates: all the essays included in this issue focus on the ability of a given genre, artist or performance to give voice to marginal or eccentric subjects who live and elaborate the world 'across borders' – state borders as well as less tangible borders between metropolis and periphery, power and resistance, hegemony and subalternity. The voice, itself a staple metaphor in postcolonial and cultural studies, is meant both as intrinsically singular and as something that is open to dialogue, bearer of discourse but also resistant to it: as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam write, "[a] voice … is not exactly congruent with a discourse, for while discourse is institutional, transpersonal, unauthored, voice is personalized, having authorial accent and intonation, and constitutes a specific interplay of discourses (whether individual or communal)".[9]

Voicing is also a technical term defining the construction of intervals in a musical chord. Musical intervals, as Trinh T. Minh-ha reminds us, "constitute interruptions and irruptions in a uniform series of surface; they designate a temporal hiatus, an intermission, … and they are what comes up at the threshold of representation".[10] Hence, 'voicings' refers not only to the act of giving voice, but also to a series of "interruptions", an interplay of different critical voices which, while interpreting different works and contexts, yet create a harmonic ensemble where each emerges as both strongly individual and in consort with the rest.

[5] Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 56.

[6] Ibid, 70.

[7] Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities" (1989), *Anglistica* 1.1-2 (1997), 22.

[8] Iain Chambers, *Culture after Humanism. History, Culture, Subjectivity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 119.

[9] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism. Multiculturalism and the Media* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 215.

[10] Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Beware of Wolf Intervals", in *Cinema Interval* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), xii-xiii.

[11] See Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings. Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Oxford, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

A significant issue of contrapuntal reading can be found in our first contribution, which presents Susan McClary's reading of Frescobaldi's *Maddalena alla croce* (1630) in the context of Mediterranean cultural exchanges. I do not think it is an exaggeration to state that McClary's work has changed the way music, especially Western classical music, is studied today: starting from her seminal *Feminine Endings*, her research on the interplay between music and gender issues has started what is today a flourishing school known as New Musicology.[11] As she writes in the essay published here, this school "has often been vilified as a reaction from those who want to foist their special interests in women or queers or pop music on the previously uncontested canon": from the start new musicology has worked to undo borders, among them the one between classical and popular music. *Feminine Endings*, for example, puts together Bizet's *Carmen* and pop star Madonna to explore the gender issues at stake in musical performance.

[12] Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: the Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2000), ix-x.

Gender has since become a popular topic in new musicology: yet, as McClary herself wrote in a later reflection on her early efforts, "it had seemed when I was writing *Feminine Endings* that the (to me) self-evident representations of gender and eroticism I was tracing would reveal the complicity of these basic formal principles in a variety of culturally specific agendas, thus enabling a thorough historical reassessment of these elements".[12] The essay presented in this issue follows this effort to provide a historical reassessment of the classical music canon, highlighting the emergence in Frescobaldi's work of the cultural and musical traffics that, together with the economic ones, make up the history of the Mediterranean area – an element too often forgotten by contemporary immigration policies in Italy and the other Mediterranean countries that share the Italian effort to silence this shared history.

It is because of this peculiar relevance to contemporary debates that McClary's essay is offered both in English and in Italian translation. It is also because her work, together with that of the new musicology school, has yet to receive due attention in Italy. When we started to plan this issue, none of McClary's work had been translated into Italian, and her major publications remain to date untranslated.[13] Italy has emerged as a major concern in our work, so much so that a whole section of the issue is dedicated to representations of Italian identity. Both Richard Dyer's and Alessandro Buffa's contributions focus on Italianness as a contested site of identity, whose construction involves the contrapuntal interaction of different stories and interpretations.

[13] In the meantime, a translation of her book on Carmen, originally in the Cambridge Opera Handbooks series, has been published: see *Georges Bizet. Carmen*, ed. by Annamaria Cecconi (Milano: Rugginenti, 2008); English ed. *Georges Bizet. Carmen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

The privileged context of the USA, where Italian migration has found one of its privileged outputs, sees both the struggle by Italian composer Nino Rota across the borders of the Italian and US film industries, and the similar struggle of young, second generation Italian migrants to voice

their diasporic identity through the appropriation of doo-wop music in post-war New York. Here music emerges as a way to voice resistance to hegemonic national discourses, embodying the "slippage of category" Homi K. Bhabha finds in the act of writing the nation:[14] the ethnicization of Italian identity, which emerges particularly from Buffa's description of the contamination between Italian American and African American music, offers a strong counterpoint to current discourses on Italy as a 'white', European nation. Here music, following Said's insight, works both as field of study and critical instrument; musical analysis – as in Richard Dyer's article – serves to deconstruct the border between imitation and originality, thereby foregrounding a radical reassessment of the possibility to represent, in music or elsewhere, an 'original' Italian identity.

The strategies of resistance that can find a voice in the fractures and fissures of hegemonic discourses are at the centre of the last section of this issue, which stands across the border between metropolitan and postcolonial spaces. Placing his discourse at the centre of the former colonial UK, Pierpaolo Martino describes the way an apparently hegemonic discourse can be transformed into a counter-discourse 'from the inside': thus rock band Radiohead makes use of the structures offered by the musical establishment to interpellate its audience differently, prompting it to take responsibility for its own part in the system and to become aware of its power to change it. Moving to the former colonies, namely Australia, Katherine E. Russo identifies the same unsettling power of musical performance in the work of Romaine Moreton, whose "transmedia storytelling" reappropriates recording technology and the 'Aboriginal' musical practices which had already been marketed to the West (as in the notorious imagery of Chatwin's *Songlines*), what Russo calls the "commodification of Indigenous orality".

Voicing, as I mentioned earlier, implies the interaction of voices – an interaction explicitly sought for in the section titled "Dialogue/Debate/ Dissent". *Anglistica* has traditionally devoted this section to interviews and discussions that cut across the border between the academic and the personal. The two pieces hosted in this section bear witness to the variety of forms these "dialogues" can take: Iain Chambers's interview with Danilo Capasso sees a distinction between the two speakers, the interviewer and the interviewee, signalled by different headings, leaving the reader with the task of spotting the echoes between the participants' voices. On the other hand, Fiorenzo Iuliano's encounter with Wayne Koestenbaum has taken a more fluid, contrapuntal form, an atypical interview that follows "the alternating and interfering rhythm of our questions and answers", as Iuliano writes in his introductory note; here, interviewer and interviewee often change place with each other and create a flux into which the reader cannot avoid being drawn.

[14] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 140.

Both interviews bear witness to two encounters: Capasso's interview came to light almost by chance, as stated in the editorial note by Marina Vitale. Naples, the place where most of us work and live, emerges here as a contested space where different musical and performative practices coexist and interrogate one another; but it is also part of an international network of artists and locations with which a fruitful dialogue can be enlaced. The other interview records a triple encounter. Several years ago, while I was working on my PhD dissertation, I came across Wayne Koestenbaum's book on opera, *The Queen's Throat*, which was to become a major inspiration for my work, writing, and life.[15] A few years later I contacted Koestenbaum for this issue and as Fiorenzo Iuliano, my colleague, friend and sometimes accomplice in academic mischief, happened to be in New York at the time, I put them in touch with each other. One of the results of this encounter, the interview, is presented here; another, the first Italian translation of Koestenbaum's work, will be published by Iuliano in the next issue of *Anglistica*. Here, Koestenbaum's queer interpretation of opera, which stems out of the 'opera queen' culture, will take us elsewhere, across the borders of gender studies to a radical reassessment of identity politics and academic writing.

As Said may have helped us anticipate, our topic but also our efforts and the contributors' enthusiasm and expertise have transgressed their allotted borders and spilled over the constraints of a single issue. Unable to reject contributions that are part of an ongoing dialogue between many disciplines, and without ever aspiring to completeness in covering the field of music studies, we decided to plan a second instalment, under the working title of "Music and the Performance of Identity". This second issue will include, together with Koestenbaum's contribution, others that necessarily engage in a dialogue with those included here: among them, a review of contemporary musical experimentations in digital art by Vito Campanelli, founder of MAO (Media & Arts Office), with whom Danilo Capasso has recently collaborated; a variation on the theme of voicing identities in a queer perspective by Freya Jarman-Ives; an essay by Patrizia Calefato on the postcolonial experience expressed through the interplay between fashion and music; an account of the aural and written provocations of Caribbean poet Jean 'Binta' Breeze, by Manuela Coppola; and a joint venture by Raffaella Bianchi and Bezen Balamir Coskun on the different meanings opera takes up in relation to national discourses in both Italy and Turkey, a follow-up to the Mediterranean suggestions offered by Susan McClary in her article in the present issue.

On a closing note, I need to thank the Editorial Board and especially the editor of the journal, Jane Wilkinson, whose 'feel' for music is even stronger than mine, and who has helped us through the sometimes hard process of making this issue come to life. I also need to thank my co-

[15] See Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat. Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire* (London: Penguin, 1994).

editor Marina Vitale, with whom I also share an intellectual commitment to music, who shared the burden of editing this issue and agreed to co-edit the next issue on music as well; and finally Marta Cariello and Katherine E. Russo, whose care in helping out with the language editing cannot be overstated. This has been a truly collective project, which has not aimed at consonance, but at a fruitful counterpoint among voices and experiences; to quote Iain Chambers one last time, "we could consider music as one of the languages we inhabit, dwell in, and in which we, our histories, cultures, and identities, are constituted. As a language it is seemingly immaterial and yet profoundly terrestrial .... At this point to ask what music is, is to ask what our culture is, who we are, and what are we doing here?".[16]

[16] Chambers, *Culture after Humanism*, 115.

Susan McClary

Mediterranean Trade Routes and Frescobaldi's Magdalene[*]

Fernand Braudel penned his magisterial *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* during World War II.[1] A daunting feat: most of us feel a sense of accomplishment simply managing to plow all the way through this massive work and in the best of circumstances. Once we get past wondering 'how did he do it?' however, it becomes clear that he 'had' to do it: it was his way of imagining a world that could acknowledge its common history and deep interdependences. Reading Braudel today, when the international agencies formed after that war to ensure cooperation threaten once again to break apart along many of the same old fault lines — the patched and repatched Balkans, the mutual antagonisms between Christianity and Islam, the problem of securing a homeland for Jews too often driven into exile, Spain with its perpetual reconquests, and the destabilizing economic wild card that the Americas were then and now — one is struck again by his vision and by a sense of missed opportunities.

Musicologists in the post-war period did not pay much heed to Braudel. A German-based discipline that had long privileged a German repertory, American musicology sought ways of holding onto its central canon despite the enemy status of its origins. To a large extent, music historians turned their attentions to projects that avoided potentially difficult ideological issues. The great achievements of the decades following the war involved the production of critical editions and inventories of archives, the scientific dating of autograph scores, and the development of objective analytic methods that bracketed everything outside the scope of 'the music itself'. As Joseph Kerman argued in his *Contemplating Music* – a book that took on the task of explaining the discipline's positivistic orientation and subsequent intellectual stagnation – these enterprises assumed in advance the greatness of their objects of study, thereby obviating the need of ever addressing questions of value.[2]

The so-called New Musicology, which took its direction from Kerman's diagnosis, has often been vilified as a reaction from those who want to foist their special interests in women or queers or pop music on the previously uncontested canon. Note, however, that the lines drawn by that canon also excluded the art musics of Eastern Europe, England, France, the Americas, and Spain. Only a small handful of mostly marginalized scholars – foremost among them Robert Stevenson, my emeritus colleague at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) – have bothered to look even into the music produced by Golden Age Spain and the new-world

colonies of Philip II.[3] They hold their own little support-group sessions in the evenings at meetings of the American Musicological Society, while prime-time panels dedicated to the Masters and to trendy topics fill ballrooms to capacity. Questions posed of music may have changed, but not enough so as to attract much interest to the Iberian world.

And here I must plead as guilty as anyone: except for a recent paper on the *chacona* – a topic that required me to give credit to both Spain and the colonies before I scurried back to the security of Venice, Versailles, and Johann Sebastian Bach – I have neglected the Braudelian Mediterranean as much as the most blinkered of music theorists.[4] I'm afraid I'm not yet ready to make my debut as a Hispanist, though I have learned enough Spanish in the last couple of years to read novels and to set up a summer place on the Catalonian seacoast. And the incomparably sensuous recordings by Jordi Savall's Hesperion XX ensemble are seducing me ever more powerfully toward those unfamiliar repertories.

I take as my starting point today Braudel's provocative (and, as always, gorgeously written) statement concerning influences:

> For every piece of cultural baggage recognized, a thousand are untraceable: identification labels are missing and sometimes the contents or their wrappings have vanished too …. Is it possible to say that Spanish mysticism in the sixteenth century can be traced back to Moslem Sufism through such intermediaries as the eclectic genius of Ramón Llull? Is it true that the use of rhyme in the West owed its origin to the Moslem poets of Spain? That the *chansons de geste* (as is quite probable) borrowed from Islam? We should be equally wary of those who are too positive in their identification of cultural phenomena (for example the borrowings from Arabic by French troubadours) and of those who by reaction deny all borrowings between civilization and civilization, when in the Mediterranean to live is to exchange – men, ideas, ways of life, beliefs – or habits of courtship.[5]

When we pass through airports today, we have to verify that no one unknown to us packed our bags; since the events of 9/11, that question resonates inevitably with the anxiety that an item of 'Arabic' origin might have slipped into one's suitcase. As María Rosa Menocal has explained, however, nervousness about Arabic meddling with our cultural baggage begins not with 9/11 or even with Braudel's World War II. It presents itself already in Petrarch's fourteenth-century attempt at drawing a direct line of descent from the cultures of Greek and Roman antiquity to the vernacular movements of his own day.[6] If Braudel hesitated to confirm the "borrowings from Arabic by French troubadours", Menocal offers definitive proof of Petrarch's own love lyrics as the progeny of Moorish courts – something the Florentine poet no doubt suspected, and thus the defensiveness in his redrawn genealogy. For Petrarch worked very hard to alter all the identification labels from the baggage he had inherited.

[3] In addition to the huge bibliography of Robert Stevenson, see also Louise K. Stein, *Songs of Mortals, Dialogues of the Gods: Music and Theatre in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). My colleague Elisabeth Le Guin is now researching the *tonadilla*, a popular genre of comic music-theater in eighteenth-century Madrid.

[4] See my "Cycles of Repetition: Chacona, Ciaccona, Chaconne, and THE Chaconne", in Lorna Clymer, ed., *Ritual, Routine, and Regime: Institutions of Repetition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 21-45.

[5] Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 761.

[6] María Rosa Menocal, *Shard of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 1-54.

The Italian Renaissance that stands at the centre of the narrative of cultural history we perpetuate always already sought to deny its debts to the racial Others who had not only inhabited part of Western Europe and influenced the rise of lyric poetry throughout the continent but had also preserved the very Greek texts upon which Petrarch wanted to build his cultural edifice.

I will take as my case study a *sonetto spirituale*, *Maddalena alla Croce*, published in Florence in 1630 by Girolamo Frescobaldi (a full score is included at the end of this text).[7] I propose to perform a Braudelian reading of this very compact piece, locating it in the cross-currents of Mediterranean trade routes by means of its large number of identification tags – long ignored but still quite legible.

My first piece of evidence is the instrument Frescobaldi designates for the accompaniment of this composition: the theorbo or bass lute, which descends from the Arabic *ud* (thus: the 'lute'). We know of *ud* players visiting Andalusian courts as early as the ninth century, and the instrument quickly took root in this new context. Spanish Christians depicted themselves playing it in the thirteenth century, and by the fourteenth, the lute had spread throughout Northern Europe. The most celebrated luthiers formed guilds in Germany, though many fled during the Peasants' Revolt of 1525 and resettled their workshops in Venice, where they had access to exotic woods and musicians from Turkey and beyond, leading to still further refinements. The expanded version, the bass lute, begins to appear at the Florentine Medici festivities of the late 1580s that figure so prominently in the early histories of monody and opera. In short, a history of this object requires a concentrated version of Braudel's road map: multiple contacts with the Arabic world, diffusion through aristocratic courts in southern Europe, trans-Alpine migration, colonies of refugees clustered in cosmopolitan Venice, Medici displays of power as they formed alliances between their banking family with the royal blood of France.

Next, the poetic text: a sonnet (recall the impact of those Arabic rhymes on the troubadour *formes fixes*!) that purports to represent Mary Magdalene at the site of the cross. In the second quatrain, the poet treats the signs of Mary's grief with Marino-inspired surface imagery, but with a particular twist: he compares her disheveled golden tresses to the precious metals imported by way of the Atlantic, her tears to the pearls conveyed from India. Much like the gaudy chapels that line the cathedral built by the Most Catholic Kings in Granada after their successful ethnic purging of the peninsula and in celebration of the vast quantities of gold and silver pouring in from the colonies, this description of Mary converts her to an icon advertising as a casual point of reference the availability of luxury commodities brought by ships from both east and west. If our poet had mentioned silk, we would have to acknowledge the influence of caravans

[7] Girolamo Frescobaldi, "Maddalena alla croce", in *Primo libro d'arie musicali per cantarsi* (Florence: Giovanni Batista Landini, 1630), 15-16.

to the Far East as well; a more contemporary version might compare the black of her eyes to the oil reserves of the Iraqi desert.

Al piè della gran croce, in cui languiva	At the foot of the great cross on which languished
Vicino a morte il buon Giesù spirante,	Close to death our good Jesus, expiring,
Scapigliata così pianger s'udiva	Disheveled and weeping was thus heard to cry
La sua fedele addolorata amante;	His faithful, grief-stricken lover;
E dell'umor che da begli occhi usciva,	And than the tears that issued from her lovely eyes,
E dell'or della chioma ondosa, errante,	And than the gold of her waving and errant hair,
Non mandò mai, da che la vita è viva,	Never has produced, since life was life,
Perle ed oro più bel l'India ò l'Atlante;	India or the Atlantic more beautiful pearls or gold.
"Come far", dicea, "lassa, o Signor mio,	"Alas, how", she said, "O my Lord,
Puoi senza me quest' ultima partita?	Can you take without me this final departure?
Come, morendo tu, viver poss' io?	How, if you are dying, can I live?
Che se morir pur vuoi, l'anima unita	For if you wish to die, my soul is united
Ho teco (il sai, mio Redentor, mio Dio),	With you (you know this, my Redeemer, my God),
Però teco aver deggio e morte, e vita".	Therefore with you I must share both death and life".

I will not try to describe Frescobaldi's musical style as anything other than the confluence of mannerist harmonic practice he absorbed during his apprenticeship at the court of Ferrara – the most concentrated site of musical experimentation in the late sixteenth century – and the dramatic monody that had taken the world by storm since its debut in Florence forty years earlier. The neo-modality with which it produces its effects descends from the Italian avant-garde madrigal with no obvious tributaries from elsewhere. In other words, a classification based on its purely musical elements keeps Frescobaldi's sonnet firmly planted within an uncompromised Italy.

But the theological orientation of the poem and Frescobaldi's response to that poem betrays a far more profound influence of the greater Mediterranean than the mere choice of a theorbo or the off-hand mention of gold and pearls. The blatant eroticism of this little piece scandalizes many present-day listeners when they first hear it: here is Mary Magdalene at the site of Christianity's most holy site – the crucifixion – enacting a fantasy of simultaneous orgasm with the dying Christ. Frescobaldi's setting concludes with a spasmodic shudder; even those who do not know the Renaissance convention of punning on the 'little death' will catch his meaning. Both the lapidary, jewel-encrusted poetry and the deliberate blending of the religious and the sexual recall Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, except that the sacrilegious stakes are much higher here. When Madonna (the pop star) attempted a similar scenario for "Like a Prayer", Pepsi yanked her million-dollar ad from circulation within a few hours. For our modern frame of reference relegates the sacred and the sexual to opposite ends of the experiential spectrum.

But anyone familiar with seventeenth-century culture will have witnessed this bizarre blend many times before. It manifests itself in the lurid verse of Richard Crashaw, the sado-masochistic holy sonnets of John Donne, the ecstatic statuary of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the music of Claudio Monteverdi and Alessandro Grandi at San Marco, the *symphoniae sacrae* of Heinrich Schütz, who brought the contagion back to Dresden after his sabbatical in Venice.[8] It was because of such egregious violations of taste as these that eighteenth-century rationalists branded their predecessors with the pejorative term 'baroque'. But 'baroque' has long since been reified as a technical term: in music history, it commonly not only refers to the early seventeenth century but also embraces the first half of the eighteenth, up through the death of Georg Friedrich Handel – a colleague of Alexander Pope, whose agnostic texts he sometimes set in his oratorios. Indeed, because Handel and Bach are by far the most familiar 'baroque' composers, most musicians assume that the word designates the 1700s.

In contrast to this dubious use of 'baroque' as a bland, mostly meaningless period label, Braudel shocks readers into remembering the context within which precisely this potentially objectionable strain of art developed:

> [T]he Baroque conveniently designates the civilization of the Christian Mediter-ranean: wherever we find the Baroque we can recognize the mark of Mediterranean culture. The Baroque drew its strength both from the huge spiritual force of the Holy Roman Empire and from the huge temporal force of the Spanish Empire. With the Baroque a new light began to shine; … new and more lurid colors now bathed the landscapes of western Europe.[9]

Braudel identifies this mode of cultural expression with the defiant reassertion of Catholicism in the face of its would-be reformers and with the militant agendas of the Jesuits – indeed, he suggests replacing 'baroque' with the label 'Jesuit' to designate such art.[10] And far from apologizing for its excesses, he explains their purposes:

> Baroque art, then, often smacks of propaganda. Art was a powerful means of combat and instruction; a means of stating, through the power of the image, the Immaculate Holiness of the Mother of God, the efficacious intervention of the saints, the reality and power of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the eminence of St. Peter, a means of arguing from the visions and ecstasies of the saints. Patiently compiled and transmitted, identical iconographical themes crossed and re-crossed Europe. If the Baroque exaggerates, if it is attracted by death and suffering, by martyrs depicted with unsparing realism, if it seems to have abandoned itself to a pessimistic view, to the Spanish *desengaño* of the seventeenth century, it is because this is an art which is preoccupied with convincing, because it desperately seeks the dramatic detail which will strike and hold the beholder's attention. It was intended for the use of the faithful, who were to be persuaded and gripped by it, who were to be taught by active demonstration, by an early version of *verismo*, the truth of certain contested

[8] For more on this phenomenon, see Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, Vol. 1: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. by Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Deborah Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

[9] Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 827.

[10] Ibid., 831.

notions, whether of Purgatory or of the Immaculate Conception. It was a theatrical art and one conscious of its theatricality.[11]

Allow me to connect these comments back to the Frescobaldi. The theatricality of *Maddalena alla croce* – despite its brevity and modest performing forces – is quite unavoidable: it hits the listener over the head with its startling affective mixtures. And although Braudel does not mention the Magdalene specifically in this quotation, he refers to "a means of arguing from the visions and ecstasies of saints". He suggests Moslem Sufism as a possible source of such practices,[12] though the great model for artists of Frescobaldi's time is Saint Teresa of Avila, who lauded Mary Magdalene as a model.

Quite possibly the descendent of *conversos*, Saint Teresa and her experiences of Divine Union ignited the imaginations of Counter-Reformation theologians seeking ways of holding on to what remained of their flock. Luther had criticized the alienating mediation of the priesthood between Christians and God; in response, this new form of Catholicism promised nothing short of fervent, one-to-one contact between the faithful and Christ. Moreover, Luther had banished women from his godhead; by contrast, the Counter-Reformation foregrounded as exemplars of spiritual power the Blessed Virgin, the holy sinner Mary Magdalene, along with that cluster of Spanish mystics. As cults dedicated to these women spread across Catholic Europe, composers produced hundreds of devotional pieces designed to suture performer and/or listener into these overheated subject positions. A Milanese nun, Chiara Margarita Cozzalani, even wrote duos that celebrate feeding on the wounds of Christ, greedily lapping the milk from the Virgin's breasts, the ecstatic union of Mary Magdalene with her Beloved.[13]

The Counter-Reformation was not alone in exploiting such sensationalistic topics at this time. Lutheran pietists also indulged freely in violent and erotic imagery, though they usually couched their meditations in scripture-sanctioned sources: the *Song of Songs* or the conjugal terrain made available by the metaphor of the church as the bride of Christ. A strain of ecstatic Judaism at the time similarly explored ways of stimulating spiritual immediacy.[14] But of these, only the Counter-Reformation (Braudel's Baroque) allowed itself to make use of the whole gamut of artistic forms: sculpture, painting, architecture, theater, verse, and music. A handful of Jews forcibly baptized in Spain, drawing on sedimented memories inherited from Sufism and elsewhere, incited

[11] Ibid., 832.

[12] Ibid., 761.

[13] See Robert L. Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and Their Music in Early Modern Milan* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[14] See Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn, eds., *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 1996); and Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

Fig. 1: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Maddalena in Ecstasy*, 1606, oil on canvas, collezione Croce.

a revolution in spirituality that transformed religious practices and their associated aesthetic expression across all of Europe: the stones that had been cast aside became the cornerstone. And Frescobaldi's *Maddalena alla croce* sits squarely in the middle of this phenomenon.

I want to examine Frescobaldi's music in greater detail. I have circumscribed the cultural universe within which such texts made sense, but granting a composer license to explore erotic imagery in no way determines choice of pitches or gestures. As I mentioned before, Frescobaldi developed his craft with the avant-garde composers at Ferrara, and he extended their experiments with chromatic harmonies and radical discontinuities in both his vocal and instrumental music. Like Gesualdo, who also honed his skills at Ferrara, Frescobaldi churned out pieces that often seem to us today little more than conundrums. In an attempt at dissuading me from taking this music seriously 'as music', one of my teachers told me: "It didn't matter to them where they started or ended or where they cadenced. They just worked through their texts and stopped".

Frescobaldi's sonnet lasts for a mere 47 measures, but in the course of that very short duration he passes through at least 11 implied keys. By contrast, the much longer pieces by Bach typically move through only three or four. As in his toccatas, Frescobaldi creates here a febrile quality that leaps nervously with no more warning than a mere leading tone pointing the way. As often as not, the tonic resolution indicated by that leading tone fails to materialize. Still the powerful syntactical implications of the leading tone preparing to close on its tonic provides an adequate guidepost, however erratic its treatment in context. Without dispute, *Maddalena alla croce* refuses to conform to a pre-set model of coherence – it startles modal expectations as much as it does tonal. But it does not make its moves at random.[15]

[15] My analysis relies on sixteenth-century theorists such as Gioseffo Zarlino, as reworked and distorted through Mannerism. See my *Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004). I deal with both the sacred erotic and seventeenth-century musical grammar in greater detail in *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, forthcoming).

A musician accustomed to tonal semiotics is likely to find perplexing the fact that the piece seems to open in A major and end in A minor. But the key signature, which sports neither flats nor sharps, does not confirm A major, nor does Frescobaldi indicate a raised mediant under the first bass sonority. If the continuo begins by striking a minor triad, then the ascent of the voice to C# for the word "croce" sounds suitably excruciating: not the complacent arrival on an already granted major mediant, the C# should sound like a C-natural wrenched up out of its proper position. Within the gestural vocabulary of this piece, in other words, the music of the first quatrain does not truly qualify as major; it presents an intensely spiky terrain (call it, perhaps, a severely wracked Aeolian) in which vocal lines and harmonic patterns strain upward past their normal bounds toward something that remains beyond their grasp.

The opening melody, the text of which describes the agony of Christ as he hangs on the cross, climbs over the continuo A with increasing tension

through to C# – a leading tone that makes its way to D only after a gasp and an aggressive leap to F# in the bass. From there, the voice presses up to D#, which ought to resolve onward to E. Instead, the arching trajectory breaks off with an angular dissonance on "languiva". Similar laboured ascents and melodic defeats occur repeatedly over the course of the sonnet, even when only the neutral narrator speaks. What starts out as an image of Christ's suffering becomes the pattern for Mary's attempts at reaching up to her Lord – futile attempts that always result in her falling back on herself.

On a kinetic level, Frescobaldi offers the phenomenological experience of heaving forward and collapsing inward, simulating a body in the throes of pain, passion, and (potentially) ecstasy. We can hear, perhaps even 'feel', the Magdalene's acute yearning, her desperate stabs at forcing a transcendence that all this striving fails to bring about. And although Frescobaldi continues to set the poetic text with careful attention to declamation, he chooses to subsume the second quatrain – with its fetishized description of Mary's tears and hair – musically into his larger allegory. For instead of stopping off to indulge in its particular images, the music keeps pursuing the same hapless pattern of arching up and falling back, though cycling down through increasingly lower pitch levels, as though losing energy. These iterations become paler and paler facsimiles of the model Mary wants to emulate.

When Mary begins to speak in the first terzet, she is in a dark G minor, far removed from the brilliance of the initial terrain. If the opening had pushed upward through all those spiky leading tones to embrace a distended tritone, the Magdalene here finds herself confined to the crabbed interval of an abject diminished fourth. More to the point for this piece, her speech (and, by extension, her consciousness) is crippled with Bb and Eb, whereas a cadence on A, which has stood as her object of desire, would require B-natural and a fulfilled ascent to E-natural. None of her effort during the first sections succeeded in catapulting her into the understanding she sought; now her vision seems permanently obscured. A pessimistic gloom settles, making the A realm once nearly within her grasp seem thoroughly impossible. She maintains her struggle, even echoing in m. 25 the frustrated, broken-off leading tone of the opening gesture and almost arriving at A in her half cadence in m. 28 on "partita". But despite these near-successes, she only spirals down even further – if the sonnet began far to the sharp side, it now sinks just as far to the flat side. Eventually, the Ab in m. 30 obstructs her access altogether and locks her in the dark night of the soul for the first presentation of "viver poss'io?". Only with great tenacity does she repeat this phrase, managing to wrench herself back up only as far as G minor and the defeated outlook with which she started her terzet.

But a distant light suddenly glimmers at the outset of the final terzet as Mary begins to figure out the solution. If her own personal efforts gained her nothing, she now recalls that her spiritual unity with Christ already guarantees her salvation. For the first time, her bass line in m. 35 takes on a linear directionality, and she ascends by step, her melody reconquering first A-natural, then pressing on to B-natural for "Ho teco" in m. 37. With this realization, she pauses for an intimate parenthetical address to Jesus himself, and as her level of mystical insight comes to equal his divine knowledge, she respells the B-natural that had previously alienated her from Christ's key as A#, leading tone to B as an implied tonic, producing a wildly dislocating F#-major triad. For a still, strangely timeless moment, we hover suspended there with Mary in rapture. And having attained that key to enlightenment, she can freely enact a strong affirmative cadence on A, the realm initially identified with Christ. In m. 42, she achieves the ascent up to E – the withheld goal of the initial melodic vector that had broken off so precipitously – with no difficulty whatsoever. When she repeats this line of text, she traces without obstruction the entire octave, from the depth of her low E all the way up to high E and thence to the final cadence marked so intensely with pain (note the diminished fourth) and pleasure. She now inhabits the world from which she had seemed hopelessly exiled. If before she saw through a glass darkly, now she clasps her Savior face to face.

I referred in my discussion to Mary's nadir of despair in her first terzet as her "dark night of the soul" – the title, of course, of the celebrated testimonial by Saint John of the Cross – and I have just described the F#-major disruption as rapture. I want to return now to the Spanish saints who provided the impetus for artists like Frescobaldi. As easy as it might have been for Frescobaldi simply to grab onto the musical vocabulary developed in madrigals and opera for simulations of the erotic, he apparently chose (as did Crashaw and Bernini) to go back to the mystical sources themselves for inspiration. For the phenomenology of Divine Love, despite all its obvious resemblances, differs significantly from that of carnal love.

Saint Teresa often apologizes for the clumsiness of language as a medium for communicating her experiences for the benefit of others, especially as she seeks to distinguish among several different varieties of mystical transport. She problematizes her own metaphors, switching from one to another in an attempt at getting close to the ineffable events she strives so fervently to convey in writing. But her verbal constructions, however inadequate, circulated widely throughout the Catholic Mediterranean and even as far as England, serving to instruct those who would follow in her footsteps. It is safe to say that Frescobaldi's target audiences in Florence or Rome would have known key passages from Saint Teresa's writings,

and he strove to match these very famous images with musical metaphors that grant us the illusion of actually experiencing these ecstasies first hand.

With respect to the radical contrast between the harsh brightness of Frescobaldi's opening and the darkness into which the Magdalene finds herself at the beginning of her terzet, John of the Cross explains:

> [W]hen [mystics] believe that the sun of Divine favor is shining most brightly upon them, God turns all this light of theirs into darkness, and shuts against them the door and the source of the sweet spiritual water which they were tasting in God whensoever and for as long as they desired. And thus He leaves them so completely in the dark that they know not whither to go with their sensible imagination and meditation.[16]

But (he explains), this dark night of the soul is necessary for eventual transcendence:

> The strait gate is this night of sense, and the soul detaches itself from sense and strips itself thereof that it may enter by this gate, and establishes itself in faith, which is a stranger to all sense, so that afterwards it may journey by the narrow way, which is the other night – that of the spirit – and this the soul afterwards enters in order to journey to God in pure faith, which is the means whereby the soul is united to God.[17]

Translating back to Frescobaldi's setting, without that alienated passage through G minor and even F minor, Mary could not have found the means of merging with Jesus.

Which returns us to that mysterious F#-major chord. Saint Teresa explains with respect to the Prayer of Quiet:

> This is a supernatural state, and, however hard we try, we cannot reach it for ourselves; for it is a state in which the soul enters into peace, or, rather, in which the Lord gives it peace through His presence. In this state, all the faculties are stilled. The soul, in a way which has nothing to do with the outward senses, realizes that it is now very close to its God, and that, if it were but a little closer, it would become one with Him through union …. It is, as it were, in a swoon, both inwardly and outwardly, so that the outward man (let me call it the 'body', and then you will understand me better) does not wish to move, but rests, like one who has almost reached the end of his journey, so that it may the better start again upon its way, with redoubled strength for its task.[18]

Saint Francis de Sales describes a similar phenomenon in these words: "But when the union of the soul with God is most especially strict and close, it is called by theologians inhesion or adhesion, because by it the soul is caught up, fastened, glued and affixed to the divine majesty, so that she cannot easily loose or draw herself back again".[19] An extraordinary description of the effect of that F#-major chord! With respect to rapture, Teresa writes: "Before you can be warned by a thought or help yourself in

[16] Saint John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. by E. Allison Pears (New York: Image Books, 1990), 62.

[17] Ibid., 75.

[18] Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1999), 127.

[19] Saint Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2009), 257.

Fig. 2: Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, 1647-52, marble, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome.

[20] Saint Teresa, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, trans. by J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1957), 136.

any way, it comes as a quick and violent shock; you see and feel this cloud, or this powerful eagle rising and bearing you up on its wings".[20]

The modern listener is likely to recognize the concluding cadential patterns as patterns of requited desire without too much difficulty. But Mary's real breakthrough occurs with that F#-major chord on "mio Dio", which suddenly and without warning lifts us out of the linear context for a moment of suspended animation – what we might call an out-of-body experience: a glimpse of timeless rapture. The syntax of this move would have baffled the seventeenth-century music theorist as much as it does us, yet it is neither arbitrary nor merely a momentary response to an image in the text. Over the course of the entire piece, Frescobaldi has carefully prepared this effect of seeing through to some mystical truth by means of this irrational hinge. Just as John of the Cross offers a causal justification for God's plunging the believer into the dark night of the soul for the sake of unity, so here the very locus of Mary's alienated doubt becomes her key to redemption. The chord functions on one level as what we call a secondary dominant, albeit to a pitch rendered highly significant within the context of this piece. But as it suddenly materializes out of nowhere, it offers (in Braudel's words) the desperately sought-after dramatic detail that strikes and holds the attention, the active demonstration that persuades and grips the faithful. We are not supposed to understand what transpires with that F#-major triad: we are to hear it and believe. As our own present-day propagandists would say: "Shock and awe!".

My work has tended to concentrate on the music of Italy, understood as a relatively insular cultural universe. But this exercise has forced me to come to terms with the folly of observing such artificial boundaries. I had known about the connection between the *ud* and the lute, of course, and the luxury goods itemized in the sonnet's poem first made me choose *Maddalena alla croce* for my contribution to a conference on Braudel. As it turns out, however, the most technical details of the music itself require for their understanding *and for their performance* acquaintance with those mystical texts that so deeply informed the Mediterranean baroque. I have not yet mentioned the fact that Frescobaldi writes his vocal part in the soprano clef. So long as the collection remained in northern Italy, it might have been sung by one of the female divas who flourished in Florence. But when he returned to Rome, the performing privilege would have

fallen to a castrato: a cultural practice traceable to the eunuchs of Moorish Spain and an indispensable ingredient of Italian music throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

I could go on tugging at various loose ends, pursuing trails of Derridean *différance*, of Foucauldian genealogy, but I think the case is made. Few cultural artifacts lack traces of such interconnections, and we historians ignore them to our peril. For our cultural baggage has evidence of its having passed through the heterodox Mediterranean stamped all over it. Yes, someone else packed our suitcases. How else would we have acquired such treasures?

Maddalena alla Croce

Girolamo Frescobaldi

Fig. 3: Girolamo Frescobaldi, "Maddalena alla croce", in *Primo libro d'arie musicali per cantarsi* (Florence: Giovanni Batista Landini, 1630), 15-16, facsimile (London: Travis & Emery, 2009), © Susan McClary.

Susan McClary

La Maddalena di Frescobaldi e le rotte del Mediterraneo[*]

[1] Fernand Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II*, trad. di Carlo Pischedda (Torino: Einaudi, 2002).

Fernand Braudel scrisse la sua opera magistrale *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II* durante la Seconda guerra mondiale. Un'impresa formidabile: nella migliore delle ipotesi il lettore si ritiene soddisfatto se riesce ad aprirsi anche solo un varco in questo sterminato lavoro.[1] Ma, superato l'interrogativo iniziale "Come avrà fatto?", diventa chiaro che Braudel 'non poteva non farlo': era il suo modo di immaginare un mondo che potesse riconoscere una storia comune e le sue profonde interconnessioni. Leggere Braudel oggi, in un'epoca in cui le organizzazioni internazionali nate dopo la guerra a garanzia della cooperazione minacciano, ancora una volta, di spaccarsi sulle solite, vecchie linee di faglia – le continue lacerazioni nei Balcani costantemente ricucite, gli antagonismi tra Cristianità e Islam, il problema di assicurare una patria agli ebrei troppe volte esiliati, la Spagna con le sue conquiste e riconquiste, la destabilizzante imprevedibilità economica delle Americhe – significa essere colpiti dalla sua visione delle cose e da una sensazione di opportunità mancate.

Nel dopoguerra i musicologi non prestarono molta attenzione a Braudel. La musicologia americana, disciplina di matrice tedesca che aveva a lungo privilegiato il repertorio tedesco, cercava di rimanere aggrappata al proprio canone, pur essendo in dissidio con le proprie origini. La maggior parte degli storici della musica si concentrava su ricerche che evitavano qualsiasi questione ideologica potenzialmente spinosa. Tra i grandi risultati dei decenni successivi alla guerra ci furono la produzione di edizioni critiche e inventari di archivi, la datazione scientifica di spartiti autografi e lo sviluppo di metodi analitici obiettivi che escludevano tutto ciò che era al di fuori della 'musica in sé'. Come ha sostenuto Joseph Kerman nel suo *Contemplating Music* – libro teso a spiegare l'orientamento positivistico della disciplina e la conseguente stagnazione intellettuale – tali imprese presumevano, in partenza, la grandezza dei loro oggetti di studio, ovviando così alla necessità di porre continuamente la questione del valore.[2]

[2] Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).

La cosiddetta Nuova Musicologia, che prese il via dall'analisi di Kerman, è stata spesso accusata di essere una reazione da parte di coloro che volevano imporre il loro interesse per i soggetti femminili o *queer,* o della musica pop, su un canone mai contestato in precedenza. Va segnalato, comunque, che i confini tracciati da questo canone escludevano anche la musica colta dell'Europa dell'Est, di Inghilterra, Francia, Spagna e Americhe. Solo pochi studiosi e per lo più marginalizzati – primo fra tutti il mio collega Robert Stevenson, Professore Emerito presso l'Università della

California, Los Angeles (UCLA) – si sono presi la briga di esaminare la musica prodotta dalla Spagna del Secolo d'oro e dalle colonie del Nuovo Mondo di Filippo II e organizzano piccoli incontri serali per gli appassionati a margine dei congressi della American Musicological Society, mentre le sessioni dedicate ai grandi Maestri e agli argomenti alla moda raccolgono uditori così vasti da riempire interi saloni da ballo.[3] Le questioni inerenti la musica sono forse cambiate, ma non abbastanza da suscitare interesse per il mondo iberico.

E qui devo confessare anch'io le mie responsabilità: se si esclude un recente saggio sulla ciaccona – argomento che mi ha spinto a riconoscere i meriti sia della Spagna che delle colonie per poi tornare al rifugio sicuro di Venezia, Versailles e Johann Sebastian Bach – ho trascurato il Mediterraneo di Braudel quanto il più ottuso dei teorici della musica.[4] Forse non sono ancora pronta per un debutto da ispanista, anche se negli ultimi due anni ho imparato lo spagnolo abbastanza bene da poter leggere qualche romanzo o fare le vacanze sulla costa della Catalogna. E inoltre, le incisioni superbamente sensuali dell'Hesperion XX Ensemble di Jordi Savall mi seducono sempre più, trascinandomi verso quei repertori insoliti.

Il mio punto di partenza è, dunque, la provocatoria (e, come al solito, magistralmente formulata) affermazione di Braudel riguardante le influenze reciproche:

> Per un bagaglio riconosciuto, mille ci sfuggono; mancano indirizzi ed etichette, talora il contenuto, talaltra l'imballaggio …. Immagineremo che il misticismo spagnuolo del secolo XVI sia derivato dal sufismo musulmano, attraverso legami ipotetici o attraverso il confuso pensiero di Raimondo Lullo? Diremo che la rima in Occidente derivò da poeti musulmani di Spagna o che le *chansons de geste* (cosa del resto probabile) abbiano derivato molti elementi dall'Islam? Diffidiamo di coloro che riconoscono troppo bene i bagagli (per esempio, i bagagli arabi dei trovatori, in Francia), o di coloro che per reazione negano tutti gl'influssi d'una civiltà su un'altra, mentre in Mediterraneo si scambia ogni cosa: gli uomini, i pensieri, le arti di vivere, le credenze, i modi di amare.[5]

Negli aeroporti, oggi, ci viene chiesto di confermare che nessuno sconosciuto abbia interferito col nostro bagaglio; dopo gli attentati dell'11 settembre in questa domanda risuona, inevitabilmente, l'ansia che un oggetto di origine 'araba' possa essersi infilato in valigia. Ma, come ha spiegato Marìa Rosa Menocal, il sospetto di un'intromissione araba nel nostro bagaglio culturale non è iniziata con l'11 settembre né con la Seconda Guerra Mondiale di Braudel: è infatti già presente nel tentativo trecentesco di Petrarca di tracciare una linea di discendenza diretta che dalle culture dell'antichità greca e romana giunge fino alla poesia in volgare dei suoi tempi.[6] Se Braudel ha avuto qualche difficoltà a riconoscere i "bagagli arabi dei trovatori in Francia", Menocal fornisce la prova inequivocabile che la lirica d'amore dello stesso Petrarca discende delle corti moresche.

[3] In aggiunta alla sterminata bibliografia di Robert Stevenson, cfr. Louise K. Stein, *Songs of Mortals, Dialogues of the Gods: Music and Theatre in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). La mia collega Elisabeth Le Guin al momento si occupa di *tonadilla*, un genere di teatro musicale molto popolare a Madrid nel diciottesimo secolo.

[4] Si veda il mio "Cycles of Repetition: Chacona, Ciaccona, Chaconne, and THE Chaconne", in Lorna Clymer, ed., *Ritual, Routine, and Regime: Institutions of Repetition*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 21-45.

[5] Fernand Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo*, 804-805.

[6] Marìa Rosa Menocal, *Shard of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 1-54.

Cosa che il poeta fiorentino sicuramente sospettava: da qui il tono apologetico della sua ricostruzione genealogica. Petrarca si è dato infatti un gran da fare per alterare tutte le etichette d'identificazione del bagaglio culturale che aveva ereditato. Il Rinascimento italiano, che è al centro della narrativa della storia culturale che noi perpetuiamo, aveva tentato fin dall'inizio di negare il suo debito con l'alterità razziale che aveva non soltanto abitato parte dell'Europa occidentale, influenzando l'ascesa della poesia lirica in tutto il continente, ma aveva anche preservato gli stessi testi greci su cui Petrarca intendeva costruire il suo edificio culturale.

Mi concentrerò ora sull'analisi di un sonetto spirituale, *Maddalena alla croce*, pubblicato a Firenze nel 1630 da Girolamo Frescobaldi (di cui includo lo spartito completo alla fine del saggio).[7] Propongo di eseguire una lettura braudeliana di questo testo così denso, che lo collochi al punto di confluenza delle molteplici rotte commerciali del Mediterraneo, attraverso le numerose etichette d'identificazione a lungo ignorate ma ancora abbastanza leggibili.

La mia prima prova è lo strumento che Frescobaldi designa per l'accompagnamento di questa composizione: la tiorba o liuto basso, che deriva dall'arabo *ud* (da cui 'liuto'). Si ha notizia dei primi suonatori di *ud* che si recarono alle corti dell'Andalusia già nel nono secolo, quando lo strumento mise velocemente radici in questo nuovo contesto. Esistono dipinti del tredicesimo secolo che raffigurano cristiani spagnoli che lo suonano, e nel quattordicesimo secolo il liuto si era diffuso in tutta l'Europa settentrionale. I liutai più celebri formarono delle corporazioni in Germania, sebbene molti dovettero fuggire durante la Rivolta dei contadini del 1525 e fondarono nuove botteghe a Venezia, dove riuscivano a trovare legni esotici e musicisti provenienti dalla Turchia e non solo; tutto ciò comportò ulteriori perfezionamenti. Le prime apparizioni del modello più grande, il liuto basso, risalgono alle feste fiorentine dei Medici dell'ultimo ventennio del sedicesimo secolo, che figurano in modo rilevante nella storia degli esordi della monodia e dell'opera. In sintesi, per ripercorrere la storia di tale strumento musicale è necessaria una versione concentrata della mappa di Braudel: contatti plurimi con il mondo arabo, diffusione nell'Europa meridionale attraverso le corti aristocratiche, migrazione transalpina, colonie di rifugiati raggruppati in una Venezia cosmopolita, l'ostentazione del potere da parte dei Medici che stavano formando alleanze tra la loro famiglia di banchieri e i reali di Francia.

Veniamo ora al testo poetico: un sonetto (e ricordo l'impatto delle rime arabe sulle *formes fixes* dei trovatori!) che intende rappresentare Maria Maddalena accanto alla croce. Nella seconda quartina, il poeta rende i segni del dolore di Maria con un tessuto di immagini ispirate a Marino, ma declinate in modo particolare: egli paragona le sue trecce d'oro scompigliate ai metalli preziosi importati attraverso l'Atlantico, le sue lacrime alle perle

trasportate dall'India. Proprio come le fastose cappelle laterali della cattedrale costruita a Granada dai Re Cattolicissimi in seguito alle riuscite epurazioni etniche della Penisola iberica e a celebrazione delle enormi quantità di oro e argento che si riversavano dalle colonie, questa descrizione trasforma Maria in un'icona che promuove, quasi involontariamente, la disponibilità di beni di lusso trasportati con le navi sia dall'Oriente che dall'Occidente; se il nostro poeta avesse menzionato la seta, avremmo dovuto riconoscere anche l'influenza delle carovane che raggiungevano l'Estremo Oriente. Una versione più attuale paragonerebbe gli occhi neri di Maria al colore dei pozzi di petrolio nel deserto iracheno.

> Al piè della gran croce, in cui languiva
> Vicino a morte il buon Giesù spirante,
> Scapigliata così pianger s'udiva
> La sua fedele addolorata amante;
>
> E dell'umor che da begli occhi usciva,
> E dell'or della chioma ondosa, errante,
> Non mandò mai, da che la vita è viva,
> Perle ed oro più bel l'India ò l'Atlante;
>
> "Come far," dicea, "lassa, o Signor mio,
> Puoi senza me quest' ultima partita?
> Come, morendo tu, viver poss' io?
>
> Che se morir pur vuoi, l'anima unita
> Ho teco (il sai, mio Redentor, mio Dio),
> Però teco aver deggio e morte, e vita."

Non tenterò di presentare lo stile musicale di Frescobaldi come qualcosa di diverso dalla confluenza tra una pratica armonica manieristica acquisita durante l'apprendistato alla corte di Ferrara – luogo in cui maggiormente si concentrava la sperimentazione musicale alla fine del sedicesimo secolo – e la monodia drammatica che aveva avuto un successo travolgente nel mondo sin dal debutto a Firenze quarant'anni prima. Gli effetti sonori prodotti dalla nuova modalità derivano dall'innovatività del madrigale italiano senza altre influenze lampanti; in altre parole, una classificazione basata su elementi puramente musicali mostra quanto il sonetto di Frescobaldi sia saldamente e indiscutibilmente radicato in Italia.

Tuttavia, l'orientamento teologico del sonetto e la sua risonanza in Frescobaldi tradiscono un'influenza molto più profonda dell'intero Mediterraneo, influenza che non si limita semplicemente alla scelta della tiorba o al riferimento casuale all'oro e alle perle. L'erotismo esplicito di questo breve testo scandalizza anche il pubblico odierno che lo ascolta per la prima volta: vediamo Maria Maddalena che, nel luogo più sacro del Cristianesimo (la crocifissione) mette in atto una fantasia di orgasmo

simultaneo con il Cristo morente. La scena di Frescobaldi si conclude con un brivido spasmodico; anche coloro che non conoscono la convenzione rinascimentale dell'allusione alla 'piccola morte', possono però comprenderne il significato. Sia la poesia lapidaria e tempestata di gemme che l'intreccio di elementi religiosi e sessuali ricordano la *Salomé* di Oscar Wilde, anche se il valore sacrilego è molto più alto. Quando Madonna (la pop-star) cercò di ricreare una sceneggiatura simile per la canzone "Like a Prayer", la Pepsi ritirò dalla circolazione la sua pubblicità da un milione di dollari nel giro di poche ore; i nostri parametri di riferimento relegano infatti sacralità e sessualità ai poli opposti dell'esperienza umana.

Tuttavia, chiunque abbia un po' di familiarità con la cultura del diciassettesimo secolo avrà notato spesso quest'unione bizzarra, un'unione che si manifesta nel sensazionalismo di Richard Crashaw, nel sadomasochismo dei sonetti sacri di John Donne, nella scultura estatica di Gian Lorenzo Bernini, nella musica di Claudio Monteverdi e Alessandro Grandi a San Marco, nelle *symphoniae sacrae* di Heinrich Schütz che, dopo un anno trascorso a Venezia, portò a Dresda questa moda contagiosa.[8] Fu a causa di queste eccezionali violazioni del gusto che i razionalisti del diciottesimo secolo marcarono i loro predecessori con il termine peggiorativo 'barocco'. Ormai da molto tempo, però, 'barocco' si è reificato come termine tecnico: nella storia della musica si riferisce non solo all'inizio del diciassettesimo secolo ma abbraccia anche la prima metà del diciottesimo, fino alla morte di Georg Friedrich Handel – collega di Alexander Pope, di cui talvolta propose i testi agnostici nei suoi oratori. Anzi, dal momento che Handel e Bach sono di gran lunga i compositori 'barocchi' più conosciuti, la maggior parte dei musicisti presume che il termine indichi il Settecento.

In contrasto con questo dubbio uso della parola 'barocco' come innocua e insignificante etichetta temporale, Braudel sconvolge i lettori ricordando con precisione il contesto in cui si sviluppò la discussa tendenza artistica:

> [I]l 'barocco' designa la civiltà del Mediterraneo cristiano: ovunque è visibile il barocco …. [Esso] s'appoggia simultaneamente all'enorme forza dell'Impero spirituale di Roma, all'enorme forza temporale dell'Impero spagnuolo. Si tratta evidentemente di una luce nuova ….[9]

Braudel identifica questa modalità di espressione culturale con la combattiva riaffermazione del Cattolicesimo di fronte ai suoi potenziali riformatori e con i programmi militanti dei Gesuiti – anzi, suggerisce di sostituire il termine 'barocco' con l'etichetta 'gesuitica' per indicare l'arte in questione.[10] E lungi dal tentare di giustificarne gli eccessi, ne spiega gli obiettivi:

> Si tratta, in realtà di un'arte che appartiene alla propaganda. … L'arte è un mezzo potente per combattere e istruire. Un mezzo per affermare, mediante la

[8] Per ulteriori informazioni su questo fenomeno, si veda Michel de Certeau, *Fabula mistica. La spiritualità religiosa tra XVI e XVII secolo*, trad. di R. Albertini (Milano: Il Mulino, 1987); Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Deborah Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

[9] Fernand Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi del Mediterraneo*, 876.

[10] Ibid., 880.

potenza dell'immagine, la santità immacolata della madre di Dio, il valore efficace dei santi, la realtà possente dell'eucarestia, il primato di San Pietro, un mezzo per trarre argomento dalle visioni e dalle estasi dei santi. Pazientemente esaminati, pazientemente insegnati, temi iconografici identici circolano così in tutta l'Europa. Se il Barocco forza la nota, se ha il gusto della morte, della sofferenza, dei martiri presentati con un realismo senza debolezze, se sembra abbandonarsi al pessimismo, al *desengaño* spagnuolo del secolo XVII, ciò dipende dal fatto che esso vuole e deve convincere, che ricerca il particolare drammatico che colpisce e fa effetto. È un'arte ad uso dei fedeli, che si vuol convincere e trascinare, ai quali si vuol insegnare con l'azione una sorta di verismo, l'esattezza di tanti dogmi contestati: quello del Purgatorio o dell'Immacolata Concezione. Arte teatrale e consapevolmente teatrale ….[11]

[11] Ibid., 881-882.

Consentitemi ora di collegare queste riflessioni a Frescobaldi. Alla teatralità del sonetto *Maddalena alla croce* non si può assolutamente sfuggire (malgrado la brevità e il modesto organico): colpisce e stordisce l'ascoltatore con le sue sorprendenti commistioni. E sebbene in questa citazione Braudel non faccia specificamente cenno alla Maddalena, fa riferimento a "un mezzo per trarre argomento dalle visioni e dalle estasi dei santi". Egli suggerisce il sufismo musulmano come possibile fonte di tali pratiche, nonostante il grande esempio per gli artisti dell'epoca di Frescobaldi sia Santa Teresa d'Avila che lodava Maria Maddalena come modello.[12]

[12] Ibid., 805.

[13] Si veda Robert L. Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and Their Music in Early Modern Milan* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Probabilmente discendente dei *conversos*, Santa Teresa con le sue esperienze di unione divina risvegliò l'immaginazione dei teologi della Contro-riforma che cercavano un modo per tenersi stretto ciò che restava del loro gregge. Lutero aveva criticato l'alienante mediazione del clero tra i cristiani e Dio; come reazione, questa nuova forma di cattolicesimo prometteva niente di meno che un contatto fervido e personale tra i fedeli e Cristo. Lutero, inoltre, aveva bandito le donne dal suo mondo sacro; al contrario, la Controriforma aveva proposto come esempi di potere spirituale la Beata Vergine, la santa peccatrice Maria Maddalena e tutta la costellazione di mistiche spagnole. Man mano che i culti dedicati a queste donne si diffondevano in tutta l'Europa cattolica, i compositori producevano centinaia di musiche devozionali che si proponevano di saldare esecutore e ascoltatore in queste posizioni soggettive surriscaldate. La suora milanese Chiara Margarita Cozzalani arrivò a scrivere dei duetti in cui esorta a nutrirsi delle piaghe di Cristo, a bere avidamente il latte dei seni della Vergine e celebra l'unione estatica di Maria Maddalena con il suo Amato.[13]

Fig. 1: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Maddalena in estasi* (1606), olio su tela, collezione Croce.

[14] Si veda Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn, eds., *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 1996); e Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

[15] La mia analisi si rifà a teorici del sedicesimo secolo come Gioseffo Zarlino, che vengono rielaborati e distorti attraverso il Manierismo. Si veda il mio *Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004). In *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, in corso di pubblicazione) tratto in maggior dettaglio sia dell'erotismo sacro sia della grammatica musicale del diciassettesimo secolo.

All'epoca, la Controriforma non era la sola a sfruttare tematiche così sensazionalistiche. Anche i pietisti luterani si concedevano liberamente immagini violente ed erotiche, pur basando, in genere, le loro meditazioni su fonti legittimate dalle Sacre Scritture: il *Cantico dei Cantici* o il tema coniugale suggerito dalla metafora della chiesa come sposa di Cristo. Analogamente, una corrente di Giudaismo estatico esplorava modalità per stimolare l'immediatezza spirituale.[14] Ma fu soltanto la Controriforma (il Barocco di Braudel) che si concesse di utilizzare l'intera gamma delle forme artistiche: scultura, pittura, architettura, teatro, poesia e musica. In Spagna un piccolo gruppo di ebrei convertiti con la forza, andando ad attingere a lontani ricordi stratificati del sufismo e non solo, fomentò una rivoluzione della spiritualità che trasformò le pratiche religiose e l'espressione estetica ad esse legata in tutta Europa: delle pietre fino allora considerate di scarto diventarono le pietre angolari dei nuovi edifici. E la *Maddalena alla croce* di Frescobaldi sta proprio al cuore di questo fenomeno.

Vorrei ora esaminare in maggior dettaglio la musica di Frescobaldi. Ho circoscritto l'universo culturale da cui questi testi derivano il loro significato, ma concedere al compositore la libertà di esplorare immagini erotiche non determina, in alcun modo, la scelta delle tonalità e dei gesti. Come ho già detto, Frescobaldi ha sviluppato le sue abilità artistiche a Ferrara con i compositori all'avanguardia, ampliando i loro esperimenti con armonie cromatiche e discontinuità radicali sia nella musica vocale che strumentale. Come Gesualdo, che pure affinò le sue capacità a Ferrara, Frescobaldi ha prodotto un gran numero di brani che a noi oggi sembrano poco più che degli enigmi. Nel tentativo di dissuadermi dal prendere sul serio questa musica in quanto 'musica', uno dei miei insegnanti mi disse: "Per loro non aveva alcuna importanza l'inizio, la fine o la cadenza. Si limitavano a musicare i testi e basta".

Il sonetto di Frescobaldi è composto da appena 47 battute, ma nonostante la brevità egli riesce a passare attraverso non meno di 11 tonalità implicite, mentre i pezzi di Bach, ben più lunghi, ne presentano soltanto 3 o 4. Come nelle toccate, Frescobaldi crea qui una qualità febbrile che procede nervosamente, a salti, con la sola sensibile come guida; ma poi, il più delle volte, non riesce a risolversi secondo questa nota sensibile. Tuttavia, le potenti implicazioni sintattiche della sensibile che si approssima a concludere sulla sua tonica forniscono una valida indicazione, per quanto precaria sia la risoluzione in questo contesto. *Maddalena alla croce* rifiuta, senza alcun dubbio, di conformarsi a un modello prestabilito di coerenza – infatti sorprende ogni aspettativa sia in termini di modalità che di tonalità, senza, con ciò, muoversi a caso.[15]

Con tutta probabilità un musicista abituato alla semiotica tonale troverà sconcertante il fatto che il pezzo sembra aprirsi in La maggiore e chiudersi

in La minore; ma l'armatura di chiave, che non sfoggia alcun bemolle o diesis, non conferma il La maggiore, né Frescobaldi indica un innalzamento della mediante sotto la prima nota del basso. Se il basso continuo esordisce suonando una triade minore, l'ascesa della voce fino al Do diesis sulla parola "croce" produce il giusto effetto straziante. Non essendo il rassicurante arrivo ad una mediante maggiore già stabilita in precedenza, il Do diesis dovrebbe risuonare come un Do naturale strappato bruscamente alla sua identità naturale. In altre parole, nel vocabolario espressivo di questo brano, la musica della prima quartina non si può considerare del tutto come in maggiore e presenta un terreno alquanto spinoso (la si consideri, magari, una sorta di modo eolio dolorosamente alterato) in cui le linee vocali e gli schemi armonici si tendono verso l'alto oltre i loro limiti normali, verso qualcosa che resta al di là della loro portata.

La melodia d'apertura, il cui testo descrive l'agonia di Cristo inchiodato alla croce, sale sul La del basso continuo con una tensione crescente verso il Do diesis – nota sensibile che arriva fino al Re solo dopo un una subitanea inspirazione e uno slancio aggressivo verso il Fa diesis nel basso. Da lì la voce incalza verso il Re diesis che dovrebbe risolversi sul Mi; e invece la parabola si interrompe con una dissonanza angolare su "languiva". Nel corso del sonetto, si susseguono molte ardue ascese e disfatte melodiche come queste, anche quando a parlare è solo il narratore neutrale. Ciò che all'inizio comincia con l'immagine della sofferenza di Cristo diventa il modello per i tentativi messi in atto da Maria per raggiungere il suo Signore – tentativi vani che si concludono sempre con l'immagine di lei che ricade su se stessa.

A livello cinetico, Frescobaldi simula un corpo negli spasmi del dolore, della passione e (potenzialmente) dell'estasi, offrendo così l'esperienza fenomenologica del sollevarsi per poi ricadere su se stessa. Possiamo ascoltare, quasi 'provare', l'acuto struggimento della Maddalena, i suoi tentativi lancinanti di conquistare una trascendenza che, nonostante i suoi sforzi, le sfugge. E sebbene Frescobaldi continui a impostare il testo poetico su una particolare attenzione alla declamazione, sceglie di includere, a livello musicale, la seconda quartina – con la descrizione feticistica delle lacrime e dei capelli di Maria – in una più ampia allegoria. Infatti, invece di interrompersi per soffermarsi sulle singole immagini, la musica continua a portare avanti lo stesso sfortunato schema con inarcamenti in avanti e ricadute all'indietro, benché il movimento avvenga attraverso tonalità sempre più basse come se l'energia venisse meno. Queste ripetizioni diventano una riproduzione sempre più sbiadita del modello che Maria vuole emulare.

Quando Maria comincia a parlare nella prima terzina, è in un cupo Sol minore, molto distante dalla luminosità iniziale. Laddove l'apertura aveva spinto verso l'alto attraverso tutte quelle spigolose note sensibili per abbracciare un tritono dilatato, la Maddalena si ritrova qui costretta

all'intervallo angusto di una misera quarta diminuita. Inoltre, il suo eloquio (e, di conseguenza, la sua coscienza) risulta inceppato per la presenza di Si bemolle e Mi bemolle, mentre una cadenza in La, il suo oggetto del desiderio, richiederebbe un Si naturale e la piena ascesa verso Mi naturale. Nessuno degli sforzi che ha fatto nelle prime sezioni è riuscito a catapultarla nella condizione a cui tanto aspirava; la sua visione sembra ora definitivamente oscurata. Subentra un cupo pessimismo, che fa apparire assolutamente impossibile il dominio del La, che in precedenza sembrava quasi alla sua portata. Continua la sua battaglia, rievocando addirittura, alla battuta 25, la sensibile interrotta e frustrata del movimento di apertura, e raggiungendo quasi il La nella sua semi-cadenza su "partita" alla battuta 28. Ma, nonostante questi successi parziali, continua a precipitare nella sua caduta a spirale: il sonetto che era cominciato nettamente dalla parte dei diesis, ora piomba altrettanto marcatamente dalla parte dei bemolle. Alla fine il La bemolle della battuta 30 le ostruisce il passaggio e la imprigiona nella notte oscura dell'anima per la prima presentazione di "viver poss'io?". Solo con grande tenacia riesce a ripetere questa frase, riuscendo a risollevarsi con una contorsione, ma solo fino al Sol minore e alla prospettiva di sconfitta con cui aveva cominciato la terzina.

Tuttavia, una luce lontana si fa strada all'inizio della terzina finale, quando Maria comincia a intravedere una soluzione. Se i suoi sforzi personali non sono serviti a nulla, ricorda ora che la sua unione spirituale con Cristo le garantisce già la salvezza. Per la prima volta la linea melodica del basso nella battuta 35 assume una direzionalità lineare e la melodia di Maria sale gradualmente, riconquistando prima un La naturale per poi spingersi a un Si naturale nella battuta 37 "Ho teco". Con questa illuminazione, si ferma per rivolgersi allo stesso Gesù in modo più intimo e, mentre il livello della sua visione mistica raggiunge la conoscenza divina di Cristo, reitera il Si naturale che l'aveva alienata dalla tonalità di Cristo intesa come La diesis, nota sensibile che porta alla tonalità di Si come tonica implicita, producendo una triade di Fa diesis maggiore estremamente destabilizzante. Rimaniamo sospesi lì in estasi con Maria, per un momento infinito di strana quiete. E avendo raggiunto quella chiave per l'illuminazione, riesce liberamente a realizzare una forte cadenza affermativa in La, la tonalità inizialmente identificata con Cristo. Nella battuta 42, senza nessuna difficoltà sale fino al Mi – obiettivo negato del vettore melodico iniziale che si era interrotto con tanta precipitazione. Quando ripete questo verso del testo, traccia senza alcun impedimento l'intera ottava, partendo dalla profondità di un Mi basso salendo fino ad arrivare a un Mi alto e da lì alla cadenza finale così fortemente segnata dal dolore (si noti la quarta diminuita) e dal piacere. Maria si trova ora in quel mondo da cui sembrava esser stata esiliata per sempre. Se prima lo vedeva confusamente come in uno specchio, ora stringe il suo Salvatore guardandolo negli occhi.

Ho fatto riferimento all'abisso di disperazione di Maria nella prima terzina come alla "notte oscura dell'anima" – titolo ovviamente della celebre testimonianza di San Giovanni della Croce – e ho appena descritto la rottura in Fa diesis maggiore come un rapimento estatico. Voglio ora tornare alle sante spagnole che erano l'ispirazione di artisti come Frescobaldi. Sarebbe stato semplice per quest'ultimo attingere dal lessico musicale sviluppato nei madrigali e nell'opera lirica per simulare l'erotismo, eppure egli sceglie (come già Crashaw e Bernini) di trarre ispirazione direttamente dalle fonti mistiche. Infatti, la fenomenologia dell'amore divino, nonostante le ovvie somiglianze, si differenzia dall'amore carnale in modo significativo.

Santa Teresa spesso si scusa perché la lingua è un mezzo inadatto a comunicare agli altri le sue esperienze, soprattutto quando tenta di distinguere fra tante tipologie diverse di trasporto mistico. Problematizza le sue stesse metafore, passando dall'una all'altra nel tentativo di avvicinarsi agli eventi indicibili che, con tanto fervore, cerca di trasmettere attraverso la scrittura. Ma le sue costruzioni verbali, seppur inadeguate, hanno avuto ampia circolazione in tutto il Mediterraneo cattolico spingendosi fino all'Inghilterra, e sono servite a istruire coloro che volevano seguire le sue orme. Si può dire con sicurezza che il pubblico a cui Frescobaldi si rivolgeva a Firenze o Roma conosceva i passi chiave degli scritti di Santa Teresa e che egli si sforzava di trovare delle metafore musicali all'altezza di quelle famosissime immagini per darci l'illusione di sperimentare davvero l'estasi in prima persona.

Riguardo al netto contrasto tra la luminosità abbagliante dell'apertura di Frescobaldi e l'oscurità in cui si trova Maddalena all'inizio della terzina, Giovanni della Croce spiega:

> [Q]uando [le mistiche] ritengono che il sole del favore divino risplenda su di loro con più intensità, Dio tramuta tutta questa luce in oscurità e chiude loro la porta e la fonte della dolce acqua spirituale che in Dio assaporavano tutte le volte che lo desideravano. Dunque Egli le abbandona completamente nell'oscurità tanto che, pur affidandosi alla meditazione e a un'assennata immaginazione, non sanno dove andare.[16]

Ma, spiega, questa notte oscura dell'anima è necessaria per una trascendenza futura:

> Questa notte della ragione è un varco stretto; l'anima si distacca dal senso spogliandosene per poter attraversarlo, e radicarsi nella fede che è estranea alla ragione, cosicché in seguito possa intraprendere il viaggio per la via stretta che è l'altra notte – la notte dello spirito – che l'anima attraversa avvicinandosi, successivamente, a Dio con fede pura, che è il mezzo attraverso cui l'anima si unisce a Lui.[17]

Tornando all'opera di Frescobaldi, senza quel passaggio alienato attraverso il Sol minore e addirittura il Fa minore, Maria non avrebbe potuto trovare il modo di fondersi con Gesù.

[16] San Giovanni della Croce, *La notte oscura* (Milano: Gribaudi, 1993), 53.

[17] Ibid., 75.

Ciò ci riporta a quel misterioso accordo di Fa diesis maggiore. Riferendosi all'"orazione di quiete", Santa Teresa spiega:

> Questa è già cosa soprannaturale, e che non potiamo noi con le nostre forze conseguire per diligenza …: perché è un mettersi l'anima in pace, o per dir meglio mettervela il Signore con la sua presenza, … finché tutte le potenze si quietano. Intende l'anima per una maniera molto differente dal modo d'intendere co' sensi esteriori, che già si trova appresso al suo Dio, e che con un pocchetto più arriverebbe a trasformarsi in lui per union d'amore. … E come uno svenimento interiore, e esteriore, che non vorrebbe quest'uomo esteriore (cioè il corpo, perché meglio m'intendiate) dico, non si vorrebbe punto muovere, ma a guida di chi è quasi arrivato al fin del cammino, si riposa, per poter meglio proseguire il viaggio; attesoche quivi gli si raddoppiano le forze a quest'effetto.[18]

San Francesco di Sales descrive un fenomeno simile come segue: "[Q]uando l'unione dell'anima con Dio è in grado altissimo stretta e forte, i teologi la chiamano inesione o adesione, perché per mezzo di essa l'anima resta presa, attaccata, agglutinata, fissata alla Maestà divina in tal modo che le è difficile potersene sciogliere o staccare".[19] Una descrizione straordinaria dell'effetto di quell'accordo di Fa diesis maggiore! Riguardo all'estasi, Teresa scrive: "Prima di esser messi in guardia da un pensiero o di fare qualsiasi cosa, arriva come uno colpo rapido e violento; si vede e si sente una nuvola o un'aquila potente che ci solleva e ci sorregge con le sue ali".[20]

L'ascoltatore moderno probabilmente riconosce, senza eccessive difficoltà, gli schemi delle cadenze conclusive come schemi di un desiderio esaudito; ma la vera scoperta di Maria avviene con quell'accordo di Fa diesis maggiore su "mio Dio", che senza alcun preavviso ci innalza dalla linearità del contesto verso un momento di animazione sospesa – che potremmo definire un'esperienza extracorporea: uno scorcio di estasi senza tempo. La sintassi di questo movimento avrebbe confuso un teorico della musica del diciassettesimo secolo come confonde noi, e tuttavia, non si tratta di una reazione arbitraria o semplicemente momentanea a un'immagine del testo. Nel corso dell'intero brano, Frescobaldi ha accuratamente preparato questo effetto che sembra mostrare una sorta di verità mistica attraverso una torsione irrazionale. Proprio come Giovanni della Croce offre una giustificazione al fatto che Dio fa sprofondare il credente nella notte oscura dell'anima

[18] Santa Teresa d'Avila, *Opere spirituali della Santa Madre Teresa di Giesù. Cammino di perfezione* (Venezia: P. Baglioni, 1714), 206-207.

[19] San Francesco di Sales, *Il Teotimo ossia trattato dell'amore di Dio*, libro VII, cap. III, (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1966), 25.

[20] Saint Teresa, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila*, trans. by J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1957), 136. [Trad. mia, N.d.T.]

Fig. 2: Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Estasi di Santa Teresa*, 1647-52, marmo, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Roma.

perché si realizzi l'unità, qui è lo stesso dubbio alienato di Maria a diventare la chiave per la sua redenzione. L'accordo funziona, da una parte, come ciò che chiamiamo dominante secondaria, benché a una tonalità resa di grande significato nell'ambito del brano; tuttavia, siccome si materializza improvvisamente dal nulla, offre (nelle parole di Braudel) il dettaglio drammatico tanto ricercato che colpisce e mantiene l'attenzione, la dimostrazione attiva che persuade e affascina il fedele. Non dobbiamo capire ciò che traspare da quell'accordo di Fa diesis maggiore: dobbiamo soltanto ascoltarlo e credere. Come direbbe l'attuale propaganda: "Shock and awe!".[21]

Il mio lavoro si è tendenzialmente concentrato sulla musica di un'Italia ancora intesa come universo culturale relativamente chiuso, cosa che mi ha costretta a confrontarmi con la follia di rispettare confini del tutto artificiali. Certo, sapevo del legame tra *ud* e liuto, e i beni di lusso menzionati dettagliatamente nel poema del sonetto mi hanno indotto, inizialmente, a scegliere "Maddalena alla croce" come argomento di un mio intervento in un convegno su Braudel. Risulta evidente, comunque, che i dettagli più tecnici della musica stessa richiedono, per esser compresi ed ancor di più eseguiti, una conoscenza dei testi mistici che hanno ispirato il barocco mediterraneo in modo così profondo. Non ho finora menzionato il fatto che Frescobaldi scrive la parte vocale in chiave di soprano. Finché la raccolta rimase nell'Italia settentrionale, poté essere eseguita da una delle famose cantanti di cui Firenze era piena; ma quando Frescobaldi ritornò a Roma, il privilegio dell'esecuzione passò quasi certamente a un castrato: una pratica culturale che si può far risalire agli eunuchi della Spagna moresca e che fu elemento indispensabile della musica italiana in tutto il diciassettesimo e diciottesimo secolo.

Potrei continuare accennando a varie questioni irrisolte, seguendo le tracce della *différance* di Derrida, o della genealogia di Foucault, ma credo di aver illustrato il punto: sono pochi gli artefatti culturali che non presentano simili interconnessioni, e noi storici lo ignoriamo a nostro rischio e pericolo. In effetti, il nostro bagaglio culturale porta ovunque i segni di un Mediterraneo eterodosso. Dunque, sì, qualcuno ha interferito con i nostri bagagli: come avremmo fatto altrimenti ad acquisire tesori del genere?

Traduzione di **Maria Cristina Nisco**

[21] L'espressione "Shock and awe" si riferisce alla campagna militare messa in atto dall'ex-presidente degli Stati Uniti George W. Bush con strategie che prevedevano un dispiegamento massiccio di forze e mezzi tale da poter raggiungere gli obiettivi prefissati in tempi rapidissimi, colpendo, intimorendo e terrorizzando l'avversario. [N.d.T.]

Maddalena alla Croce

Girolamo Frescobaldi

Al piè del-la gran cro-ce, in cui lan-gui-va Vi-ci-no a mor-te il buon Gie-sù spi-rant-

te, Sca-pi-glia-ta co-sì pian-ger s'u-di-va La sua fe-de-le ad-do-lo-ra-ta a-man-

te; E dell' u-mor che da' be-gli oc-chi u-sci-va, E dell' or del-la chio-ma on-do-sa, er-

ran-te, Non man-dò mai, da che la vi-ta è vi-va, Per-le ed o-ro più bel l'In-dia, ò l'At-

lan-te; "Co-me far," di-ce-a, "las-sa, o Si-gnor mi-o,

Fig. 3: Girolamo Frescobaldi, "Maddalena alla croce", in *Primo libro d'arie musicali per cantarsi* (Florence: Giovanni Batista Landini, 1630), 15-16; facsimile, London: Travis & Emery, 2009, © Susan McClary.

Richard Dyer

Tales of Plagiarism and Pastiche:
The Music of *The Godfather*, *Il gattopardo*
and *The Glass Mountain*

Imitation is the foundation of all expression and performance that yet also constitutes a faultline in modern Western culture. On the one hand, it is viewed with disdain from the perspectives of individualism, expressive and autographic notions of authorship and copyright. On the other hand, the centrality of genre and branding to capitalist cultural production and the rise of identity politics and multi-culturalism emphasise the value of similarity, which, whether fully perceived or not, entails imitation. Within academic discourse, imitation's other, originality, has been resoundingly routed by critiques of romanticism and the rise of post- and post-post-modernism, yet in public intellectual life, in highbrow journalism, and in examination guidelines, the criterion of originality continues unaffected.

Two registers of this faultline are plagiarism and pastiche. They are two forms of imitation that share the characteristic of being formally very close to that which they imitate, so close as to be on occasion deliberately (plagiarism) or misleadingly (pastiche) taken actually to be that which they imitate: this is the first way in which they straddle the discursive faultline of imitation. At the same time they are near-opposites: plagiarism only works as plagiarism if it is not recognised as such, whereas pastiche has to be recognised as pastiche to work as pastiche. Yet despite this glaring difference, in practice, because of their closeness to their referent, they are also often taken for one another: that is, in given circumstances, the accusation of plagiarism is often levelled at a work pastiching another work, while pastiche is often condemned as nothing better than plagiarism. This confounding of the two is a second way in which they throw into relief the faultline of imitation.

In this essay I want to trace a number of the ways notions of plagiarism and pastiche throw up ambiguities around those of imitation and originality through an account of three interlinked cases: the films *The Godfather*, *Il gattopardo* and *The Glass Mountain* and, more particularly, the music of these films, composed by Nino Rota. All three cases illustrate the slipperiness of notions of plagiarism and pastiche, slippery by virtue of the way they are deployed in different aesthetic, economic and other contexts, slippery by virtue of their inter-connectedness. I hope to disentangle some of the meanings and connotations of the terms while demonstrating their ineluctable entanglement.

The Godfather

In 1972 the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences refused the nomination of *The Godfather* for an Oscar in the category of Best Original Dramatic Score. They argued that its composer, Nino Rota, had re-used music from an earlier film, *Fortunella* (1957), and thus that the *Godfather* score could not be deemed original. They seem not to have realised that the main theme is based on a motif already used by Rota in *Fellini-Satyricon* (1969) and Michael's on one used for the funeral at the end of *I clowns* (1970).[1]

Many, then and subsequently, would consider the music for *The Godfather* among the finest of all film scores, certainly more distinguished than the others nominated (*Images, Limelight, Napoleon and Samantha, The Poseidon Adventure, Sleuth*); bizarrely, the winner was *Limelight*, a film made twenty years earlier, whose nomination was accepted on a technicality.[2] Besides, Rota had, after all, re-used his own music, and when he did so again, in *Godfather II* (1974), he was awarded the Oscar. Yet *Godfather II* contains very much more of his music for *The Godfather* than the latter does of *Fortunella*. Nonetheless on this occasion the Academy saw no problems of unoriginality in his nomination and award. They probably did not know that two of the new elements in *Godfather II* were also recycled: the song the child Vito sings while waiting in quarantine on Ellis Island is taken from Rota's music for Luchino Visconti's 1957 stage production of Carlo Goldoni's *L'impresario delle Smirne*, and the theme for Kay from his music for the television series *Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca* (1965), hugely successful and fondly remembered in Italy but unknown outside.

In its own terms, the Academy's decision on the first *Godfather* was correct. The primary burden of 'original' in the category's designation is that the music be expressly written for the film in question. Rota's use of music from *Fortunella* for *The Godfather* was not in this sense original; it was, in the most exacting sense of the term, plagiarism. He knew he was using music he'd used before and does not appear to have made that clear to Francis Ford Coppola or Paramount. They thought they were getting new ('original') music from him. He knew they weren't, and he presumably presumed that no-one would realise because *Fortunella* was a pretty obscure film. Presenting something already heard as never heard before in circumstances where you assume you can get away with it are hallmarks of plagiarism.

It seems to have been a product of a kind of laziness. Rota was, as always, extremely busy when Coppola made a late request for a theme for the Sicily sequence. Deeming it "inutile che mi spremessi le meningi" ("a waste of time racking my brains") to come up with a new tune, Rota

[1] Mario Soldati claims that the theme was developed from the main theme of his own film *Daniele Cortis* (1947). Soldati is neither criticizing nor making a claim to prior rights on his own part. However, I am not convinced about this, even though Soldati's description of the similar feeling of the two motifs is felicitous in suggesting that they evoke a "nostalgia di una vita mai vissuta" ("nostalgia for life never lived"). See Mario Soldati, "I silenzi di un musicista", in Ermanno Comuzio and Paolo Vecchi, eds., *138 ½. I film di Nino Rota* (Reggio Emilia: Comune di Reggio Emilia, 1986), 54.

[2] Namely that it had only been shown for the first time in Los Angeles in 1972; see Mason Wiley and Damien Bona, *Inside Oscar: The Unofficial History of the Academy Awards* (New York: Ballantine, 1986), 779.

[3] Cited in Comuzio and Vecchi, eds., *138 ½*, 10.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Review, *La Notte*, 15 March 1958, quoted in Claudio G. Fava, *Alberto Sordi* (Rome: Gremese, 2003), 119.

pulled out a number of old ones and, "secondo il mio solito" ("as is my way"), ran them past a few friends to see which they thought best.[3] It is only one theme out of the whole score, about twenty minutes in a nearly three hour film, and played very differently from its previous use. In *Fortunella* it appears first as a fast march, played with the kind of reckless enthusiasm that Rota often used to suggest the circus or amateur town band; he refers to it as "una marcetta sfottente" ("a nice little send-up of a march").[4] It then goes through a number of variations, including ones which are much closer in tempo to its re-appearance in *The Godfather*. At no point though is it used, as in *The Godfather*, in an arrangement for mandolins and strings, nor played fortissimo over the images or in relation to the romantic evocation of landscape and love. Aside from the tune itself, it is really quite far musically and affectively from its appearance in *The Godfather*. This is unlike the re-use of the song from *L'impresario delle Smirne* in *Godfather II*, mentioned above, where the feeling evoked in both cases is very similar: in its earlier incarnation, it is an intensely melancholic serenade sung by a small, lonely boy in prison, just like Vito.

All of the markers and mitigations of plagiarism in the *Fortunella-Godfather* case contrast with another instance of Rota's re-use of a (different) melody in *Fortunella*. In a contemporary review, "m.m." (Morando Morandini) observed that in *Fortunella*, Rota "arriva al punto di plagiare se stesso" ("goes so far as to plagiarise himself").[5] However, unless plagiarism means here (as it often does) stale but not literal repetition of previous work, only one element of the *Fortunella* score actually comes from an earlier film and thus might on the face of it be thought of as auto-plagiarism. This is a fanfare-like motif composed for *Il bidone*. Moreover, as the latter was made only two years before (1955) and was directed by one of *Fortunella*'s scriptwriters, Federico Fellini, it is unlikely that no-one knew what Rota was up to. The theme is very little altered between the two films and in both cases is associated with rather comic conmen, the trio of swindlers in *Il bidone* and the character of Peppino (Alberto Sordi) in *Fortunella*; the bitter and in the end tragic feeling of the earlier film, carried in this theme, makes available an undertone to the characterisation in the more whimsical context of the later one. Not only did those making *Fortunella* know the theme was being re-used, but in fact the film works better if the audience pick up on it too. Declared and purposeful re-use is not plagiarism.

Compared to this, Rota's re-use of a *Fortunella* theme in *The Godfather* is indisputably, technically, plagiarism. Yet, all the same, it seems pretty innocent at the level of intention and effect. As already noted, it is musically very different, really only involving a melody, and it is only a small part of the score (confined to the Sicily sequence, about twenty minutes in a nearly three hour film). It only became plagiarism that mattered when it

started to make money. Much to Rota's surprise, Paramount chose the last minute, *Fortunella*-derived theme, for the short Sicily sequence as the 'Theme from *The Godfather*'. It was (and still is) widely used in the promotion of the film, including in the form of the hit ballad "Speak Softly Love" (words by Larry Kusik), recorded by, among many others, Johnny Mathis, Andy Williams and Al Martino, who plays the crooner Johnny Fontane in the film.[6] It thus came to be seen as the principal musical element of the film, sidelining the film's other much more pervasive and expressly written motifs and perhaps giving the Sicily sequence undue significance. Paramount thus reduced the score to a single marketable element, a tune that could be made into a song.

It is in fact rather surprising that the Academy had even heard of *Fortunella*. In Italy it had been a flop, albeit a high profile one involving as it did a notable line-up: Eduardo de Filippo, Giulietta Masina and Alberto Sordi as well as an American star, Paul Douglas, plus Fellini as one of the scriptwriters and Rota's music. Masina, Fellini and Rota were riding high from the success of *La strada* (1956), which had won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film, and the character of Nanda (nicknamed 'Fortunella') is clearly built on Gelsomina, the winsome character played by Masina in *La strada*. Rota was also now internationally known for his music for *War and Peace* (1957). None of this though could secure *Fortunella* art house success abroad any more than it had been a box office hit in Italy. The tune that Paramount had promoted to main theme status and that was under fire from the Academy was from a film most people had never even heard of. The Academy only learnt of the prior existence of the theme from a telegram, signed by "I compositori italiani di colonne sonore" (Italian film music composers). It seems probable that Dino De Laurentiis, the producer of *Fortunella*, was behind this, as he hoped to make money from the huge success of "Speak Softly Love" by claiming his rights in it, even though he had never paid Rota for the music for *Fortunella* nor even got him to sign a contract.[7] In short, plagiarism could be an issue because Paramount promoted a tune to main theme status and put words to it to make it at once a money spinner and a form of advertising, but it only really became one when De Laurentiis thought he could profit from it too. The underlying economic imperative for both Paramount and De Laurentiis was in turn wittily highlighted when in 1972 the record company Cora reissued the *Fortunella* soundtrack on LP with the by-line (in much bigger letters than the title itself) "La madrina del padrino" (The godmother of the godfather).

Rota had never particularly wanted to write the music for *The Godfather*. By 1971, with a string of successes behind him, to say nothing of a very active life as a composer and teacher, he was not interested in taking on yet more work, especially with a then little known American director,

[6] Neither Martino nor anyone else sings "Speak Softly Love" in this or the subsequent films. The song he does sing, "I Have But One Heart", is not by Rota. There is however a further thread of imitation. Martino was, like his character Johnny, a successful crooner, but Johnny has always been supposed to be based on Frank Sinatra, himself in turn a model, as singer, for Martino. Vito's help for Johnny occasions one of the most famous scenes (the horse's head) and phrases ("to make someone an offer he can't refuse") in the film. Sinatra seems never to have recorded or performed "Speak Softly Love".

[7] See Francesco Lombardi, ed., *Fra cinema e musica del novecento. Il caso Nino Rota* (Venice: Olschki, 2000), 152.

[8] See Peter Cowie, *The Godfather Book* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 63-64.

[9] Cit. in Pier Marco De Santi, *Nino Rota. Le immagini e la musica* (Florence: Giunti, 1992), 104-5.

Francis Ford Coppola. The latter, against the wishes of the studio, who wanted Henry Mancini, camped outside Rota's apartment in Rome to beg him to take it on;[8] when Rota, to shake him off, imposed extravagant conditions (such as that he would only compose the music when the film was finished, would never himself come to the USA and would send someone else to conduct it and adjust the score in synchronising it for the image), Coppola went ahead and accepted. It is interesting that he so much wanted Rota (and that, with more promise than track record behind him, he was able to get his way with Paramount). Rota had only once, with *War and Peace*, worked for Hollywood, and then not actually in Hollywood as the film was shot in Rome, and though he had worked in many genres, including one or two psychological thrillers, he had never done a Mafia or gangster film. Coppola however did not want him to write action thriller music. Rather, as Rota recounted, he wanted music that would evoke, rather broadly, even vaguely, Sicily, in such a way as to suggest its distance from America.[9]

In short, what Coppola wanted from Rota was pastiche, music that, precisely by not actually being Sicilian, suggested Sicily as an idea, that communicated directly the feeling of Sicilianness while indicating that this is a notion carried in the fading memories and passed-down values of the characters. Pastiche is able to convey the emotional pull of this notion even while signalling it as a notion, and it is precisely the affective power of everything suggested by this Sicilianness (notably family, loyalty, honour, male bonding) that draws the characters (and especially Michael) inexorably into crime and violence. Rota provided this sense of culturally and historically constructed feeling, above all in the film's real main theme, a slow waltz, first heard on a solo trumpet recorded with considerable echo, to give a blowsy sound suggesting remoteness, nostalgia, longing, loneliness, melancholy.

The theme that caused all the trouble for the Academy (now usually referred to as the love theme) ratchets pastiche up a further notch. The main theme insinuates itself into the texture of the soundtrack, underscoring, often reticent. The love theme, withheld for just under an hour and three-quarters, comes only in the Sicilian sequence. The orchestra plunges straight into the melody, first with gloopy massed strings, then augmented by mandolins insistently to the fore, thus combining, almost to excess, the conventions of Hollywood romanticism and the folkloristic/touristic aural image of Sicily. It seems to underline the fantasy of Sicily that the character of Michael experiences even when, indeed only when, he is actually in Sicily, a fantasy coloured by the ideas of it that he has brought from America. You don't have to take it this way: it is possible to take the Sicily episode straight, as a largely idyllic escape from the tension and carnage of New York. But neither Coppola nor Rota are straight in that way, and

the subtlety of pastiche, at once straight and aware, is at the heart of both artists' work.

Rota's love theme for *The Godfather* was not original in the Academy's sense. Melodically, it was plagiarism (albeit auto-plagiarist and guileless), though in all other musical aspects (harmony, tempo, orchestration) it was not, to say nothing of the fact that it was such a small fraction of the whole score. The theme was also, in all its musical dimensions, pastiche. This is almost by definition not original, except in a technical sense (that is, it is not plagiarism). Yet Coppola seems to have recognised in Rota's pastiching both a consummate skill and an unusual complexity of relationship between the pastiche, that which it is pastiching and the filmic context in which it is being deployed. It is a vindication of pastiche.

Il gattopardo

There is very little original music, in the Academy's sense, in *Il gattopardo* (1962). It comes from one of Rota's symphonies and two of his earlier films, together with a little Verdi. Yet, despite the fact that Rota and Visconti must have assumed that no-one would have recognised the re-uses, the issue of plagiarism did not arise. On the other hand, there is, but in a markedly different sense from above, pastiche.

The non-diegetic score has two main elements. A stately romantic theme in a predominantly string arrangement accompanies the credits, taking us into the grounds of the Salina palazzo, and sequences such as Tancredi leaving the palazzo to join Garibaldi, Tancredi and Angelina exploring the palazzo in Donnafugata during their courtship and Don Fabrizio contemplating his mortality in the final moments of the film. Secondly, there is a poundingly dramatic theme, carried for the most part on strings with brass and timpani, which mainly accompanies the Risorgimento battle sequences and the flight to Donnafugata. The themes are drawn respectively from the third (*andante sostenuto*)[10] and fourth (*allegro impetuoso*) movements of Rota's *Sinfonia sopra una canzone d'amore* (Symphony on a Love Song), written in 1947 but unperformed. Although Luchino Visconti did use expressly written scores in some of his films (including those by Rota in *Le notti bianche,* 1957, and *Rocco e i suoi fratelli,* 1960), he more commonly used already existing music for the resonances they carried with them (e.g. Donizetti in *Bellissima,* 1951; Bruckner in *Senso,* 1954; Mahler in *Morte a Venezia,* 1972). According to Rota, Visconti had considered Massenet, Wagner and Gounod for *Il gattopardo*, and Rota played some of these themes over as they discussed the matter, segueing distractedly into the andante from the symphony; Visconti at once recognised that "quella era la musica del *Gattopardo*" ("this was the music of *Il gattopardo*").[11] On this occasion, Visconti could not be using the

[10] This itself re-uses a cadence from the second movement of Rota's 1939 Second Symphony.

[11] Cit. in De Santi, *Nino Rota*, 90.

music for its associations, since it was virtually unknown, yet it is almost uncannily appropriate for the film. A symphony of the period, which would have been new in the period, would sound familiar and encrusted with association to us. The Rota symphony can have that sense of newness (unfamiliarity) while at the same time being recognisable as old (the style of the period) and this fits with the general aesthetic strategies of the film.

Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Il gattopardo* was written between 1954 and 1957 and published in 1958. It is set principally between 1860 and 1862 (with later episodes omitted from the film) and written in a faintly ironic realist style untouched by twentieth century literary modernism. Rota's *Sinfonia sopra una canzone d'amore* was written ten years earlier, yet it too could have been written a hundred years before: Suso Cecchi d'Amico, in the critical study that came out with the film, simply refers to it as a symphony "di tono ottocentesco" ("in nineteenth century style").[12] It uses large orchestral forces, but with none of the exotic instrumentation, lush chromaticism or folk and jazz inflections that were to come in symphonic composition (not least in classic film music: Steiner, Rósza, Korngold, Herrman). Were it not for the credits, which indicate the contrary, you might treat it in the film as a mid-nineteenth century symphony you happen never to have heard, by Tchaikovsky perhaps. The film *Il gattopardo* is shot largely on locations carefully restored to how they would have looked in the period,[13] with costumes meticulously recreated by Piero Tosi; its style approximates nineteenth century art, both painting – composition within the 'landscape' (that is, scope) frame that is reminiscent of, and sometimes specifically refers to, nineteenth century Italian painting, a quality brought out by an overall "tempo rallentato"[14] – and the novel – naturalistic accumulation of physical detail; "l'onniscienza e la pluralità non soggettivizzata dei punti di vista propri della tradizione narrativa ottocentesca" ("the omniscience and plurality of unsubjective points of view characteristic of nineteenth century fiction"),[15] achieved by long takes and, mainly, pans, techniques that hold back from the scene rather than entering it and thereby tending towards identification. In short, the novel, symphony and film, produced within fifteen years of each other, all evoke an older world in something approaching the style of that world.

One might say that this is what a film of *Il gattopardo* would have been like if there had been cinema in the 1860s. It is more nineteenth century than mainstream cinema, strongly marked though that is by both the novel and melodrama. It was moreover made by a high profile director in a period when cinema's nineteenth century inheritance was under attack, the period, to mention only Italian examples, of *Accattone* (Pasolini), *La commare secca* (Bertolucci), *L'eclisse* (Antonioni) and *8 ½* (Fellini). The score is likewise out of step with prevailing styles of film music, the Cinecittà/Hollywood mainstream as well as the spare atonality of Giovanni

[12] Suso Cecchi D'Amico, ed., *Il film* Il gattopardo *e la regia di Visconti* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1963), 172.

[13] Paolo Bertetto, "*Il gattopardo*. Il simulacro e la figurazione. Strategie di messa in scena", in Veronica Pravadelli, ed., *Il cinema di Luchino Visconti* (Venice: Marsilio, 2000), 203-206.

[14] Stefania Severi "L'arte figurativa e *Il gattopardo* di Visconti: presenza, citazione, ispirazione", in Francesco Petrucci, ed., *Visconti e il gattopardo. La scena del principe* (Milan: De Agostini Rizzoli, 2001), 73.

[15] Bertetto, "*Il gattopardo*", 218.

Fusco (*L'eclisse*), Bach cantatas over proletarian imagery (*Accatone*) or the exuberant collage of evident pastiche, quotation and parody of the Rota of *8 ½*. If it could never be possible to make a nineteenth century film, it was even more remarkable to be trying to do so in this period.

Some aspects of the film may even seem to underline this. The mise-en-scène is excessive in its detail, always in danger of drawing attention to its pictorial sources; the casting of stars, notably Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon and Claudia Cardinale, puts familiar, twentieth century faces amid all this strenuous recreation; and as the film's central source of understanding, Don Fabrizio is given "un sapere e … un punto di vista che pare talvolta troppo avanzato e novecentesco per risultare verosimile e coerente con l'universo diegetico" ("knowledge and … a point of view that at times seems too advanced and twentieth century to fit realistically and coherently with the film's diegetic world").[16] Even without these elements, the film would have to be considered anachronistic, albeit anachronistic in a peculiar way, for it seems to want to recreate a form that never in fact existed, the nineteenth century film. It is, if not pastiche proper, at any rate in that neck of the woods, an imitation that, in context (a film and score out of synch with its time) and perhaps textually (mise-en-scène, stars, central character), is evidently an imitation, but in a medium that the thing imitated neither did nor could have deployed.

Nino Rota also composed the dances for the ballroom sequence that makes up the last third of the film. These are of course diegetic music – you wouldn't necessarily know that they were written by Rota at all, and indeed one of them, a *valzer brillante*, is in fact by Verdi. It was discovered by a friend of Visconti's on a bookstall in autographed manuscript form scored for piano and dedicated to Countess Maffei, whose Milanese salon played a significant role in the Risorgimento; Verdi himself has also been considered 'Il vate del Risorgimento' (the Bard of the Risorgimento).[17] Rota arranged it for orchestra along with six other dances, including another waltz. The Verdi waltz carries particular narrative weight in the film: it is the first dance we hear and see and is also the music for the dance between Don Fabrizio and Angelica, a dance startlingly erotically charged and pregnant with symbolic significance. However, I find it hard to believe that one could pick out the Verdi dance from the Rota ones – the orchestration ensures that they seem all of a piece. So does the playing. A local orchestra was used during the shooting, and their playing is less polished, with smaller orchestral forces, than originally planned. Visconti and Rota however liked this less than perfect sound, perhaps on grounds of realism, but in any case folding Verdi and Rota on a par into the film's processes of recreation.

All of the dances sound nineteenth century. As with the score, their unfamiliarity to the film audience is well judged – they sound of their period, they carry no baggage and, to the characters, they would have

[16] Ibid., 219.

[17] On Verdi and the Risorgimento see Roger Parker, "Il 'vate del Risorgimento': *Nabucco* e 'Va pensiero'" and Antonio Rostagno, "Verdi politico", in Francesco Degrada, ed., *Giuseppe Verdi. L'uomo, l'opera, il mito* (Milan: Skira, 2000), 35-44, 180-181.

sounded new. They are a memory of something that the audience in fact has never known. One at least though may be more than this. This is another waltz that Rota had used with the same orchestration in an earlier film set just a little later, *Appassionatamente* (1954). Here too there is a long ball sequence, where questions of shifts of class structure (in this case, an aristocratic woman marrying into the rising new professional class) are played out in the gyrations and couplings of the dance floor. *Appassionatamente* is a period melodrama, but clearly Rota saw no incongruity in transposing the music from one film representing social relations through interpersonal ones to another film doing the same thing within the more highbrow accurate period gloss of *Il gattopardo*. Visconti seems not to have known of the borrowing.

There is also a galop in *Appassionatamente* that is re-used in *Il gattopardo* as well as a polka that, entirely in keeping with the style of the other dances, is nonetheless not re-used. The only other dance in *Appassionatamente* (*Il gattopardo* has four others) is a then well-known old waltz tune that gives its title to the film, composed by Dino Rulli (and acknowledged in the credits). Thus here too there is no question of plagiarism: though also used non-diegetically, the film's title and the credit to Rulli draw attention to the tune as a reference. This is also part of the way *Appassionatamente* works differently from *Il gattopardo* as a historical film. The former assumes that the audience will recognise its eponymous theme, suggesting an attitude of awareness of the past as past, and perhaps of nostalgia, in its visual and aural mise-en-scène (even while being modern in its contemporary melodramatic identity, not least by virtue of stars specialised in the genre, Myriam Bru and Amedeo Nazzari). *Il gattopardo* in contrast works on the assumption that, though obviously old-fashioned, everything about the film is nonetheless contemporary with the characters.

In 1947 Romeo Carreri observed, in the course of an enthusiastic article on Rota's film music, "Chi potrebbe dimenticare il delicato valzer di *Un americano in vacanza*?" ("Who could forget the delicate waltz in *Un americano in vacanza*?").[18] Yet clearly many could (forget), since this is the waltz in *Appassionatamente* and *Il gattopardo*. *Un americano in vacanza* (1945) tells of an encounter between Dick, an American GI on a few days' leave in Rome, and a young Italian teacher, Maria. She resists his advances, thinking he just wants a fling, like other GIs and indeed many Italian girls, a situation illustrated in the "Melody Club" (sic) and its hot swing music (which, as is common in films of this period, is associated with loose morals).[19] Later Dick takes her to an American reception held in an old Italian villa; Maria is not dressed for the occasion, but the villa's owner lends her an elegant gown; as she dances with Dick, she finally comes to believe in the honourableness of his intentions. The music they dance to is the 'unforgettable' waltz. The villa, the gown, the waltz all

[18] Romeo Carreri, "I commenti di Nino Rota per la Lux Film", *Libera arte* (June-July 1947), cit. in Lombardi, *Fra cinema e musica*, 40.

[19] See Richard Dyer, "Music, People and Reality: the Case of Italian Neo-realism", in Miguel Mera and David Burnand, eds., *European Film Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 32-34.

affirm the values of an older age, still alive despite fascism, the war and the American cultural invasion (emphasised by a brutal cut from the waltz to blaring swing later at the party). It is not actually an old waltz – it is the idea or echo of one.

It occurs twice in *Il gattopardo*. The first time it accompanies Tancredi introducing Don Calogero (representative of the petit bourgeois class who has profited from the Risorgimento) to the hostess, a princess of ancient noble family, and continues behind Don Fabrizio looking on at the new vulgarity of the young aristocrats at the ball. It appears at the end, as the ball is breaking up, coming in on the soundtrack as Don Fabrizio looks at himself in the mirror, aware of his own mortality, and sheds a tear. In *Un americano in vacanza*, the waltz represents the survival of old values in a world imperilled by modernity; twelve years later, in *Appassionatamente*, set perhaps seventy years earlier, it suggests a reconciliation of those values; in *Il gattopardo*, another five years on, set even earlier, it is an elegy for the eclipse of those values.

Both the score and the dances in *Il gattopardo* are pastiche, in that they are imitations that know themselves to be such (rather than simply imitating prevalent styles, the basis of nearly all cultural production), but they are not textually marked as pastiche (unlike the *Godfather* score). They contribute to the creative anachronism of the film and to its melancholy, for a world that is passed, for a film form that never was.

The Glass Mountain

Il gattopardo is not the only film with music in common with the *Sinfonia sopra una canzone d'amore*. The latter's first movement (allegro) uses music written for an earlier film, *La donna della montagna* (1943), which Rota then re-used, after writing the symphony, in what was in its time one of his greatest hits, *The Glass Mountain* (1948). Both films are about the lure – the beauty and danger – of mountains; in each, a dead woman is associated with that lure. The allegro theme is associated with the lure in both cases, though the films' overall tones are very different: *La donna della montagna*, made in the last year of the war, is bleak and perverse, whereas *The Glass Mountain*, made in Britain, with Italy figuring as a place of wartime heroism and peacetime exoticism, tempers melodrama with sweetness and light. Ostensibly, both end happily, but the reconciliation of the couple in *La donna* is perfunctory and formulaic and we have never seen love between them anywhere else in the film, whereas we have idyllic scenes of love and marriage between the couple in *The Glass Mountain*, and they come together at the end as a result of an arduous journey towards each other. The use of the theme in the two films underlines the difference. In *La donna* it is used throughout the film,

broken down into phrases and not given a full, orchestrally affirmative statement at the end. In *The Glass Mountain*, there is an alternative theme for the central (married English) couple, Anne and Richard Wilder, and it is this that accompanies their reconciliation. After this, there is a full statement of the allegro theme, but over a panorama of the mountains as the couple and rescue party ski safely away from them. The theme's most important statement occurs in the opera, "The Glass Mountain", composed by Richard (and in fact of course by Rota), which is about a fateful love story, wherein a woman scorned kills herself in the mountains and then in turn, perhaps only in his imagination, lures her fickle lover to his death with her plaintive song. Here, within the opera, there prevails something of the sense of emotional doom that pervades *La donna della montagna*, albeit more grandiose, less bleak, and the return to the theme at the very end of the film itself, even as the English couple leave the mountains, perhaps suggests the abiding presence, and lure, of such terrain.

Rota's re-use of the *La donna/sinfonia* theme in *The Glass Mountain* is a different case from his use of the *Fortunella* theme in *The Godfather*. In the latter instance, there is a radical re-orchestration and change of tempo in the theme in the context of huge differences in setting, period, story and tone, whereas the orchestration alters only slightly between the two mountain films. Although one would be hard put to it to claim that there is something intrinsically 'mountainy' about the music (it does not, for instance, draw on the music of the German Bergfilm of the 1930s), it is reasonable to assume that Rota heard doomed love in it (whether in the cadences of the theme itself or in its association with the events in *La donna della montagna*), not least because it is the *canzone d'amore* on which the symphony is built, and in undoubtedly dark, turbulent colours. While it is probably the case that Rota assumed that few if any would see both films and make the musical connection between them, it would also not matter aesthetically if they did, since their emotional material is so close.

As a piece of film music the allegro (and other music) in *La donna della montagna* and *The Glass Mountain* conforms to what had become standard practice by the mid-twentieth century: formally modified nineteenth century symphonic in style, subordinate to the story telling, offering the audience emotional response cues. Perhaps because, unlike the symphony's andante sostenuto and allegro impetuoso movements, the allegro was originally conceived as a piece of film music, and perhaps also because, unlike *Il gattopardo*, the setting of both films is contemporary, there is nothing remarkable about the allegro here. If it is anachronistic in relation to developments in both highbrow (atonality, serialism) and popular (canzone, jazz) music, this is because film music in general was (while presumably not felt to be consciously so by most of the audience).

Anachronism is put to particular ends in *Il gattopardo* but in *The Glass Mountain* it is just business as usual.

As already noted, the allegro theme also occurs in the opera-within-the-film, "The Glass Mountain". Works-within-works have a propensity to seem to be being held up for stylistic inspection, but this does not have to be the case and is not so here, and this despite the fact that "The Glass Mountain" is an amalgam of musical styles.[20] There is the allegro theme, here sung by both lovers, whereas it only functions as purely orchestral, non-diegetic music for the surrounding story. Secondly, the opera also draws on the modes of operatic verismo associated especially with the Mascagni of *Cavalleria rusticana*; four years later, in 1952, Rota was to arrange and supplement the music for the Mascagni biopic, *Melodie immortali*. As in "The Glass Mountain", such verismo promotes a chimera of noble poverty and peasant vitality. Thirdly, the opera also quotes a song, "La montanara", sung by the mountaineers in the surrounding story. This combination of references in a work which is moreover, as far as the film is concerned, written by an Englishman, might suggest multiple foregrounding of the constructedness of musical affect.

Yet this is not how the opera works in the film. This is partly because the musical elements are themselves related: opera, and especially verismo, had a direct influence on film scoring, especially in Italy, and, notionally at any rate, verismo gestured towards folk sources (a point made in many biopics, including *Melodie immortali*). Even were this not so, the scoring of the opera folds all the elements into a stylistically unified whole. Most suggestive of all is the presence of the Italian male lead in the film, Tito Gobbi, the most famous baritone (and perhaps male opera star) of the period, not least by virtue of his many film appearances. As with other opera stars (e.g. Beniamino Gigli, Gino Bechi) and biopics such as *Enrico Caruso: leggenda di una voce* (1951), Gobbi's films present him as a man of the people, often even of poor origins, able to move musically and naturally between opera, folk and music hall, an embodiment of an ideal of unified Italian identity achieved through music (e.g. *Musica proibita*, 1943; *O sole mio* , 1946; *Avanti a lui tremeva tutta Roma*, 1946). The different musical styles are not seen as inimical but, quite the contrary, wholly compatible, as both Gobbi's practice and star persona, and the opera in the film, demonstrate. Further authentication is provided by the fact that Gobbi plays a character in the surrounding story who sings in the opera, suggesting the continuity between the two realms.

The Glass Mountain is in part about the recovery of past, perhaps lost emotion. The opera itself seeks to recapture Richard's feelings for Alida, the woman he fell in love with when his plane crashed in the Alps during the war; and he remembers her through a legend she told him, about a man whose dead fiancée forces him to remember her forever. Like *Il*

[20] See Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London: Routledge, 2006), 64-91.

gattopardo, the opera recalls a past moment in the musical language of that moment – except that the musical language of the opera, both its *verismo* and its folklore, were already past by the time the film was made and in which it is set. The anomaly of its style is highlighted by the fact that it is supposedly premiered at La Fenice in Venice, which in the immediately following years premiered two unmistakably mid-twentieth century operas: *The Rake's Progress* (Igor Stravinsky, 1951) and *The Turn of the Screw* (Benjamin Britten, 1954). Moreover, Britten had had remarkable success with *Peter Grimes*, premiered just after the war (that is, before *The Glass Mountain* and "The Glass Mountain"), establishing a contemporary British approach to opera very different to Richard Wilder's unselfconsciously anachronistic style.

The Glass Mountain, in its use of "La montanara", also takes us back to the question of plagiarism. The song had been found/composed by Antonio Pedrotti and Luigi Pigarelli, specifically for the Coro della Società Alpinisti Tridentini, presented probably by the composers and certainly by the film as an authentic emanation of the alpine spirit.[21] The credits of the film clearly attribute "La montanara" to Pedrotti and Pigarelli, and Rota seems to have tried to sort out his right to use it before leaving for London to complete the score;[22] in the programme of music for the film, Rota claims that every single second of use of "La montanara", as song or as cited in the non-diegetic score, was spelled out.[23] In the film, the people of the village of San Felice are seen singing it, so that when it appears in the non-diegetic score it can readily be understood as having been picked up and reworked from this source. Most viewers are perhaps unlikely to take in the small print (literally) of the credits and might well take "La montanara" to be Rota's invention or, even more probably, a genuine folk song. This last was how it was referred to in coverage in 1948 in the British magazine *The Cinema*,[24] apparently on the basis of interviewing Rota, and the song was well known in Italy, certainly in the Dolomites, at least since the late twenties.[25] Besides, as so often with folk song, to what extent one should consider it composed rather than collected by Pedrotti and Pigarelli is unclear as is what (artistic as well as legal) right of ownership collection would give them. Folk music is characterised by just such fudges of composition and discovery, authenticity and invention.

In all these ways, there may have been aesthetic conundrums about originality, but no clear-cut issues of ownership. However, Rota was persuaded to produce a version of the much admired score in the form of a piece for piano and orchestra, aiming at the same market that had made hits out of other British 'concertos' such as the *Warsaw Concerto* (Richard Addinsell, from *Dangerous Moonlight*, 1941), the *Cornish Rhapsody* (Hubert Bath, *Love Story*, 1945) and *The Dream of Olwen* (Charles Williams, *While I Live*, 1947), to say nothing of the popular success of Rachmaninov's

[21] See Gianna Borgna, *Storia della canzone italiana* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992), 102.

[22] See Ernesta Rota's diary, 24 August 1948, cit. in Lombardi, *Fra cinema e musica*, 43.

[23] Nino Rota in correspondence reproduced in ibid., 61.

[24] Anonymous, "Nothing Like It in Italy: Nino Rota and Our Film Music", *The Cinema*, 6 October 1948, reproduced in ibid., 44-47.

[25] Borgna, *Storia della canzone*, 102.

Second Piano Concerto following its use in *Brief Encounter* (1945, much admired by Rota).[26] This 'concerto' (short enough – just over four minutes – to fit on one side of a 78 rpm record), entitled *The Legend of the Glass Mountain*, had a phenomenal success in Britain, on radio, in record and sheet music sales, appearing in the top ten of the hit parade for over a year.[27] The 'legend' incorporated phrases from "La montanara" and, as "Song of the Mountains", it appeared in non-vocal form on the B-side of the disc; with English words, it became a popular song, sung by the most beloved star of her generation, Gracie Fields, at the Royal Variety Show in 1950. Royalties poured in. As with "Speak Softly Love", who owned the song came to be of considerable significance. What, within the discourse of folk music, ought to have been considered traditional, autochthonous, and thus beyond issues of individual authorship and ownership, of originality and copyright, came to matter financially a great deal in those terms. Although in the end "the tribunal came down on my side", Rota owned that he "did feel aggrieved about it".[28]

The score of *The Glass Mountain* also incorporates a couple of times a snatch of the tune "Lilliburlero", to underline moments of cheerfulness between Richard and Anne. This is a standard item of British light music, and thus a familiar musical point of reference in the middle-class culture to which the couple belong, a tune seen as so traditional as to be beyond questions of origin or authorship and thus beyond those of plagiarism.[29] It is an overt citation, perhaps also constituting some kind of homage by an Italian composer working in a British context.

Pastiche and plagiarism are conceptually distinct yet in practice they overlap or are even mistaken for one another. Both involve close, even very close, imitation. Pastiche's open close imitation is tarred with plagiarism's dishonesty because both violate the culturally privileged principle of originality, but this doesn't need to matter.

Plagiarism flouts the principle of originality by directly ripping off a previous work and even claiming itself as original. Though the examples in this essay do not go that far, the initial proposal that *The Godfather* score be nominated did so inadvertently. However, plagiarism's deceit only matters when something – money or acclaim, or it might be status or competitive examination – is at stake.

Pastiche signals the issue of unoriginality because it acknowledges that all expression and performance involve imitation. However, pastiche may nonetheless take that which it imitates at face value, as if acknowledging its own activity of imitation without perceiving that that which it imitates is also involved in imitation. *The Glass Mountain* knows that it is producing a new version of verismo and reproducing an established version of folk, but shows no recognition of the problem of authenticity in both of these traditions. *Il gattopardo* and *The Godfather*, in contrast, recognise that

[26] Anonymous, "Nothing Like It", 47.

[27] De Santi, *Nino Rota*, 48.

[28] Quoted (from an interview with the author) in De Santi, *Nino Rota*, 50.

[29] In fact probably in origin an Irish jig, it seems to have been first arranged in an English context by Henry Purcell in 1689. It is familiar now for its use from 1955 until recently as the signature tune of the BBC World Service.

they are in the realm of the already said and use it, not to spuriously authenticate nor yet, as in much modernist and postmodernist consideration of such recognition, to distance or critique, but to get close, formally (*Il gattopardo*) and/or affectively (*Godfather*), to acknowledging the sources of imagination and emotion without in the process extinguishing them.

Alessandro Buffa

"On the Street Where you Live":
Italian American Doo-Wop in Postwar New York*

> Not to find one's way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal. Requires ignorance – nothing more. But to lose oneself in a city – as one loses oneself in a forest – that calls for quite a different schooling. Then, signboards and street names, passers-by, roofs, kiosks, or bars must speak to the wanderer like a cracking twig under his feet in the forest, like the startling call of a bittern in the distance, like the sudden stillness of a clearing with a lily standing erect at its center.
>
> (Walter Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle")

> The concept of space is itself transformed when it is seen in terms of the ex-centric communicative circuitry that has enabled dispersed populations to converse, interact, and more recently even to synchronise significant elements of their social and cultural lives.
>
> (Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps*)

Music historian Ed Ward, drawing on his personal experience as a teenager and rock and roll fan in the late 1950s, eloquently begins his article "Italo-American Rock" by considering some similarities between Italian American and African American youths:

> In my hometown, Eastchester, New York, there was only one ethnic group that knew anything about rock and roll. They liked loud, flashy colors, and they seemed to have a natural sense of rhythm and inborn musical ability. They excelled in the school band, and at dances they cut everybody. They all lived in one section of town, and while it was dangerous to go there after dark, there were a couple of candy stores where they'd sometimes gather to hang out and stand outside and harmonize. My Jewish friends might have had the money to buy the latest rock and roll records, but when it came to swinging it, dancing it, and living the rock and roll life, they had to cross the invisible line into the north end. That's where the Italian kids lived. (You thought I was talking about blacks? Hey, the day the first black moves into that town is the day the last Italian is too weak to fight 'em off).[1]

This description racializes the image of African Americans and Italian Americans. Nonetheless, it helps us to understand how Italian American youths were involved in an urban culture which has moved away from the conventional image of Italian American culture. Inspired by Ward's reflection, this essay explores Italian American doo-wop music in the 1950s within the context of urban space and culture in post-war New York.

Although the 1950s had been the decade when many so-called white ethnics left city centers with the consequent development of the suburbs, rock and roll was essentially an urban phenomenon. Most Italian American youths in New York belonged to working class communities and were directly involved in rock and roll as an urban creation. As historian George Lipsitz suggested: "The movement of young people into the street emerged in part as a reaction against the corporate culture of conformity that had shaped much of the suburban life since World War II".[2] Doo-wop was introduced by African American R&B vocal harmony groups in the 1940s. Its roots are in gospel, black vocal groups of the 1930s and the barbershop tradition. Contrary to gospel, this music was not religious and reflected the new urban conditions of the North – the street corners of Harlem, Brooklyn and the Bronx. According to music historian Reebee Garofalo:

> [D]oo-wop was the product of urban vocal harmony groups, mostly black and almost invariably male. The style owed as much of a debt to gospel, jazz, and pop as it did to the blues. Typical of the genre was a melodramatic, often gospel-inflected lead tenor who was bracketed by a distinctive bass and a soaring falsetto. Backgrounds vocals typically consisted of nonsense syllables, such as "Sha-na-na-na sha-na-na-na-na", "Buzz-buzz-a-doodle-lee", "Shoo-doo-shoo-bee-doo.[3]

By the 1950s this music had been appropriated by working-class 'white ethnics', especially of Italian origins, and Puerto Rican youths in urban centers. Cultural critic Greil Marcus states that doo-wop "was the first form of rock & roll to take shape, to define itself as something people recognized as new, different, strange, theirs".[4] In the 1950s, doo-wop was known as R&B vocal harmony or simply as rock and roll. As DJ Dan Romanello explains: "I guess doo-wop, the name doo-wop is something that I don't think anybody used … It's a kind of a name that came later. I think somewhere in the 1970s was when the term was probably coined".[5]

In the late 1950s, the two major streams of Italian American rock and roll/R&B were the teen idols phenomenon, and doo-wop. While the teen idols phenomenon was a creation of the media industry launched through the television program American Bandstand, broadcast from Philadelphia, doo-wop came from the streets of New York and other cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh.[6] In New York each borough had its favorite doo-wop band. Dion and the Belmonts (Dion DiMucci, Carlo Mastrangelo, Fred Milano and Angelo D'Alea) came from the Bronx. Their first hit was "I Wonder Why" recorded in 1958.[7] As the doo-wop expert Stephen M. Bennett argues, "this blend of pop-jazz and rock and roll was devastating on 'I Wonder Why', a record which introduced the catchy, bouncing bass which was to become the most

[2] George Lipsitz, "Who'll Stop the Rain? Youth Culture, Rock and Roll, and Social Crises", in David Faber, ed., *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 321.

[3] Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin' Out: Popular Music in the USA* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 101.

[4] Greil Marcus, "Is This the Woman who Invented Rock & Roll?: The Deborah Chessler Story", *Rolling Stone* (24 June 1993), 41.

[5] Dan Romanello interviewed by Mark Smith, Part of the Fordham University Bronx African American History Project, 2002, The Bronx County Historical Society Archive; and Mark Naison, "The Bronx African American History Project", *Organization of American Historians Newsletter* 33 (August 2005), 1 and 14.

[6] See John A. Jackson, *American Bandstand: Dick Clark and the Making of Rock'n'Roll Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[7] See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZBSGaWrEn4>, 3 November 2009.

[8] Mark Bennett, "Introduction", in Edward R. Engel, *White and Still All Right* (New York: Crackerjack Press, 1977), 6. On Italian American doo-wop see also Joseph Sciorra, "Who Put the Wop in Doo-Wop? Some Thoughts on Italian Americans and Early Rock and Roll", *Voices in Italian Americana* 13.1 (2002), 13-19.

[9] See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QySQ3UQnK3c>, 3 November 2009.

[10] *Doo-wop Box* (Rhino Records, 1993). The *Doo-Wop Box* is a complete collection (four CDs) of black and white doo-wop.

[11] See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl-o5LsYtKU> (The Crests, "Sixteen Candles"), and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_OsX2K-mv8> (Johnny Maestro and the Crests, "My Juanita"), 3 November 2009.

[12] Engel, *White and Still All Right*, 66.

[13] Alessandro Buffa, unpublished interview with Bob Gerardi, April 2003, hereafter cited as B.G. Bob Gerardi grew up in Queens Village, Queens. In the late 1950s he was a member of a rock and roll band called The Rockin' Chairs. Their first song, "A Kiss is a Kiss", sold over 200,000 copies and made the top 20 on the New York charts.

distinctive element of all the white group R&B harmony which was to follow".[8] The Elegants (Frank Tardagno, Carmen Romano, Jimmy Moschella, Vito Picone and Artie Venosa) started to sing doo-wop on the street-corners of their neighborhood in Staten Island. They wrote one of the most popular doo-wop pieces of the 1950s: "Little Star" (1958).[9] In this song black vocal harmony style interacted with pop and Italian melody to create a new sound. The Elegants will never repeat the success of "Little Star" which "hit # 1 with both white and black audiences".[10] The Crests, who came from Brooklyn, were a racially mixed group, which included one Italian American (the lead singer Johnny Maestro), two African Americans (Tommy Gough and Jay Carter), and a Puerto Rican (Harold Torres). They had a few big hits in 1958 and in 1959 such as "My Juanita", "Sixteen Candles", "The Angels Listened In" and "Step by Step".[11] The Crests was not a group created by the music industry, but was rather the product of a spontaneous friendship among four teen-agers from different ethnic backgrounds in the streets of Brooklyn. Another important group from the Bronx was The Regents/Runarounds (Guy Villari, Sal Cuomo, and Ernie Maresca). Their name is associated with the classic song "Barbara Ann" (1959) which was made famous by the Beach Boys version a few years later in 1964. Not many people know that "Barbara Ann" was composed by The Regents and was first released by Lou Cicchetti, the owner of the "Cousins Music Shop" in Fordham Road (The Bronx) and proprietor of the "Cousins" record label. Doo-wop historian Ed Engel argues that "Barbara Ann" was an immediate hit in the New York area and thanks to this song, Lou Cicchetti's label became very important in the rock and roll music business. Lou Cicchetti's record shop in Fordham Road was an important meeting point for all Italian American doo-wop bands and fans alike. As Engel puts it: "Cicchetti and his shop came to serve as the focal point of the highly influential, so called Bronx sound".[12] Unfortunately today the shop has been replaced by a clothing outlet.

What was specific to the age of early doo-wop was that many youths just decided to form a group in a day. Almost all young people from working-class neighborhoods in one way or another became involved in music in those days. Most doo-wop bands did not earn money. As Bob Gerardi recalls: "When I put the band together around sixteen we started to play but with no money. The DJ never paid us. He gave us a ride. We couldn't drive, we were kids and we had fun".[13] Similarly, Emilio Fornatora remembers: "Nobody told us how to sing. I was thirteen or fourteen but I was with older guys. I looked older for my age. I was more mature. After we made a couple of records, I remember we cut a record … 'Lonely Heart'. The next day it was on the radio, went to number 7 in New York. I told my mother, mom, I'm going on TV this week-end. I made no money.

It was different from today, you got to have a good lawyer. I was so young that I had to make my parents sign".[14]

Sounding out the City: from Home to Hybridity

In doo-wop, more than in other music, and perhaps similarly to hip-hop but without its social commentary, the urban landscape acquires particular importance: places like street corners, trains, roofs, parks, passages, and candy stores, were all parts of the doo-wop imaginary. As the doo-wop musician Dion DiMucci recalls:

> Being in a studio never really made me nervous. My approach to cutting records was, and still is, simple: don't fake it. Standing in front of that microphone, I could shut my eyes and see the street corner where we'd first started singing. I could hear everyone joining in, the girls clapping hands, and someone banging on a cardboard box. Sometimes it would be winter, bitter cold, but we'd still be out there, stamping our feet by an oil barrel fire.[15]

Referring to the modern metropolis Iain Chambers observes: "Here the urban machine is no longer the privileged focus of alienation. Rather, it has become the principal means of language".[16] In doo-wop music places like trains, cars, and bridges, which generally are associated with the alienated and 'intoxicated' life in big cities, were "appropriated and domesticated" by youths.[17] As DiMucci recalls: "A lot of our rehearsing was on the Sixth Avenue D train, heading downtown. We'd grab a couple of seats and start banging out time on the floor. Trains had the greatest bass sounds in the world. So did the back seats of Checker cabs, underneath the EL, or on the roof of a building, next to the pigeon coops".[18] The formation of the doo-wop band The Crests is connected with the fluidity and incessant movement of the city. As Ed Ward puts it: "The earliest of these groups to make a real impression was The Crests. Legend has them starting out in Brooklyn singing on the subway, the Lexington Avenue IRT, to be exact, and a mysterious lady walking up to them with a business card from a well known band leader".[19]

Doo-wop music was strictly linked to the territory of the

Fig 1: "The Third Avenue El (Elevated Train)", 1956, photograph, The Bronx, in Lloyd Ultan and Gary Hermalyn, *The Bronx: It Was Only Yesterday, 1935-1965* (The Bronx, NY: The Bronx County Historical Society), courtesy of The Bronx County Historical Society.

[14] Alessandro Buffa, unpublished interview with Emilio Fornatora, April 2003. Emilio Fornatora lives in Long Island but he grew up in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. Hereafter cited as E.F.

[15] Dion DiMucci with Davin Seay, *The Wanderer: Dion's Story* (New York: Beech Tree Books, 1988), 76.

[16] Iain Chambers, *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience* (London: Routledge, 1987), 194.

[17] Ibid.

[18] DiMucci, *The Wanderer*, 57.

[19] Ward, "Italo-American Rock", 132.

neighborhoods. For example, the group Dion and the Belmonts took their name from their neighborhood, and they had been members of a gang called the Fordham Baldies. Doo-wop was the favorite music of gang members, and sometimes before musicians could cut a record they had to perform privately for youth gangs during parties.[20] Musicians were highly respected by gangs. Black doo-wop musician Arthur Crier, who had never been in any gang, could have special privileges among the youths on his block because he was an excellent singer. Crier, who grew up in the Bronx on Prospect Avenue, recalls that youth gangs were part of the culture of his neighborhood, and doo-wop was central to the daily life of gangs. As a musician he could go into any neighborhood of the Bronx and Upper Manhattan without having any problem.[21]

As Chambers has observed: "The city exists as a series of doubles: it has official and hidden cultures, it is a real place and a site of imagination".[22] The candy store is central to the production of doo-wop and to the hidden histories of working-class youths in the 1950s. The candy store was a public place generally located on the street corners of working-class neighborhoods where youths used to hang out after school and in the evening. It was a 'real place' grounded in the local history of the neighborhood. "Candy stores", as Eric Schneider observes, "dotted working class areas, offering an opportunity for petty entrepreneurship that kept the proprietor rooted in the local neighborhood. Typically small storefronts, with a counter, a soda dispenser, magazine racks, and perhaps a jukebox and some stools or a small table, candy stores provided a place where gang members could meet, gossip, and, if space permitted, dance with their debs".[23] However, the candy store was also 'a site of imagination' which allowed inter-ethnic exchanges and where youths could desire and experience a new hybrid metropolitan culture which emerged in post-war years. Fornatora remembers the candy store almost like a place of fantasy. In his words: "In the candy store you had the juke box, penny candies, the soda fountain, egg creams. You had to see summer nights outside the candy store in 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962. It was a spectacle to see. The counter was in marble, it was marvelous. The owner was Jimmy, he had only one arm" (E.F.). Fornatora recalls that it was in the candy store where he started to sing doo-wop: "At the candy store there was the first group I started, it was a group called the Mystics. We all started to sing at the candy store, nobody told us how to sing" (E.F.).

Italian American doo-wop is a very interesting example of black and Italian interactions and of the continuity and change in neighborhoods culture in the 1950s and early 1960s. Although Italian American bands borrowed their style from black doo-wop, I would argue that the appropriation of black cultural expressions by Italian American teen-agers does not follow a straightforward pattern. Here we have different diasporic

[20] See Richard Price, *The Wanderers* (New York: Penguin Books, [1974] 1999).

[21] Mark Naison, unpublished interview with Arthur Crier, part of the Fordham University Bronx African American History Project, 2002-, The Bronx County Historical Society Archive.

[22] Chambers, *Popular Culture,* 183.

[23] Eric Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 153.

stories which intertwined with each other within the context of postwar popular culture and urban space. Certainly Italian American singers such as Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Tony Bennett were a source of inspiration for Italian American vocal groups. However, Italian folk and regional music like stornelli and tarantella, for instance, perhaps influenced Italian American doo-wop in a more unconscious and subterranean way. Italian regional music was very popular in Italian American neighborhoods. It traveled with migrants and was kept alive within Italian American communities.

Bronx local historian Lloyd Ultan recalls that in the 1940s in the Bronx there were many "itinerant street singers roaming from neighborhood to neighborhood and into backyards of apartment houses".[24] In the United States traditional regional music evolved and was adapted to the life of Italian immigrants. Some regional popular songs, for example, are based on rhymes, often improvised; they depict situations which can be funny, sad, acts of protest, or just comments about the weather, or a hard day of work. There were many places where Italian Americans performed these songs: at parties, at home, during working breaks, in barber shops, or in the streets of the neighborhood. In my view, although the roots of doo-wop are in black American music, it was also embraced by Italian Americans because of their diasporic life in the United States. Lipsitz refers to similar interactions as follows:

> Another kind of history permeated Dion DiMucci's hit record "The Wanderer" in 1961 .... "The Wanderer" was written by Ernie Maresca. It reached the number-two spot on the best-seller charts in the winter of 1961-62. Maresca claims that in writing the song he was inspired by "I'm a Man", by blues musician Bo Didley, and the lyrics certainly show an affinity between the two songs. The infectious beat of "The Wanderer", however, comes from the tarantella, the traditional Italian dance frequently played at weddings and other festive social occasions.[25]

As sociologist Phil Cohen suggests, "[S]ubculture is a compromise solution to two contradictory needs: the need to create and express *autonomy and difference* from parents and, by extension, their culture, and the need to maintain the security of existing ego defenses and the parental identifications which support them".[26] In this sense, the neighborhood played a fundamental role in the formation of youth identity especially in terms of ethnicity, class and gender in the 1950s and early 1960s since it embodied both parent culture and 'foreign' cultural forms.

In his book *Blood of my Blood*, Italian American scholar Richard Gambino states that "Italian-American neighborhoods were indeed clusters of transplanted towns of the Mezzogiorno, compressed together in the congested cities of the New World".[27] Yet, we must keep in mind that Italian American neighborhoods in New York were surrounded by Puerto Rican, African American and Irish neighborhoods, and that Italian American

[24] Lloyd Ultan and Gary Hermalyn, *The Bronx: It Was Only Yesterday, 1935-1965* (The Bronx, NY: The Bronx County Historical Society, 1992), 9.

[25] George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxi. See also <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJBT71O_fLU> (Dion DiMucci, "The Wanderer", live 1990), 3 November 2009.

[26]Phil Cohen, *Rethinking the Youth Question* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 59.

[27] Richard Gambino, *Blood of My Blood: The Dilemma of the Italian-Americans* (New York: Guernica, 1974), 110.

Fig.2: *Spanish American Restaurant*, about 1950, photograph, The Bronx, in Lloyd Ultan and Gary Hermalyn, *The Bronx: It Was Only Yesterday, 1935-1965* (The Bronx, NY: The Bronx County Historical Society), 115 , courtesy of The Bronx County Historical Society.

children interacted with children from different ethnic backgrounds in schools, recreation centers and other public places. In addition, as Lipsitz observes, through mass communications technology like radio and record-players, "consumers … can experience a common heritage with people they have never seen; they can acquire memories of a past to which they have no geographic or biological connections".[28] In this view, Italian American neighborhoods, rather than simply being reproductions of Southern Italian towns, can be considered as sites of struggle where a sense of Italianness was "continually contested and renewed" by local youths.[29] Fornatora, for instance, perceives the Italian characteristics of his neighborhood as highly influential for his life experience and identity formation. He is very proud to be an 'Italian' who grew up in Brooklyn in the 1950s. In his words: "Everybody in the butcher shop spoke Italian …. I knew a person from Italy who brought fresh tomatoes from Italy every year …. We had dinner all together in my family … during holidays all my relatives were in the house ... having a big lunch together and once they had finished eating, all the *men* had black Italian coffee" (E.F.).

At the same time, it is interesting to note that he remembers many things which are not generally associated with the traditional image of the Italian American community. He recalls that on Tuesday nights people from the neighborhood organized concerts in the local church. What is striking is that these concerts were not of Italian music; rather, they were of Latin music with Puerto Rican musicians. Latin music in the late 1950s started to be very popular in New York. He also recalls that while his mother sang opera, he started to sing doo-wop at the candy store, and in his leisure time he listened to the radio, especially rock and roll and R&B. Before World War II Italian American families listened particularly to ethnic radio stations, which broadcast Neapolitan and other traditional Italian music. By the end of the 1940s, private radio stations started to broadcast music from the South of the United States like R&B and country. It was through the radio that Italian American youths first encountered black music. DiMucci recalls his first encounter with the music of Hank Williams

[28] George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 5.

[29] Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 8.

as something that changed his life:

> I can still smell the aroma of my mother's spaghetti sauce, simmering on the stove for that Sunday supper … I heard it coming over the radio, drifting down the hall like the scent of my mom's good sauce. I got up pulled along by that sound, strange and distant and cut through with static … to tell you the truth if there'd been a five-alarm fire with engines racing down Crotona Avenue, I don't think I would have noticed. I was listening for the first time in my life to the music of Hank Williams.[30]

The fact that Italian American youths embraced black music does not mean that the relationships between Italian Americans and African Americans were good. As Susan Douglas has observed in her important book *Listening In*: "On the radio (as elsewhere in popular culture), white ridicule of black culture and of African Americans mixed with envy, desire, and imitation: with what the University of Virginia scholar Eric Lott called Love and Theft".[31] In the 1950s interactions between African Americans, Italian Americans, and Puerto Ricans were not peaceful. However, as Lipsitz points out, in "the very moment that residential suburbs increased class and racial segregation, young people found 'prestige from below' by celebrating the ethnic and class interactions of the urban street".[32] In his autobiography, DiMucci deals with interactions between African American and Italian American musicians. He recalls that he had a series of concerts with his band on the East Coast, and that one show was at the Howard Theater in Washington, D.C., which was a traditional black venue. He was surprised by the success they had in Washington. In his words: "They [black audience] loved us. We had a two-week stand there, living in an all-black boarding-house, sleeping during the day, performing and partying with all our new friends during the night. We got the same response at the Apollo in Harlem where we were the first white performers ever to play the house".[33]

Of course African Americans were certainly glad that white youths listened to their music; as James Brown states, referring to the role of white DJs in promoting black music to white audiences, "John R. meant so much to Afro-American people. He did as much to help blacks as any white I know, and more than most. Because he made us aware, and he made our music important".[34] Sometimes white bands from working class neighborhoods became a source of inspiration for African American bands. As Gerardi observes: "Black music came out from the gospel, doo-wop was a black form, and white groups imitated black groups. But black groups were inspired by white groups because we were surrounded by each other" (B.G.). The common experience of marginality and racism, and the blurring of ethnic and racial lines in working-class neighborhoods, has sometimes produced alliances and cooperation between Italian Americans and African Americans. As historian David Roediger puts it:

[30] DiMucci, *The Wanderer*, 131.

[31] Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 18.

[32] Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, 122.

[33] DiMucci, *The Wanderer*, 76.

[34] Cit. in Douglas, *Listening In*, 240.

[35] David Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (London: Verso, 1994), 188-189.

It may well be that, as the music historian Ronald Morris has argued, Sicilians playing jazz in New Orleans embraced black music because Sicilians were like black people in seeing music as a highly personalized affair … born of collective experience. But in the playing, Sicilians not only retained this sensibility but contributed to creating a new American art form, though far from a white American one.[35]

According to Gerardi and Fornatora doo-wop music helped to establish a better relationship between the two communities. Bob and his band, for example, did back-ups of black bands such as Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, and The Cadillacs, and they were discovered by a black DJ. Gerardi told me that in doo-wop shows there were many black and white groups performing one after the other, most of them were black groups but there were also many Italian American bands. As he observes: "We were in the same show all the time, black groups and white groups. We were making music. We really liked them for their music" (B.G.). Fornatora recalls that he and his band used to play in Coney Island and in such ballrooms as Freedom Land, and the Brooklyn Paramount, and that Italian Americans wanted to play there because a lot of black bands performed there. In the interview, Fornatora emphasizes that there were no problems between Italian Americans and African Americans; he remembers that the bass singer in his band was African American. In his view "in music there is no boundary, there is not black and white …. and musicians are *different people*" (E.F.). Only once in the whole interview did he mention, but then immediately changed topic, that there were some kinds of people in the neighborhood who really did not like African Americans. I asked him to be more specific but he answered without hesitation: "You know, I cannot explain it now" (E.F.). In these gaps we can read that there were probably many problems between African Americans and Italian Americans at the end of the 1950s, and his "you know, I cannot explain it now" hinted at further stories about relations between blacks and Italians.

Pierpaolo Martino

Hail to the Thief:
Strategies of Resistance in Radiohead's Musical Discourse

Radiohead represent one of the most important artistic and critical voices in contemporary British (and global) culture. Their music escapes the very notion of identity, to posit itself as a polyphonic soundscape in which different voices, stories and genres mix in rich and unpredictable ways. Their sound is, indeed, based on dialogical interactions among pop, jazz, world and electronic music. The richness and complexity of their artistic form is matched by the band's unique intellectual effort to articulate 'resistant' discourses against those who exercise power both at the political and economical levels. According to Stephen Duncombe,

> cultural resistance can provide a sort of 'free space' for developing ideas and practices. Freed from the limits and constraints of the dominant culture, you can experiment with new ways of seeing and being and develop tools and resources for resistance. And as culture is usually something shared, it becomes a focal point around which to build a community …. Cultural resistance can also be thought of *as* political resistance. Some theorists [believe] that politics is essentially a cultural discourse, a shared set of symbols and meanings, that we all abide by. If this is true then the rewriting of that discourse – which is essentially what cultural resistance does – is a political act in itself.[1]

[1] Stephen Duncombe, ed., "Introduction", in *Cultural Resistance Reader* (London: Verso, 2002), 5-6.

This paper investigates Radiohead's strategies of resistance in relation to the imperatives of mainstream pop both in terms of musical form (through the analysis of the band's musical and literary 'otherness') and musical communication (focussing on the potential of music to criticise socio-political dynamics and on the very fruition/distribution of music within society). Radiohead have often been criticised for their tendency to stand against a system (the musical establishment) of which they are an essential part; however, as White observes, "Radiohead's aesthetic strategy is not to avoid the enemy but to inhabit it and to reorient its energies".[2] In this perspective, the paper isolates four moments in Radiohead's musical career, which are particularly significant in order to investigate the band's musical and discursive strategies. The first coincides with the publication of the *Ok Computer* album in 1997, which is particularly important for its musical inventiveness and for its investigation of the relationship between technology, capitalism and the 'human'; the second with the publication within a few months of two experimental albums, *Kid A* and *Amnesiac,* in 2000/2001 (which, as we will discover, seem to enact contemporary technological alienation); the third with the publication of *Hail to the Thief* in 2003, the band's most political album, characterized by a sharp

[2] Curtis White, "Kid Adorno", in Joseph Tate, ed., *The Music and Art of Radiohead* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 13.

focus on American politics and the effects of globalised capitalism; and the fourth and last with the release of *In Rainbows* in 2007, which was first sold on-line with fans left free to choose the album's price, escaping in this way (at least in part) the constraints of the music industry. Before focussing on these four moments, it is worth making a brief reference to the origins of the British band and to their music before *Ok Computer*.

The band that would become Radiohead was formed in the mid-eighties by five schoolmates at the exclusive Abingdon school in Oxford; it is ironic that a band known today for its critique of capitalism is really the 'product' of the English public school system and that it was formed in a place – Oxford – which is unquestionably associated with high culture and the higher-education industry. Basically, Oxford stands for traditional Englishness, for an exclusive, often white and aristocratic world. On the contrary Radiohead's music represents an open space in which different languages (high and low) and different musical traditions mix to create something new. They are white musicians who are particularly fascinated by world and black music to the extent of enriching their musical lexicon with samples and rhythmic solutions often found in such genres as jazz, dance, jungle, etc, especially in the two experimental albums published in 2000-2001.

Radiohead's early musical efforts seemed to be particularly influenced by American grunge and more specifically by bands such as Nirvana, whose leader Kurt Cobain became in the early 1990s the spokesman for a generation of alienated American youth. A similar function was to be played in Britain by Radiohead's singer, Thom Yorke. "Creep" (1992) – possibly the band's most famous song – voices the sense of alienation felt by many young people living in 1990s Britain: "I wish I was special/ You are so fucking special/ but I'm a creep/ what the hell I'm doing here?/ I don't belong here".[3] The term "creep", as Yorke explains, refers to a condition which is not completely negative: "It means people who hate themselves, but get something creative out of it".[4] The ideas articulated in the song's narrative indirectly define the position of Radiohead within the homologized musical scene, which within a few years was to dominate Britain. Radiohead are basically middle-class boys, who are not particularly good-looking (an NME journalist will define Yorke "ugly"[5]) and who seem determined to speak for losers and outsiders of any kind. In this sense, Radiohead were to represent a sort of antidote to Britpop, the musical phenomenon which was to emerge in the mid 90s, dominating the media with the notorious rivalry between Oasis and Blur. Britpop and the Cool Britannia phenomenon in general (which also affected literature, art, football and fashion) were about winners, about a sense of belonging, about a rediscovered Englishness to be contrasted with any American influence. Radiohead didn't really care about this parochial trend (Britpop was

[3] Radiohead, *Pablo Honey* (Parlophone, 1993).

[4] Dave Jennings, "Jeepers, Creepers", *Melody Maker* (10 October 1992), 13.

[5] Keith Cameron, "Radiohead, London Islington Smashed!", *NME* (19 December 1992), 69.

basically a white, working class, English rather than British, phenomenon); their concerns were in a sense 'transnational', they were preoccupied with the value of the human being in a hardly human world.

In 1997, Radiohead published one of the most important albums of the twentieth century: *Ok Computer*. According to Tim Footman, Radiohead's third album is "something which defines our age in the same way that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Eliot's *Waste Land* and Warhol's Marylins define theirs".[6] Its relevance is given by the band's capacity to articulate the sense of alienation felt by many at the turn of the century, especially in relation to a technological reality which seemed to represent a menace for the 'human'. The band's intelligence resides in the very use it makes of the subject it criticises; *Ok Computer* is an album about hi-tech culture which speaks the language of technology. But before analyzing the complex dialectic between art and technology – which is at the basis of Radiohead's masterpiece – in a global perspective, it is worth referring to the album in terms of a complex political enunciation articulated in 1997 Britain.

1997 is a key year in the recent history of Britain; it was then that a number of very important events took place such as the cloning of the sheep Dolly, the death of Lady Diana (with the resulting crisis of monarchy), and the election of New Labour prime minister Tony Blair. According to many, Blair's success was due to his capacity to construct an image of himself which could be easily appropriated by young people. In June 1997 he declared to the *Daily Telegraph*: "within everyone of my generation there is an aspiring musician waiting to get out".[7] He had also appeared with U2 at a party organized by pop magazine *Q* and included the Gallagher brothers (of Oasis) in the special guest list at No. 10 Downing Street. If, on the one hand, Britpop had already been considered in 1996 as a symbol of conservative Britain by the MP John Redwood, on the other Blair was capable of appropriating Britpop as part of the semiotic repertoire which was to provide the optimism, positivity and energy characterizing the New Labour strategy.[8]

Ok Computer was strongly at odds with this kind of cultural and political climate: both the music and the lyrics were characterized by a sense of pessimism and anxiety. As Cavanagh noted in 2007,

> Radiohead have been criticised for their gloomy prognoses of humanity's inexorable meltdown but, ten years later, *Ok Computer* seems all the wiser for not being suckered into fashionable optimism. The distress in Thom Yorke's lyrics was – to say the least – emotionally at odds with 1997's widespread feelings of hope and renewal.[9]

The pessimism characterizing the album is in part influenced by a number of books read by Yorke in 1997, in particular a long essay called *The State We're in* by Will Hutton, which is "an analysis of Britain's predicaments in

[6] Tim Footman, *Radiohead. Welcome to the Machine. Ok Computer and the Death of the Classic Album* (New Malden: Chrome Dreams, 2007), 10.

[7] *The Daily Telegraph* (27 October 1997).

[8] Redwood is a British Conservative Party politician, MP for Wokingham. During the years of John Major's cabinet he was appointed Secretary of State for Wales. Today he is co-chairman of the Conservative Party's Policy Review Group on Economic Competitiveness. Writing in *The Guardian* in the mid-Nineties, Redwood claimed that Britpop – with its emphasis on white working-class youth (lad) culture – was a healthy sign of Conservative Britain.

[9] David Cavanagh, "Communication Breakdown", *Uncut* 117 (February 2007), 38.

the '80s and '90s, from the decline in social housing to the inexorable rise of BSkyB. The reader's conscience is pricked by the iniquities of income distribution and rampant elitism". Even though this situation was the outcome of Thatcher and Major's politics, Hutton warned that "unless Britain's entire economic framework was rebuilt from scratch … voting for a Labour government at the next election would be useless".[10]

Yorke writes about politics in a song entitled *Electioneering*; here he describes an age in which "voters are treated as little more than customers in an extension of the service industry"[11] and he sings ironically: "I will stop at nothing/ say the right/ when electioneering/ I trust I can rely on your vote".[12] It is worth noting that Yorke wrote the songs for *Ok Computer* from his characters' viewpoint rather than his own (as was the case with *Creep*), even if the results are not apparent to the listener. Discussing this point in an interview, Yorke declares with a sort of literary awareness: "I'm not personally answerable for the characters in the songs, that's not me talking and I think that people who listen to us know that now".[13] Yorke's is in truth a polyphonic consciousness, inhabited by different voices: that's why 'listening' to his lyrics is such a complex and challenging experience. As in poetry, the writer asks for a responsive interpretation by the reader/listener, who, in the end, is asked to embrace otherness to become other herself.[14]

Ok Computer's twelve songs explore different themes and ideas, which seem however to develop a central subject that is "alienated life under techno/bureau/corporate hegemony".[15] "Airbag", the album's opening track, deals with the kind of machine everybody, in different ways, is involved with, the car, recalling how machine-dependent we all are: Douglas Robinson sees us as low-tech cyborgs because "we spend large parts of the day connected to machines such as cars, telephones, computers and, of course, televisions".[16] As the singer explains, "Airbag" is about the idea "that whenever you go out on the road you could be killed". At a different level the song (through lines such as "in a deep deep sleep of the innocent") is a critique about all of us "selfish wage zombies who accept the mantras of industrial capitalism (that dollar sign) without a second thought".[17] At the musical level the song exemplifies the key paradox which is at the heart of the whole album; as Footman observes, throughout the song (and the album) "the musicians and producer are delighting in the sonic possibilities of modern technology; the singer, meanwhile, is railing against its social, moral and psychological impact".[18]

In truth, Radiohead's strategy of resistance consists in 'using' technology in a non-functional way; here computers produce nothing but 'art', which asks listeners to 'use' their free-time to think critically about their own condition. It can be argued, as is often the case, that Radiohead are just one product to be sold within the capitalist system; however, as I will

[10] Ibid., 40.

[11] Steve Lowe, "Back to Save the Universe", *Q. Radiohead Special Edition* (July 2003), 97.

[12] Radiohead, *Ok Computer* (Parlophone, 1997).

[13] Thom Yorke, "The New Interview", in *Q. Radiohead Special Edition* (July 2003), 137.

[14] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[15] Nadine Hubbs, "The Imagination of Pop-Rock Criticism", in Walter Everett, ed., *Expression in Pop-Rock Music: A Collection of Crtical and Analytical Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 3-29.

[16] David Hess, "On the Low-Tech Cyborgs", in Chris Hables Grey with Heidi J. Figueroa Sarriera and Steven Mentor, eds., *The Cyborg Handbook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 373.

[17] Footman, *Radiohead*, 45.

[18] Ibid., 46.

argue later, this product stands as a sort of platform for new ways of thinking about oneself within end-of-the-century society. This is also connected, as we will see, with Radiohead's (later) interest in critical consumerism and ecology.

The most 'technological' track in the album is entitled "Fitter Happier" and represents a sort of list poem in which Yorke voices his uneasiness with a number of prevailing yuppified social values. The song features a piano accompaniment which sharply contrasts with a Mac synthesized voice reading the following lines: "fittier happier, more productive/ comfortable/ not drinking too much/ regular exercises at the gym (3 days a week) getting better with your associate employee contemporaries/ at ease/ eating well (no more microwave dinners and saturated fat)/ … sleeping well (no bad dreams)/ no paranoia".

The sense of alienation pervading the album is best voiced in what is often considered as the album's most experimental track: "Paranoid Android". The song is made of three different sections, which actually sound like three different songs, with the first and third 'noisy' sections enframing the highly lyrical and moving mid-section. For many, "Paranoid" is basically prog rock, but a comparison with the Beatles in their *White Album* period might be more appropriate, because of the complexity of music and words. In the opening of the song Yorke sings: "please could you stop the noise I'm trying to get some rest?/ from all the unborn chicken voices in my head/ huh what's that?". Speaking about the lyrics, Footman observes here:

> Yorke offers fragments of dialogue, speaking in numerous voices, creating fleeting images of alienation and disgust, rather than any kind of coherent narrative. One possible interpretation is that a simple request for release from noise (the plea that pervades the whole album) ends in some kind of confrontation with wealthy, successful people; this provokes the protagonist for some sort of actual or spiritual cleansing.[19]

This is exemplified in the lines: "rain down rain down come on rain down on me from great high". This invocation recalls the closing lines of the "greatest modern depiction of human despair", T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[20] As Footman observes:

> "the dust and screaming" paraphrases Eliot's promise of fear in a handful of dust; the barman ejecting the narrator from the yuppie hangout has a counterpart in the "Hurry up please it's time" refrain. More significantly, like "Paranoid Android", *The Waste Land* is composed of cultural fragments: Hindu myth sits alongside Tarot cards, Shakespeare and birdwatching guides.[21]

However, unlike Eliot's final "shantih", Yorke's final assertion of divine love is at once sarcastic and desperate.

[19] Ibid, 51.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

It seems Yorke is trying to look for some possible exit from the techno-capitalist labyrinth he and we inhabit. In this sense, the final assertion of divine love of "Paranoid" introduces the theme of the album's fourth track "Exit Music (for a Film)", written for Baz Luhrmann's film *Romeo+Juliet*. In Yorke's rewriting of the Shakespearian tragedy death becomes the only possible escape from a system based on the logic of war and antagonism (exemplified by the relationship between the two families), and yet it seems that this desperate attempt is successful to the extent in which death (as extreme enactment of love) becomes a metaphor for the urgent need we have (as listeners and social actors) for 'human' relations in a world in which even emotions and feelings are sold as capital.

After the publication of *Ok Computer*, the band embarked on a very long tour after which Yorke "spiralled into a black period of confusion and creative block".[22] *Ok Computer* had turned the group into global celebrities, which is a paradox if we consider the critique of global techno-capitalism contained in the album. Yorke and the rest of the band were in a sense looking for an 'exit' from this situation. *Kid A,* published in 2000, was the intelligent response to all this. The band's fourth album and its sequel – *Amnesiac*, published in 2001 – represent two of the most uncompromising artistic statements ever to be released in the realm of pop. Thanks to their first three albums – and especially *Ok Computer* – Radiohead had become known for its oblique, even disturbing, lyrics investigating man's alienation within society, but "until *Kid A* the songs had only spoken of alienation, they never enacted it directly. They still followed a more or less conventional structure of verse and chorus. With *Kid A*, alienation takes form directly, absent the trappings of pop artifice".[23] Simon Reynolds – in a notorious essay first published in the avant-garde magazine *The Wire* – describes the strategies adopted by the band in order to translate this sense of dislocation into sonic terms:

> Yorke spoke of how he'd even contemplated changing the name of the band in order to make a break with Radiohead's past recordings, towards which he felt utter alienation. Instead of self-destruction, Radiohead eventually set on self-deconstruction: discarding or tampering with the two things that the band was most celebrated for by fans and critics alike: the guitar sound, and Yorke's singing and lyrics. *Kid A* is largely devoid of guitars … As for Yorke's singing, on *Kid A/Amnesiac* studio technology and vocal technique are both applied to dislexify his already oblique, fragmented words.[24]

The process of self-destruction which is at the core of the two experimental albums can be read in terms of the band's attempt to produce works capable of resisting the imperatives of the pop industry, while at the same time preserving its position within this same industry. The most important of these imperatives is immediate readability, and transparency; in other words, pop must be a vehicle for fun (something which prompted

[22] Simon Reynolds, "Radiohead versus Brit-Rock/ Thom Yorke Interview", in *Bring the Noise. Twenty Years of Writing About Hip-Rock and Hip-Hop* (London: Faber&Faber, 2007), 289.

[23] Marianne Tatom Letts, *"How to Disappear Completely". Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, Ph.D Dissertation (The University of Texas, Austin, 2005), 85.

[24] Reynolds, "Radiohead", 286-287.

[25] White, "Kid Adorno", 12.

[26] Mark B.N. Hansen, "Deforming Rock: Radiohead's Plunge into the Sonic Continuum", in Tate, *The Music and Art of Radiohead*, 136.

[27] A vocoder is a machine that can make a human voice sound synthetic. It is often used to speak like a robot, with a metallic and monotonous voice. The german group Kraftwerk used a lot of vocoder effects in their songs ("We are the Robots" for example). The ondes martenot is an early electronic musical instrument that Maurice Martenot created in 1928. The sonic possibilities of the instrument were later expanded by the addition of timbral controls and switchable loudspeakers.The instrument's eerie wavering notes are produced by varying the frequency of oscillation in vacuum tubes.

[28] Greg Hainge, "To(rt)uring the Minotaur: Radiohead, Pop, Unnatural Couplings, and Mainstream Subversion", in Tate, *The Music and Art of Radiohead,* 62-84.

novelist Nick Hornby to write an article in the *New Yorker* on October 30, 2000 in which he attacks *Kid A*). Radiohead make fun of this imperative through the use of a number of devices, which turn their music into a complex statement asking for an active, committed response from the listener. It is interesting to note that no singles were released from *Kid A*: Radiohead wanted their listeners to focus on the work as a whole, with its complex internal dialogism.

Curtis White, with reference to Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* that is, to the complex dialectic between the administered universal and the particular, reads *Kid A* as an attempt to create a gap between the artwork and the law of the universal. In this sense, he identifies a number of musical devices used by Radiohead in order to enact their strategy of resistance in specific songs:

- Dissonant orchestral waves ("How to disappear completely")
- Avant-garde free jazz extrapolations à la Mingus ("The Natonal Anthem")
- Surreal lyrics and aural landscapes ("Treefingers")
- Punk/grunge crudeness in bass lines and guitar crunching ("The National Anthem")
- Homage to The Beatles' avant-gardism in the echoes of Ringo's drum rhythms in "Strawberry Fields Forever"
- Electronic ambience à la Brian Eno ("Motion Picture Soundtrack")
- Psychedelic noodling in guitar lines ("In Limbo")
- Homages to Led Zep vocal and guitar breakthroughs … ("In Limbo")
- Sampling and a general feel of the aesthetics of pastiche (rooting the band not only in hip-hop but also in Dada) ("Idioteque").[25]

What is possibly the most important aspect of Radiohead's *Kid A* is, however, the subversive process through which songs are deconstructed. The voice becomes just one aspect of a dissonant soundscape asking for the listener's immersion: if the voice is subordinated to the general sound texture of the work, which according to Hansen is also a way of "overcoming the vococentrism of Western music",[26] and at times othered through the use of vocoders and ondes martenot – the listener becomes, in a sense, an active participant in the musical experience as a whole.[27] Both musicians and listeners share a sense of dislocation, of not feeling at 'home'. If "Creep" allowed listeners to think of Radiohead's music as a homely space providing a comforting centre with which to identify, as Hainge argues, *Kid A* creates a sense of isolation in which there is no safe, reassuring voice to listen to.[28] By enacting alienation, the album stages a complex conflict between voice and noise with the latter standing for the dark forces of techno-capitalism. In *Kid A* noise represents a constant menace – the very existence of the voice-as-subject is constantly threatened. In other words, if *Kid A* can be considered a concept album, it is about the existential death of the subject trapped in a world moved by forces he

cannot control. The album, as Yorke observes, is about "the feeling of being a spectator and not being able to take part";[29] however, the whole *Kid A* experience stands as an enunciation waiting for an active, politically committed response by the audience. In Reynold's interview-piece on Radiohead we read:

[29] Reynolds, "Radiohead", 293.

> You could describe *Kid A/Amnesiac* as a Threnody for the victims of Globalisation. Yorke says that spending three years in the UK after a lot of time touring abroad was a big influence: reading newspapers, noticing the discrepancy between mainstream pop culture and what was going on 'out there'. Three members of the band read Naomi Klein's anti-corporate bestseller *No Logo*, and at one point [it] was rumoured *No Logo* would be the album title. Talking about the upsurge of anti-globalization dissent Yorke defends the movement from charges of ideological incoherence and being merely reactive. "That's how it's always dismissed in the mainstream media, but that's because it's this coalition of disparate interest groups who are all pissed off because they've been disenfranchised by politicians who are only listening to corporate lobby groups .... It's not based on the old left/right politics, it's not really even an anti-capitalist thing … it's something far deeper than that: 'who do you serve?'".[30]

[30] Ibid., 294.

This is the kind of question you could ask Radiohead themselves. Indeed, Radiohead articulate their critical discourses mainly through the discursive channels offered by a music corporation such as Emi/Parlophone. Acknowledging this unsolvable contradiction, Yorke affirms: "unfortunately, if you're interested in actually being heard, you have to work within the system".[31] This is a powerful image which the band, with critical self-awareness, has translated into visual terms in the artwork of *Kid A*'s sequel, *Amnesiac*. The soundscape of the 2001 album is not dissimilar from *Kid A*'s: the listener can experience the same sense of dislocation, even though there are more guitars and Yorke's voice is sometimes in the foreground in such tunes as the Smiths-inspired "Knives Out". *Amnesiac* should be about the idea of forgetting existential alienation and about the artist's uncomfortable position as product of the recording industry. Nonetheless, according to Hainge, the artwork in *Amnesiac*

[31] Ibid.

> situates us in the space of trauma so that we are standing in the fire at the heart of a now absent centre. Fragmented street maps, blazing buildings, towering skyscrapers seen from the bottom up, interweaving power cables and Escherian drawings of arches and staircases all appear to give sets of punctual references and coordinated with which to orient ourselves, but ultimately have the opposite effect, creating that same sense of being lost and dislocated felt in *Kid A*.[32]

[32] Hainge, "To(rt)uring", 78.

In this disturbing landscape one figure seems particularly interesting: that of the weeping minotaur, which according to Hainge represents the "unhomely space that Radiohead have come to inhabit within the homely space of the mainstream".[33] The hybrid creature is the result of an "unnatural

[33] Ibid., 79.

[34] Ibid., 82.

[35] Ibid, 83.

[36] Joseph Tate, "Hail to the Thief: A Rhizomatic Map in Fragments", in *The Music and Art of Radiohead*, 179.

[37] Ibid., 180.

[38] Ibid., 177.

[39] Ibid., 181-182

coupling: the marriage of the mainstream record industry with genuine artistic experimentation".[34] But why is Radiohead's minotaur weeping? Hainge reads the tears as a symbol of "genuine, emotional expression", of Radiohead's unique and deeply felt art, something, however, which the band can produce in the "haven of calm from the mainstream" represented by the labyrinth.[35]

Radiohead's artwork is a product of the collaboration between Dr Tchock (Yorke's alter ego) and artist Stanley Donwood. One of the most beautiful outcomes of their collaboration is the artwork for Radiohead's 2003 album, *Hail to the Thief*, in which we are presented with a number of maps of real cities, filled with anti-global slogans. The cities are London, Grozny, Manhattan, Kabul, Baghdad and Los Angeles. In the artwork the cities are "homogenized and heavily regimented via Donwood's reconception of capitalism's glaring visual presence: an oppressive sameness of style and colour that mirrors globalization's reduction of difference".[36]

The album's title refers to George W. Bush's 'stolen' elections victory in 2000: the expression "hail to the thief" is indeed a well-worn protest slogan which featured prominently during inauguration protests on January 20, 2001, in Washington. Although the band's members have denied the connection in a number of interviews and Yorke himself stated that the songs are not about politics, *Hail to the Thief* is undoubtedly a 'political' album: "it is firmly grounded in and derived from the political present".[37] However, the collection is characterized by an "uncontainable and fragile heterogeneity of subject matter" which asks for a reading aimed at isolating single texts within the sonic continuum.[38] Unlike *Kid A* and *Amnesiac*, Radiohead's sixth album is not constructed on a specific aural poetics; there are a number of electronic experiments which however do not interfere with, or deconstruct, the songs.

The opening track, "2+2=5", "targets the potential fascism of all governments" and in this it unveils its debt to George Orwell, whose *Nineteen Eighty Four* is a critique of the very process of governing. As Tate observes, "the absurdist mathematical formula is a recurring motif of Orwell's books: a reversal of the axiomatic notion … that there is an unreachable core of the self that those people in power can never affect". In truth, those who hold power get inside you and you start to think according to their logic. The song includes the phrase "you have not been paying any attention" which is a reference to O'Brien's conversation with Winston Smith in the novel. As Tate observes, through the line "it's the devil's way now", the song also introduces the theme of the struggle between forces of good and evil, which other songs of the album then expand. [39]

The song entitled "Go to Sleep" looks backwards to Radiohead's concern with technology, more specifically the song "echoes and enacts Žižek's

estimation of the situation that what we do in the face of technological change is simply 'go to sleep' and let it wash all over us. The perfect response is to let the capitalist machinery go on without interruption".[40] "The Gloaming", whose title comes from an archaic poetic term meaning 'twilight' or 'evening', stands as an attempt to deal with the aftermath of 9/11, while "Myxomatosis" – which is the name of a virus released by the Australian government in order to control the country's burgeoning rabbit population – is a song about "government sponsored mind control", something people could easily experience during the 2003 war in Iraq.[41] "A Wolf at the Door" voices, once again, Radiohead's dissatisfaction with American world politics, with its title coming from a line from John Skelton's 1522 poem "Why come ye nat to courte?".[42] After touring extensively in 2003, Radiohead took a long break in which Thom Yorke and guitarist Johnny Greenwood published their solo albums.

Radiohead's 2007 album *In Rainbows* stands as a very successful attempt to resist the imperatives of the music industry, in particular those concerned with the marketing and distribution of recorded music. After fulfilling their contract with EMI in 2003 with *Hail to the Thief*, Radiohead turned down multimillion-dollar offers for a new major-label deal, preferring to remain independent. *In Rainbows* was released via Radiohead's website on 10 October, 2007. Buyers could "pay zero or whatever they [pleased] up to £ 99.99 for the album in MP3 form" for what was to become the "most audacious experiment in years",[43] one in which the response of the audience to the musical event became, in a sense, the most important aspect of the event itself. One of Radiohead's managers – Mr Hufford – noted how "people made their choice to actually pay money... It's people saying 'we want to be part of this thing'".[44] In this perspective, the very idea of giving fans the chance to remix two of the album songs – "Nude" and "Reckoner" which would then be put to the public vote – stands as a response by the band to the community's commitment in the download strategy. However, as not all Radiohead's fans are used to downloading music, the band decided to release the album on CD and vinyl in December 2007. The album was sold in the form of a cardboard package which contained the lyric booklet, the CD, and some Donwood artwork stickers; this way of packaging encouraged a 'do it yourself' philosophy, whereupon the stickers could be placed on an unused case to create a proper package. The choice of the cardboard packaging is in line with the eco-sustainability campaign which the band promoted during their mid-2008 tour.

The focus on the release strategy risked overshadowing people's response to the music, which is absolutely striking in terms of musical freshness and lyrical directness. The ten brief narratives included in the album are extremely dense and "move together beautifully without a wasted moment to be found".[45] According to NME "the album sees Radiohead

[40] Tate, "Hail", 185.

[41] Ibid., 182.

[42] Ibid., 194.

[43] Jon Pareles, "Pay What You Want for this Article", *The New York Times* (9 December 2007), <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/09/arts/music/09pare.html?_r=1>, 30 July 2009.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Matthew Fiander, "Radiohead, In Rainbows. Things Kept, Things Left Behind", *PopMatters* (15 October 2007), <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/review/49811/radiohead-in-rainbows/>, 30 July 2009.

[46] NME Review of Radiohead, *In Rainbows* (14 december 2007), <http://www.nme.com/reviews/9350>, 30 July 2009.

[47] Fiander, "Radiohead".

[48] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_Rainbows>, 30 July 2009.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Fiander, "Radiohead".

[52] Ann Powers, "Spellbound in a Radiohead Prism", *The Los Angeles Times* (13 October 2007).

reconnecting with their human sides – realising you could embrace pop melodies and proper instruments while still sounding like paranoid androids located somewhere around the outskirts of Venus".[46] The human aspect of the album is conveyed first of all in sonic terms, through the construction of a dynamic soundscape driven by Phil Selway's almost tangible drums. As Fiander maintains, "perhaps more than anything, *In Rainbows* succeeds at showing Selway's talent, opting for his energetic live drumming over machines for much of the record".[47] The conflict between man and machine, which is a constant concern of Radiohead's work, seems here to find a momentary resolution allowing the human being to reclaim its spaces within a digitalized existence.

Lyrically, the album investigates and develops some of the old obsessions of Yorke, who recently confessed that the songs are based on "that anonymous fear thing, sitting in traffic, thinking I'm sure I'm supposed to be doing something else. … It's similar to *Ok Computer* in a way. It's much more terrifying".[48] In another interview Yorke said the album was "about the fucking panic of realising you're going to die".[49] The album opens with "15 Step" which – with lines such as "you used to be alright/ what happened?" – gives the idea of a descent into some 'lower' unpleasant situation. The following track "Bodysnatchers", inspired by Victorian ghost stories and by the 1972 novel *The Stepford Wives* by Ira Levin, translates Yorke's feeling of having his "physical consciousness trapped without being able to connect fully with anything else".[50] The key line here is "do the lights go out for you? Because the lights go out for me. It is the twenty-first century" which Yorke enunciates with extraordinary intensity, to the extent that it seems "he's fighting back again, maybe with the most verve he's ever had ".[51] A similar verve can be heard in the single "Jigsaw Falling into Place", which, juxtaposing chaotic and unsettling experiences, closes on a somehow positive note: "wish away your nightmare/ you got the light you can feel it on your back". In a sense *In Rainbows* is about light, 'human' hopes to be 'listened to'. The prismatic quality conveyed by the title is perfectly translated into the multiplicity of lights and colours of its sound. In this sense "Videotape", the last song on the album, in which "Yorke gently describes his own death and the personal legacy he hopes his loved one can preserve",[52] also stands for the audiotape Radiohead's audience have been listening to; a tape which, in a way, has come to inhabit their imaginary and enrich their perception of others and of the world as a whole.

The title of the album can generate other sorts of associations, in particular those with nature and with the importance of our commitment to it. It is not by chance that the tour for *In Rainbows* has seen the band implementing a number of strategies aimed at reducing their own impact – as part of the rock industry – on the environment. Yorke got involved

with Friends of the Earth after reading the UN Report on climate change in 2003. In an article published by the *Observer* in March 2003 he writes:

> With Radiohead, the most shocking yet obvious thing we discovered was that the way people travel to our shows has the biggest impact. So we now play in venues that are supported by public transport. We have a new lighting rig that is, hopefully, powered by super-efficient generators, and we've made deals with trucking companies to cut their emissions.[53]

Radiohead's is a strategy of resistance to a very common praxis in the (rock) industry to maximize profits without caring about the impact of 'consumerism' on the planet. The band's supporters have been highly responsive to a strategy which was also enacted through the internet: in December 2007 the following statement from members of the band could be found on their official website: "here you can try out our carbon calculator and compare different transport methods for getting to and from the venue. The list of tour dates will give you public transport information where available, and where not, there may be venue incentives for car sharing".[54] Few bands in the history of pop and rock have been capable of establishing such a dialogic relationship with their fans.

This paper has investigated Radiohead's strategies of resistance in relation to the imperatives of the pop establishment both in terms of musical form – highlighting the literary and musical complexity of such works as *Ok Computer*, *Kid A* and *Amnesiac* – and musical communication, focussing on the political content of works such as *Hail to the Thief* and on the dialogic relationship established by Radiohead with their supporters through the alternative marketing and eco campaign behind *In Rainbows*. What has emerged from this immersion in the band's soundscape and politics is the very idea that art and intelligence can combine at times in fresh and unprecedented ways to create spaces of enunciation which (in resounding of a sort of collective conscience) can articulate a critique of the dark forces governing the world, within the same channels used by those forces to "get inside our head". Radiohead's appropriation of the protest slogan *Hail to the Thief* – with its satiric subversion of the American ceremonial tune "Hail to the Chief"[55] – has the transitory but destabilizing effect of getting the "chief" out of our head: with its mixture of melody and dissonance and its rejection of sameness, Radiohead's art insinuates difference within our minds, making us human again, or better, musical beings.

[53] Thom Yorke, "Editor's Letter", *The Observer* (23 March 2008).

[54] <www.radiohead.com>, 30 July 2009.

[55] Tate, "Hail", 180.

Katherine E. Russo

On Indigenous Post-nostalgia:
Transmedia Storytelling in the Work of Romaine Moreton[*]

It is a calling an octave higher
The rainbow cries
The first time was water
The next shall be fire
(Romaine Moreton, "The River's Course")

[1] T.G.H. Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971) acquired notoriety after Bruce Chatwin's citation of Strehlow's work in *Songlines* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

During the period between 1932 and 1935, the anthropologist, T.G.H. Strehlow, and the Arrernte guide, Tom Lyonga, gathered and translated a collection of more than three-hundred Arrernte songs.[1] Barry Hill's recent biography and collection of Strehlow's diaries reveals some interesting details on the collaborative praxis employed while collecting these songs. As Strehlow recounts, during the transcription of the songs, the traditional custodians laid down a series of bundles, each containing a verse inscribed on a sacred object called *tyuringa*. Strehlow's role was to write down the verses while the custodians wailed and sang as they unravelled the long strings in which the *tyuringa* were wrapped. Yet, although it is scarcely acknowledged, Strehlow's diaries reveal the difficulties encountered by the anthropologist in understanding and translating the multidimensional textuality of Arrernte songs. Strehlow voiced his difficulties in transcribing the complex performance of the *tyuringa* and confessed that he "had to use inversion and certain poetical turns in an attempt to capture some of the dramatic effects of the original".[2] Yet, the performative intertextuality of the *tyuringa*, indicated by the multiple meanings of the term which defines the songs, the inscriptions on the sacred objects and the related ground-painting which often took place during the performances, was later reified through the wide-spread nostalgic mode of the anthropological studies of Strehlow's time into a commodified orality. Strehlow later justified his selling of the secret/sacred images of the Arrernte elders to the German magazine *Stern* by declaring that he owned them for he was the "last of the Aranda" or *ingkata* (ceremonial elder) and was recording "the remnants of a finally doomed culture".[3] According to the present study, this episode may be regarded as an example of the "white possessive investment" in orality, a story that remains largely invisible in the persistent severing discourses of developmental modernization of histories of media and technology.[4]

[2] Barry Hill, *Broken Song: T.G.H. Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession* (Milsons Point, NSW: Random House Australia, 2002), 166, 188.

[3] Barry Hill, "Talking Broken Song", *Overland* 171 (Winter 2003), 31-37.

[4] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

In the face of never-ending, counterfactual announcements of the death of orality, Indigenous songs, music and spoken word performances have not disappeared either with the colonial imposition of the English language,

or with the advent of the press, broadcasting media, and digital recording technology. On the contrary, they have participated in the growth of Australian literature, in the recording output of the twentieth century and in radio and television broadcasting. The Indigenous media sector is extensive, with more than a hundred permanently licensed community radio stations, one commercial television station (Imparja, Alice Springs) and one commercial radio station (Yamitji Media, Carnarvon); more than fifty film, video and multimedia producers; one national newspaper and a large number of regional and local newspapers; several presses (IAD, Magabala Books, Aboriginal Studies Press).[5] Likewise, the number of Indigenous music and spoken word performances at music festivals has significantly increased since the 1960s, and, more recently, digital recordings and video performances have started to circulate on the web.

Already during the 1990s, the prominent Australian scholars of media studies, Marcia Langton and Eric Michaels, demonstrated that Indigenous Australian writers have a long experience in broadcast media and sound recording technologies.[6] If the digital revolution rhetoric of the 1990s assumed that new media were going to push aside and absorb old media, convergence may emerge as an important reference point for media studies which try to imagine the future of the entertainment industry and claim that old and new media already have interacted and will interact in the future in ever more complex ways.[7] According to this study, "media convergence" or "transmedia storytelling", has always characterised Australian Indigenous creative practices.[8] Thus, media convergence and transmedia storytelling may be more helpful frameworks to analyse the steady growth of transmedia practices of Australian Indigenous authors, such as the Goenpul poet, spoken word performer, singer and film-director, Romaine Moreton, whose work inhabits and continually crosses the liminal space of creative media.

The Time of The Voice: The Commodification of Indigenous Orality

As Arjun Appadurai notes, the effort to inculcate nostalgia is a central feature of modern merchandising and commodification, yet such nostalgia does not principally involve the evocation of a sentiment to which consumers who really have lost something can respond. Rather, mass advertising teaches consumers to miss things they have never lost. In creating experiences of loss that never took place, these types of advertising create what might be called 'imagined nostalgia', nostalgia for things that never were. Nostalgia, he continues, creates the simulacra of periods that constitute the flow of time, conceived as lost, absent, or distant. Thus, they sell a progressive conceptualisation and representation of time and history to contemporary consumers.[9] This implosive, retrospective reification

[5] Michael Meadows, "'Tell Me what You Want and I'll Give You what you Need': Perspectives on Indigenous Media Audience Research", in Mark Balnaves, Tom O'Regan and Jason Sternberg, eds., *Mobilising the Audience* (St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press), 256; Anita Heiss, *Dhuuluu-yala: To Talk Straight; Publishing Indigenous Literature* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2003), 51-57.

[6] Marcia Langton, *Well I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television…* (North Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993); Eric Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[7] This re-definition of the complex relation between technology and modernity may be traced in several essays by Marcia Langton and Eric Michaels, but also in Stephen Muecke, *Ancient and Modern: Time, Culture and Modernity* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004).

[8] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006); Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling", *Technology Review* (15 January 2003), <http://www.technologyreview.com>, 23 January 2009.

[9] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996), 77.

of time has arguably characterised the commodification of Aboriginal voice and music.

Indigenous cultures and spirituality have been reduced to commodities and deprived of their original use, context and symbolic value through the extensive use of the term Dreaming, a translation of the Central Desert Arrerndic *alcheringa* coined by the anthropologist Baldwin Spencer in 1899. The Dreaming, or Dream-time as it is often called, refers to the Arrerndic time of ancestral creation. Aboriginal Englishes tend to favour the term Dreamings, which denotes the ancestral beings, the story and songs which recount the beings' actions, or the sacred objects, designs, and sites in the landscape which those actions brought about, or, more often, the term Law, stressing the fact that the ancestors created a universe of rules and regulations. Yet, the development of Dreaming as an English gloss for specific Arrernte concepts and practices has taken the normative English meaning as its starting point and has been naturalised through the marketing of festivals and events, through the plastering of Indigenous art across aeroplanes, walls, umbrella stands, paper napkins, T-shirts, key racks, wine bottle labels and all manner of domestic and commercial objects.[10] In the Australian society of spectacle, the constant stereotyping, iconising and mythologizing of Indigenous cultures has created a set of imagined representations through which non-Indigenous peoples experience an Aboriginality that is divorced from experience. Yet, verbal art and music have rarely been considered as colonial commodities, although the international exhibitions of the nineteenth century which mark the beginning of the mass consumption of the colonial commodity spectacle regularly featured spoken word and live music performances.[11]

Mainstream broadcasting, jingles and advertising have taken the invention of racial difference into every corner of Australian homes. Indigenous Australian verbal art, the songlines and the sound of the didjeridu and clapsticks have been the referents of ever-changing discursive practices.[12] Many recordings marketed as authentic and traditional music have recently been composed and recorded as new age relaxation music by non-Indigenous and even non-Australian performers to create Australia's past for the tourist industry.[13] Similarly, Indigenous music genres, such as rock and rap, are often regarded as unauthentic and pressure is put on musicians to use the dijeridu regardless of whether it "is culturally or aesthetically appropriate to the music", and to "produce Indigenous, expressive culture in particular, prescribed ways".[14] Along these lines, the nostalgic demand for the Indigenous voice and sound feeds into the production of Australia's white modernity.

Correspondingly, academic criticism often reiterates the trope of media convergence as loss or as the replacement of a vanishing oral tradition. Verbal art is separated from other visual and musical elements by means

[10] Marcia Langton, "Culture Wars", in Michele Grossman, ed., *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 86-87.

[11] Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography & Exhibitions: Representations of the Making of European Identities* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999).

[12] Murray Garde, "Maningrida, the Didjeridu and the Internet", in Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* (South Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press), 344-346.

[13] Linda Barwick, "Song as an Indigenous Art", in Kleinert and Neale, eds., *The Oxford Companion,* 328-335.

[14] Kathleen Oien, "Aboriginal Contemporary Music: Rockin' into the Mainstream?", in Kleinert and Neale, eds., *The Oxford Companion,* 335.

of literary criticism. Yet, following Mikhail Bakhtin, this search for orality may be identified as the methodological misunderstanding and confusion of the fundamental unit of communication: "the utterance".[15] According to Bakhtin, orality and recorded speech do not represent or determine something that exists outside them. Recorded and oral language do not exist outside of performance, they are not a "function of thought emerging independent of communication".[16] In Bakhtin's words, "language enters life through concrete utterances …. Our repertoire of oral (and recorded) speech genres is rich. We use them confidently and skilfully in practice, and it is quite possible for us not even to suspect their existence in theory".[17] Theoretically, Marie Louise Pratt further explains, there is no reason to expect that the body of utterances called orality should be systematically distinguishable from other utterances on the basis of intrinsic textual properties.[18]

Several critical works have further complicated the history of the orality/literacy relation. In *Orality and Literacy, The Technologising of the Word*, Walter J. Ong suggests that the relationship to orality of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, considered by Jacques Derrida one of the first voices of phonocentrism and logocentrism, was ambiguous.[19] In the *Phaedrus* and the *Seventh Letter*, Plato seems to be downgrading writing in favour of oral speech, and thus subscribes to a phonocentric point of view. However, in the *Republic*, he bans poets from the ideal republic because they stand for the oral, mnemonic world of imitation, aggregation, redundancy, copiousness, tradition, participation. This was a world antagonistic to the 'ideal' analytic, sparse, exact, abstract, visual, immobile world of the ideas. Ong claims that Plato felt this antipathy because he lived at a time when the alphabet had first become sufficiently interiorised. Paradoxically, Plato could formulate his phonocentrism, his preference for orality over writing, clearly and effectively only because he could write. Plato's phonocentrism is textually contrived and textually defended. Hence, according to this study, orality and writing are identified through their other. They have always existed in a symbiosis, that is, not as a binary opposition but as a constitutive intertextual relation. In Ong's words, "without textualism, orality cannot be identified; without orality, textualism is rather opaque and playing with it can be a form of occultism, elaborate obfuscation".[20] Written texts may well have been constructed following an oral concept (as in political rhetoric) and, vice versa, oral performance may follow conceptually written rules, as in religious services with a requirement of verbatim repetition.

Yet, the interrelation between verbal and written performances has often been constructed as a temporal succession, which has been the basis of their discrimination. As Stephen Muecke emphasises in his analysis of the different relation between epistemology and conditions of production

[15] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres", in Michael Holquist, ed., *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by Vern W. McGee (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, [1952-1953] 1986), 71.

[16] Ibid., 67.

[17] Ibid., 78.

[18] Mary Louise Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press,1977), xi.

[19] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

[20] Ibid., 169-170.

[21] Stephen Muecke, "Body, Inscription, Epistemology: Knowing Aboriginal Texts", in Emmanuel S. Nelson, ed., *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988), 42.

[22] Kateryna Arthur, "Fiction and the Rewriting of History: A Reading of Colin Johnson", *Westerly* 1 (March 1985), 55-56.

[23] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatry Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press), 123.

[24] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (London: University of Chicago Press, [1972] 1981), 99.

in Indigenous verbal art and in writing, this chronological bias may run the risk of implying that "traditional performances .... [are] preliterate, as in some way preceding literary productions, as if they lie at the end of a progression. They could then be seen as unelaborated or unsophisticated, in a comparison which always treats writing as more powerful a medium than speech".[21] Indeed, the misleading construction of the hierarchical opposition of writing/orality has had very concrete consequences, as for example the temporary amnesia of the first British settlers of Australia who declared 'possession' of an unnamed and unoccupied space. As Kateryna Arthur argues, the obliteration of Indigenous cultures in Australia has been as much the work of the pen as of physical violence and might be defined as "a kind of cultural write-out or white-out".[22] However, the erasure of Indigenous Australian pre-colonial history was not the work of writing but the failure to understand that writing need not always be defined by the Gutenberg tradition. As Derrida notes, the Western interpretation of writing is rather limited: "To say that a people do not know how to write because one can translate the word which they use to designate the act of inscribing as 'drawing lines', is that not as if one should refuse them 'speech' by translating the equivalent word by 'to cry', 'to sing', 'to sigh'?".[23] Hence, the blind spot of many scholars of Indigenous verbal art and writing might be that they seek to explain or modify the power relations that link technology and performance in a way that doesn't take into consideration that performance might exceed their power of classification and might already be operating through a technology that they prefer to perceive as their own property.

As Derrida further argues, the translation of the composition of the mutually related orality/writing into one logic is "an effect of analysis that violently destroys it, reduces it to one of its simple elements by interpreting it, paradoxically enough, in the light of the ulterior developments it itself has made possible. Such an interpretative translation is thus as violent as it is impotent".[24] Instead, this study seeks to redefine spoken word performances, song, music, and writing as intertextually related performances. Thinking of writing, orality and sound in terms of multimedia convergence and transmedia storytelling, rather than in terms of competitive historical progress, means that their analysis has to consider how they co-exist, opening up the Western progressive history of media and technology to the performative, disjunctive elements that are normally left out.

The Post-nostalgic Stage: Romaine Moreton's Transmedia Storytelling

The nostalgic view of Indigenous cultures, which denies the capacity of Australian Indigenous artists to establish new media networks and employ different technologies, may be attributed to the white possessive investment

in Aboriginal orality as a benchmark of pre-modernity. As a recent study on talking and listening in the age of Australian modernity argues, during the 1920s sound and voice started to be influenced by media and communication technologies such as the telephone, the gramophone, the radio and the cinema, and modern sound and voice were defined as something to be measured, managed and abated through new regulatory measures and new techniques of mechanical reproduction.[25] As Bruce Johnson notes, the arrival of modern sound recording technology, which in Australia coincided with the implementation of the White Australia Policy, proliferated and amplified the geographical and semiotic range through which auditory phenomena could exercise authority.[26] Arguably, sound recording technologies granted music, language and accent the unique potential to become a biopolitical device on a large scale.

Music and songs functioned as a pervasive regulatory measure and strong conveyor of the White Australia Policies, which since 1901 have largely regulated the access to the imaginary white Australian nation. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, songs and music have regulated and disciplined the white self of the modern Australian nation, as in the case of Australian children singing the national anthem and reciting in one nation-wide accent in schools and missions; the overtly nationalist discourses of band cultures in schools; ideas of what is a legitimate or pure Australian accent and powerful speech. Whiteness is, of course, a figment of the imagination, yet, as George Lipsitz argues, the possessive investment in whiteness is a social fact that provides those who introvert and pass on the spoils of discrimination to the succeeding generation with resources, power, and opportunities, such as insider networks that channel employment opportunities, housing secured through discriminatory markets, unequal education opportunities.[27] Therefore, it should not be surprising that those who enjoy the various kinds of privilege which derive from the possessive investment in sound are frequently suspicious of new information circuits and attempt to regulate ownership of the information stored in sound recording media by drawing them into discourses of authenticity and disciplinary borders. The scarcity of Australian Indigenous contemporary music recordings up until the 1970s – with the exception of Jimmy Little – reflects the Australian white policing strategies and social climate of the twentieth century.

Until the 1970s, Indigenous artists had limited access to recording studios and when they were recorded it was exclusively on non-indigenous terms. Significantly, the 1960s and 1970s, the years marked by the acquisition of the right to vote (1967) and the pan-Indigenous Land Right movements, saw a growth of recordings by male Indigenous artists such as Jimmy Little, Vic Simmons, Johnny Nicol, Col Hardy, and Ernie Bridge; music recording continued to grow in the 1980s, when at least thirty indigenous

[25] Joy Damousi and Desley Deacon, eds., *Talking and Listening in the Age of Modernity: Essays on the History of Sound* (Canberra: Australian National University E-press, 2007), 1-4.

[26] Bruce Johnson, "Voice, Power and Modernity", in Joy Damousi and Desley Deacon, eds., *Talking and Listening in the Age of Modernity*, 113-122.

[27] Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, vii.

[28] ScreenSound Australia, *Recordings by Australian Indigenous Artists 1899-1998: A Guide to Commercially Issued Sound Recordings by Australian Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders* (Canberra: ScreenSound Australia, 1999).

[29] Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities", *Black Film/ British Cinema*, ICA Document 7 (1988) reprinted in *Anglistica* 1.1-2 (1997); Kobena Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation", *Third Text*, 10 (Spring 1990), 61-79; Reprinted in Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 234-235.

[30] Katelyn Barney, "Women Singing Up Big", *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1 (2006), 45.

male performing artists released recordings. Yet, if Indigenous musicians of the 1960s and 1970s resisted dominant hegemonic cultural processes and representations, hegemonic forces in the recording industries re-appropriated the tactics of minority cultures into the mainstream. Through the aforementioned process of commodifying the Indigenous voice, the cultural hegemonies attempted to re-assimilate the disruptive elements of the movement, creating a market context wherein conventional, even stereotypical, modes of articulating Indigenous Australian music and sound received the greatest award. The marketing of a homogeneous Aboriginal identity had produced a cultural context in which images that would subvert the status quo were harder to produce because there was no market for them.

The study of Australian Indigenous sound culture clarifies how the non-Indigenous representation of Aboriginal cultural identity has often functioned as an oppressive discursive formation which reveals little about those individuals who are supposed to identify with the fictionalized Aboriginal cultural identity of Australian commodity culture.[28] Indigenous Australian musicians and writers had to carry an impossible "burden of representation" in the sense that every single publication had to stand for the totality of everything that could conceivably fall within the category of Indigenous music and literature. Building on Stuart Hall's seminal essay, "New Ethnicities" (1988), Kobena Mercer explains that during the 1970s-1980s, the role of representative fell on the shoulders of black artists not so much out of individual choice, but as a consequence of structures of racism that historically marginalized their access to the means of cultural production. The visibility of a few token black public figures served to legitimate, and reproduce, the invisibility and lack of access to public discourse of the community as a whole.[29]

This seems to be confirmed by recent studies and discographies, such as "Women Singing Up Big", which emphasise that an increase in recording output by Indigenous women performers happened only in the 1990s,[30] when they started voicing a critical corrective to the absence and romanticization of Indigenous women by certain Koori reggae rock bands, such as No Fixed Address. Several important events occurred in the 1990s that may have had an impact on the recording output of Indigenous women musicians, as also on the participation of women in the Land Rights Campaign and the incipient formation of a strongly committed Indigenous feminist and queer movement that distanced itself from the white feminist movement. An event which provided women greater access to the music industry was the 1992 national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contemporary women's music festival, *With Open Eyes*, held in Sydney. Two years later, the Tiddas group received the Australian Recording Industry Award.

As part of the evermore differentiated Indigenous movement, which has clearly entered a post-nostalgic phase characterised by multiple identifications and possibilities, Romaine Moreton's multimedia work reveals "the compelling importance of the auditory in the cultural, clinical, technological constitution of the modern self" both in inter–Indigenous and intra-Indigenous relations.[31] Yet, she also reveals the strategic potential of media convergence, defined by Henry Jenkins as the "flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation of multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of audiences", for new strategic performative purposes. [32]

Moreton's creative work may be defined as transmedia storytelling; that is, "storytelling across multiple forms of media", for it is often conveyed and may be accessed through different media such as live spoken word performances, print, radio broadcasting, cd recordings, the internet.[33] Yet, while transmedia storytelling is used by most franchising companies to enhance the creative process and capture the audience, Moreton's knowledge of the diffused discourses of modern technology and whiteness and their investment in mediatic privilege sets her apart for her metanarrative reflections and creative exploitation of the power of media, accent and sound. The governmental functions of media, sound and accent are evident in several works by Moreton, yet they acquire a central importance in her spoken word performances where the structural arrangement of the poems is often determined by the ubiquitous citation of white sounds and accent. Moreton often reflects on the colonial imposition of the English language and accent in her poems.[34] Yet rather than using Goenpul English, she diffuses the violence of colonial sound and accent, articulating it in "ritual, ceremonial, scripted behaviours" in which sound is crucial, such as the recitation of the national hymn, the oral memorization of historical events, the gospel and the abusive imposition of accent.[35] This aural strategy is particularly evident in "Like White", hence it is worth quoting the poem at length:

> Back straight and head held high
> As you mouth the pride of Australiana
> Yes You!
> Black bitch and dirty black bastard
> You!
>
> As you take your place at your desk ready for your schooling
> Absorbing the miracles of the great white captain
> Cook?
> Or Hook?
> Whatever you may
> Whatever you say
> you for now
> believe,

[31] Joy Damousi and Desley Deacon, *Talking and Listening in the Age of Modernity*, 1.

[32] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 2; see also Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

[33] Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling".

[34] I have discussed Romaine Moreton's use of English in my "'Post Me to the Prime Minister': Property, Language and Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Relations in the Australian Nation", *Anglistica*, 9.2 (2005), 103-125.

[35] Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofski Sedgwick, *Performativity and Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

Like White
Like normal

Like for now there is no prejudice
no black no white,
Until you do bad or do too good,
Like excel (for which you will be patronised)

Or don't listen (for which you will be chastised)

as you start worrying about how your mother will pay her bills
or how she always affords to feed you
on next to nothing,
and not listening to God himself!

The teacher
The preacher

As he, in his eyes

Tries to rescue you from savage ignorance
By delivering unto you the gospel ....

and ways for you to speak them like they're truth ....

and that I should take great care in my pronunciation of words and my arithmetic,
so that I shall set myself apart.

I am not like the other savages,
I am now an educated savage
I am now ready to try to be normal

Like White.
Like what I say will make any difference
As to how you perceive me,
Like God preacher man
Teacher man ....
What if I am wrong
And am still just a stupid black
Stupid Black![36]

[36] Romaine Moreton, "Like White", *The Callused Stick of Wanting* (published privately, 1995). Reprinted in *Rimfire* (Broome, WA: Magabala Books, 2000), 34-36.

[37] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 168-170.

[38] Homi Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity: The Postcolonial Prerogative", in David T. Goldberg, ed., *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1990.

In this poem, sound penetrates the body, yet it also has the power to constitute it racially. Moreton discovers blackness as a racial category in her encounter with white sound and accent. Following a post-colonial interpretation of Louis Althusser's theorisation of the process of interpellation, Moreton becomes a racially defined subject through the recitation and introversion of white sound.[37] In Homi Bhabha's words, "we are no longer confronted with an ontological problem of being but with the discursive strategy of the moment of interrogation, a moment in which the demand for identification becomes, primarily, a response to other questions of signification and desire, culture and politics".[38] Yet, in

the conclusion, Moreton renders the speech act of interpellation "unhappy" for she does not introvert it, remaining silent instead.[39]

[39] Parker and Sedgwick, *Performativity and Performance*, 3.

> So I stay silent,
> And the preacher man
> Teacher man
> No longer knows whether I have absorbed his lies
>
> Or whether
>
> A blankness of mind replicates
> The blankness of eyes.[40]

[40] Moreton, "Like White", 36.

Most importantly, while Moreton cites and recites white discourses in the first part of the poem, she creates an audience/readership that is challenged to listen to her interrogating voice either through self-recognition or as witness, for the poem's theatricality effectively depends on the tacit requisition of a third person plural, a "they" of witness.[41] The poem ostensibly moves from the introverted recitation of the white address, to the author's address of a singular second person (the teacher, the preacher), to the inclusion of the audience as "compulsory witness".[42] Although it is impossible to presume consensus between Moreton's views and those of her audience or readership, once they are placed within the enunciative space of her spoken and written performances, readers and listeners witness Moreton's silence with or without their consent.

[41] Parker and Sedgwick, *Performativity and Performance*, 10.

[42] Ibid.

Elsewhere, Moreton explicitly apostrophizes interlocutors who are as diverse as her mother, colonial rapists, and the Goenpul people. In the poem, "Crimes of Existence", she returns to the pain caused by the national anthem "Advance Australia Fair" embraced by her mother in order to reflect on the potential or actual displacement of queer identities.[43] Even here the constitution of a community of witness enables the making of an exclusionary imaginary nation ("the silence of witness that permits it, the bare, negative, potent but undiscretionary speech act of our physical presence"):[44]

[43] Romaine Moreton, "Crimes of Existence", in *Post Me to the Prime Minister* (Alice Springs: Jukurrpa Books, IAD Press, 2004), 24-25.

[44] Parker and Sedgwick, *Performativity and Performance*, 10.

> My mother thinks
> That when they sing
>
> Advance
> Australia
> Fair
> That they mean to advance
> All of us
>
> What she doesn't realise
> Is that us
> Does not necessarily

Include us
& that fair really means
Light
As in
 Right
As in
 White
....
My mother
Also doesn't stop
To consider
That when the Christian leaders
& other vilifiers of homosexuality
Call society to attention
& ask them to jail

The queer, the lesos & the gays
What they really mean
Is to incarcerate
Her very own daughter
& make sexuality her crime.[45]

[45] Moreton, "Crimes of Existence", 24-25.

[46] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 226.

[47] Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity", 204.

As in this monologue, Moreton's creative practice moves within the liminal space of media, only to emerge as a practice that is "theatrical to the extent that it mimes and renders hyperbolic the discursive convention that it also reverses".[46] Arguably, Moreton's live, filmed, digitally recorded and printed performances carry out a re-citation of subjectivity, putting on stage other ways of being by re-presenting and re-citing stereotypes in order to flout masculinity and racism. Fragmented and fractured, identity is disavowed, troubled and unsettled by multidimensional flows across multilateral media dialogues and sounds which "can subvert the perverse satisfaction of the racist, masculinist gaze ... by presenting it with an anxious absence, a [performative effectivity] that turns the discriminatory look, which denies ... cultural and sexual difference, back on itself".[47] This kind of practice works through citations which, as Judith Butler explains, are crucial to the exposure of the sounds that can no longer control the terms of their own abjecting strategies. For instance, in the digitally recorded, printed and web versions of "Blood of Dinosaur", the liquidity of blood signifies the recidivism of racism:

Water is a never ending cycle
Which passes from one generation
Into the next

Like recidivism
Has a greater context

Racism too an estuary
Ebbs and flows between descendants ....

> My tears upon the floor
> Are nothing but the blood of dinosaur

The soaking, all-embracing abjecting strategies of racism are articulated by Moreton in a cyclic pattern of "bare life" experiences:

> I knew a man
> Who took his final stand
> Armed with courage at his door
>
> This man, with gun in hand
> Said you ain't gonna take my children
> Any more
> This man defended his land
> And the children he bore
> This man physically yielded
> To the fossil hand of the law
>
> Poised upon his lip
> He tasted the blood of dinosaur ….
>
> I knew a child
> Hunger was his best friend
> Consumed by the consumer
> he was eaten again
>
> his little black body
> withered by neglect
> this little boy
> humanity forgets
>
> his body is wrapped
> invisible offshore
> the blanket soaked
> by the blood of dinosaur
>
> a history of nameless black faces
> the present a fiction of races
> I will cry I will cry until I no longer deplore….

Yet, the bare life experiences described by Moreton unavoidably fold in and out of each other. The flow of blood is unpredictable and uncontrollable: it is transformed into tears, rain, rivers of justice. Thus, the abjecting strategy of racism creates, as its 'constitutive outside', a space of material and political effectivity:

> Only when the reign falls no more
> Shall there be no blood
> Upon the valley floor
>
> The beauty not misery
> Will be lifted by the sun

Then finally collapse
Renewed as one

So when it falls
Let it wash me over
Let it wash me free
…

I shall let my eyes be filled by beauty
Not misery
Then rise with the sun

May love bring greed undone
Then may the rivers of justice
Eventually flow into one

May tears upon the valley floor
Be nothing more
Than the blood of dinosaur.[48]

Arguably, Moreton's exhortative use of "perlocutionary" speech acts such as "I shall let my eyes be filled by beauty", "May tears upon the valley floor be nothing more than the blood dinosaur" has the strategic intention of creating an audience which will listen and act according to a new vision.[49] Elsewhere, this is made evident as the audience and readers are insistently interrogated. For instance, in "Are You Beautiful Today?", Moreton explicitly addresses white women,

Are you beautiful today?
Are your children safe and well?
Brother, mother, sister too?
I merely ask so you can tell.[50]

This insistent pattern of interrogation, far from signifying univocal patterns of deafness or participation, might indicate that Moreton's movement across media such as writing, digital recording, radio broadcasting and film, is strategic in creating a direct communication with her readership and audience. Moreton creates a specifically located readership and audience by employing verbal narrative devices such as visible speaking positions, deixis, chiasmus, snatches of dialogue, repetition, rhythm and vocatives. These may be identified through the methodological application of Julia Kristeva's notion of "intertextuality" as a transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of "enunciative" and "denotative" positions.[51] However, more than a transposition, Moreton's creative work displays the potential of not being restrained by pre-conceived notions of writing and sound recording as performances of detached communication. Ong's argument that while the address of an oral speaker forms an 'audience' that is a close-knit

[48] Printed and digitally recorded in Romaine Moreton, "Blood of Dinosaur", in *Post Me to the Prime Minister* (Alice Springs: Jukurrpa Books, IAD Press, 2004), 115-119, to be found in the **Multimedia** section.

[49] Austin's category of perlocutionary speech acts is particularly useful in this context. See J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[50] Romaine Moreton, "Are You Beautiful Today?", in *Post Me to the Prime Minister*, 29.

[51] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 15.

group or unit, writing and recording have no equivalent concept, is contradicted by the insurgence of a new way of using writing and sound recording technologies.[52] Moreton's transmedia storytelling doesn't abide by the Ongian definition of writing and recording as detached universality. Writing and recording are used to address the audience and readership, thus calling for a clearly located reading and listening process, which enables mutual agency, possible alliances and exchange through a strategic alliance between the performative and the political.[53]

Yet, critics who approach Moreton's creative work in search of a pre-modern voice find it quite different from their standards of authenticity, which require the Indigenous poet to carry the 'burden of representation' of remoteness and nostalgia beyond contemporary politics. In Moreton's transmedia storytelling, the auditory becomes a site for the communication event which unfolds in the time of the present continuous and interrupts the 'remote temporality' of tradition. While the sounds, rhythms and song patterns of her performances often draw their inspiration from Goenpul traditions and lore, they are also a space of deconstruction grounded in the artist's involvement in Indigenous, feminist and queer movements. In poems such as "Shake", this is particularly powerful:

> Depression did not swell
> Like erupting oceans
> Round the point where my
> Aunty grew
>
> While disenchanted men
> Plunged to their misfortune
> The wind did not whip
> My mob into a frenzy
> They shook the dirt
> From their soles
> As per usual
>
> Now an Elder
> My aunt smirks at the impending doom
> Of tax reform
>
> Bring it on
> No gst[54]
> Will frighten
> Me
>
> The privileged panic
> the less privileged fear
> the world quakes
> whilst the poor remain motionless
> at the notion
> of a national tax hike

[52] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 74.

[53] Anne Brewster, "Engaging the Public Intimacy of Whiteness: The Indigenous Protest Poetry of Romaine Moreton", *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, Special Issue "The Colonial Present", Gillian Whitlock and Victoria Kuttainen, eds., 2008.

[54] Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a broad-based tax of 10% on most goods, services and other items sold or consumed in Australia.

we shall climb
then shake the dirt
from the soles of our feet

we shall pull weeds pick crops
chop wood
paint skyscrapers

then shake the dirt
from the soles
of our feet.[55]

[55] Digitally recorded as "Shake" on the music compilation *Fresh Salt* (Secret Street); reprinted and digitally recorded in Romaine Moreton, "Shake", in *Post Me to the Prime Minister*, 99-103, to be found in the **Multimedia** section.

Thus, as this study hopes to have demonstrated, Moreton's multimedia storytelling displaces the expectations of those Aboriginalists who search for a distant and remote practice of connection or identification with past oral forms or narratives. Significantly, in a recent interview, Moreton links her use of performance poetry to the Indigenous spiritual belief in timelessness, the belief in the simultaneous existence of past, present and future, through which she actively counteracts the Western "technologically driven" representation of time. Moreton notes that in Indigenous culture, Eastern philosophy and quantum mechanics "time doesn't exist" and that her refusal to "give away power to time" is liberating.[56] Arguably, the belief in timelessness lies at the centre of Moreton's performative practices, which counteract the nostalgic rhetoric of the white possessive investment in orality through the multimensional flow of content across multiple media platforms and the active appropriation of multiple media industries, which enable her to reach and create specifically located audiences. Through a topological reframing of time, Moreton's works may be regarded as "situative" in that they deal with the diverse situations of Indigenous peoples in Australia and, by unsettling dominant modes of empathy and identification, they invite the audience and readers to reflect on what happens when the utopian public space imagined in modernity – neutral, transparent, open to all – is replaced by a "social space that is always already inhabited hence always divided, circumscribed, owned".[57]

[56] Romaine Moreton, "Interview", *Red Room Company*, <http://www.redroomcompany.org/poets_romaine-moreton.php>, 20 January 2009.

[57] Philip Morrissey, "Aboriginal Writing", in Kleinert and Neale, eds., *The Oxford Companion*, 320; Dick Hebdige, "Foreword", in Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art*, xxi.

The Soundscapist

Danilo Capasso *interviewed by Iain Chambers*
Naples, December 2004.

Editorial Note

Last December – while watching Yvonne De Rosa's uncanny photographs of objects left behind by the patients of a former psychiatric hospital on show at an exhibition entitled "Crazy God", held at PAN (Palazzo delle Arti, Naples) – I happened to meet both Danilo Capasso and Iain Chambers. Serena Guarracino and I had just started planning this issue of *Anglistica* on music and I asked Danilo whether he wanted to contribute something. It turned out that, four years earlier, Iain had interviewed him on his experience as a 'soundscapist' for a publication, which had never materialized. He also agreed to update the interview, if only Iain could trace the text on his computer. Which Iain actually did. This explains the two-sections format of the following interview.

(MV)

Iain: How would you describe what you do?

Danilo: What I do involves a very eclectic attitude in which a series of parallel activities are in constant elaboration in a dialogue with the future. This is important given the difficulties of realising projects in a context which can easily lead to abandonment. Naples is a difficult place to work in. So my perspective involves looking far ahead so that immediate obstacles are overshadowed and I manage to find the energy to look at projects in a positive fashion, thereby overcoming those daily difficulties so typical of the city. Naples is a mythical-poetical city. It is quite distinct from those other cities where everyday life tends to function 'normally' and it is possible to arrive at results through a daily accumulation of organised work. Naples is overwhelmingly precarious, you can never take for granted what you have set up or carried out yesterday.

Iain: There are no guarantees?

Danilo: So it seems, but there are some. You need to be able to 'read' the situation and take it on trust. What I do here in Naples has to do with my interests in the media, in architecture, in music and in the creative arts. This is obviously not unique to Naples, the only difference lying in the amount of energy required in order to remain 'actual' and, at the

same time, contemporary with similar activities in other European cities.[1] In fact, what I am involved in are precisely those activities that have difficulty in acquiring visibility in the Neapolitan scene. I won't say avant-garde, given that the avant-garde does not exist; I am simply speaking of what is 'actual': the world of the media, digital cultures, the Web, where art has become very much a 'pop' phenomenon. This is the context in which I work, simultaneously following parallel developments. I've worked as a DJ in Naples for many years. It was and is my passion: selecting music for others, i.e. communicating a certain artistic and conceptual perspective as an act of cultural mediation, remains a constant factor in my life. For me this comes from my education in architecture. I haven't finished my degree, but it has provided me with an excellent frame for receiving and evaluating ideas and perspectives that arrive from diverse cultural contexts within the existing situation of this city. For example, I began my university studies early, when I was 17, as I had studied in an art institute that allowed me to anticipate my university entry, but I still haven't finished. The reason is not because I'm not interested but rather because the manner in which architecture here in Naples is taught disappointed me. The approach was rarely stimulating. This reflects the Neapolitan paradox: a city rich in culture and people with brilliant ideas, but which, at the same time, is dominated by an overriding individualism where there is no systematic aggregation. It is left to my generation to attempt to create certain structures and systems here in Naples.

Iain: How old are you?

Danilo: I'm 32. If you fail to elaborate a structure then it is impossible to produce novelty. This means co-operation, distribution, exchange, offering what you have with a certain generosity. So, Naples gives me a lot of stimulus, it provides me with many creative ideas, but, at the same time, in order to develop I have to travel. Other cities provide me with a catalyst and stimulate me in a manner so that I avoid stasis. As I've said I haven't completed my university studies, this is because prior to developing a passion for architectural studies I encountered other possibilities. I encountered music, the clubs, and a series of transversal interests that drew me elsewhere and have acquired an increasing importance. In this particular space, living here in southern Italy and drawing upon European Union funding I have been able to create a new media company composed of young, eclectic people like myself involved in graphics, advertising, the digital arts, and so on.

Iain: What exactly does this association do?

Danilo: It's called HUB. The name itself gives an idea of what it is all about, a knotting together of a series of intersecting interests. A group of us, each with his or her specific competence – photographer, graphic designer,

[1] The term 'actual' used by Danilo Capasso here resonates with the connotations of 'contemporary', 'up-to-date' or 'topical' attached to the Italian word 'attuale'. We preferred to keep it as connoting not just 'current' and 'existing now', but 'existing in fact' and 'real as distinct from ideal' [Editorial Note].

The Soundscapist

programmer, video maker, sound designer – seeks to elaborate a project, a reality, within the city that can function as a nodal point, a hub.

Iain: You have undergone a transition from Disk Jockey to Digital Jockey.

Danilo: Sure. I began talking about the relationship between the DJ and architecture precisely because I consider that architecture involves a capacity or disposition that does not necessarily involve constructing a building: it evokes a systematic approach to the complex interaction between things, whether these systems are buildings, events, works or projects.

Iain: In this passage from DJ to DJ, from Disk to Digital Jockey, you continue to be involved in music. Or, rather, to be involved with sounds.

Danilo: That has remained constant. But yes, let's speak of sounds. I don't consider myself a musician.

Iain: Perhaps we should define you as someone who is involved in the architecture or design of sonorial landscapes.

Danilo: Exactly, a soundscaper. What I'm interested in is what occurs in space. Between music and architecture there are a whole series of significant connections. Music interpellates space even when the latter is apparently empty, producing an architecture of vibrating molecules of air. It gives form and content to space. In this sense, architecture is congealed music. We could travel back in time through a semiotic lens and consider the musical divisions and rhythms of Baroque music and their consonance with the visual system incorporated in the *facciata* of the buildings of the period. Then this interest of mine has developed further in the light of my working in HUB and learning things that I never thought I would have to deal with: project management and organisational skills, marketing! Activities that here in Naples are difficult to pursue. Naples has a rather stifled market in terms of the media, advertising, Internet. We need to remember that in Italy some eighty per cent of the communications market is in Milan. Of the remaining twenty per cent most of it is in Rome, a bit in Florence and Bologna, and some crumbs in the South. However, the South is potentially an enormous cultural market. Although it lacks a strong communications sector it has a series of assets at the local level in terms of cultural activities and tourism; it is these that it needs to develop rather than remain the victim, as with the rest of Italy, of its history. This is the real danger: we are victims of our past, we have a lot of difficulty in removing this weight.

Iain: Perhaps both victims and the adoption of a certain 'victimisation'.

Danilo: Exactly, but to the degree that we are 'victims' we can paradoxically also exploit that category in a positive way. For example, in the attempt to revitalise those discourses that orbit around my interests in architecture and music the *Sintesi* festival was created. This emerged after a long gestation that included my DJ career in the period after the 1980s:

that period with House music and stuff in which Naples played a key role in Italy. While there were, and are, clubs everywhere, in northern Italy the situation is far more provincial and is deeply entrenched in the local tradition of Saturday night dancing so that the appearance of House music didn't really change anything, merely the genre. Here in the city this moment was experienced in an altogether more intense fashion. It is sufficient to say that major DJs arriving from Britain and the United States always commenced their Italian experience in Naples. Between 1990 and 1995, Naples was the crucial scene. Subsequent developments have led to a different situation today. Electronic music has now acquired a certain institutional recognition. House and Techno have in part been integrated with the pop panorama and are no longer strictly underground. At the same time, there has been a cultural reconfiguration of such proposals as they have been drawn into becoming part of the experimental scene in which electronic music becomes a branch of the contemporary art scene.

Iain: A process of contamination: on one side, electronic music developed in the context of musical modernism and the history of classical music; on the other, this other modality of electronic music, that apparently emerged from 'below', from the House movement, youth culture and the popular culture scene.

Danilo: I fully agree; it is something that brought together both 'high' and 'low' culture…

Iain: At this stage it becomes extremely difficult to draw the line and indicate the distinction that separates a trajectory that arrives from the contemporary classical world of Boulez, Stockhausen and others, and one that comes from subcultural sounds…

Danilo: This is because of technology. Initially there were academic studies in experimental music that required expensive and inaccessible technology. Today, for example here in my bag I have a laptop computer and I am free to experiment with all sorts of sounds and approaches. I can be John Cage… I have a software that I can programme to imitate Stockhausen or Cage. With the synthesising of sounds we have arrived at an extremely intimate level. What you're saying is true: contemporary, experimental, avant-garde electronic music has descended into the arena of popular taste…

Iain: Perhaps we could suggest that this distinction – between high and low culture – has become largely invalid. We might then prefer to say that the avant-garde has not so much descended into the popular as gone elsewhere, beyond this traditional scheme.

Danilo: Fine, they've gone elsewhere.

Iain: There has now emerged another space.

Danilo: Sure, my use of the terminology 'high' and 'low' is fundamentally polemical, a criticism of the academic custodians of certain traditions and

their abhorrence of recent transformations in which art flows in unsuspected channels and comes to be increasingly inscribed in the category of fashion. This means that everyone ends up listening to experimental electronic music. Two weeks ago I was in Rome to hear a fantastic concert by the London Sinfonietta, where, alongside pieces by Ives and John Cage they played Boards of Canada, Aphex Twin, pieces of electronic music arranged for orchestra – something that I'd never heard before. But what is important to note here is that there were something like 2,500 people there; it was packed, and largely a youth audience. There was even an article the next day on *La Repubblica* in which a classical composer expressed surprise that there was an audience of this type for such a concert. "… There were all these young people listening to the orchestra and applauding a piece by John Cage as though it were the Chemical Brothers. A concert hall full of tattooed bodies: it is something to think about…".

Iain: Of course. Let's speak a bit about how you yourself elaborate such sonorial landscapes; for example, in the context of the *Sintesi* festival that you organise here in Naples every year.

Danilo: Yes, every year in two sessions. Rather than an artist I'm one of the curators of the festival. The festival is something that a group of us invented. The festival itself is our artistic work. Most of us who work in organising the festival itself are unable to insert our individual works, we offer the space to others. Even though each of us is involved in the areas of music and video we invite other artists. The festival was launched in order to insert Naples in a European and international circuit of festivals and activities of this type; that is to render Naples a participant in an international dialogue. In fact, the *Sintesi* festival is better known outside Naples than in the city itself. This is fundamental. Of course, this non-recognition is typically Neapolitan! To be acknowledged it is necessary, whether you like it or not, to emigrate. Otherwise you remain blocked; there's something in this city that makes creativity implode. It's like Vesuvius, it refuses to explode and hence remains constipated.

Iain: Sure, just like after the earthquake in November 1980 there was that outburst of creative energy in the local scene. There was electricity in the air.

Fig. 1: San Severo's Church, hosting the 2002 *Sintesi* Festival, photograph, courtesy of Danilo Capasso.

Danilo: *Sintesi* is not the result of a spontaneous idea, but rather took shape over many years as a group of us sought to realise a project of this type. It took time but six of us who were willing to deal with the difficulties managed to put together a group in 2000 to manage the festival; we 'took up the cross' as we say. This is the positive side of living in Naples; that is, when people, fully aware of all the difficulties, decide to realise a project such as this. Naples, apart from *Sintesi*, is right now witness to a whole series of initiatives of this type. So, just as there is a Film Festival and a Comics Festival, there is also the development of a festival of the electronic arts. The latter is quite separate from the development of contemporary art, which in Naples is now integral to the business of the art world and local politics. We have put together this festival and we present it in historical buildings, reinvesting the past with new languages and interrogations, exorcising to some degree the burden of the past. Taking this super-contemporary, super-electronic material and its digital aesthetics, and inserting it in Baroque *palazzi*, Renaissance churches, we create a strong and disquieting contrast between the future and the past. This has become a fixed element in the elaboration of the festival.[2]

Iain: Certainly, my own experience is that of climbing the massive stairs of poorly illuminated Baroque buildings, and then stepping out of the yellow, crespuscular light to be enveloped in waves of electronic sound as the future comes to invest the past.

Danilo: Exactly! It is this sort of short-circuit that we seek to achieve. In fact the first edition of the festival was extremely dramatic from this point of view. The Chiesa di San Severo al Pendino is a Renaissance church. There were also unsuspected connections, given that some of those who performed in the festival are part of a minimalist current which could be said to have a resonance with Brunelleschi! We have a church, an architectural environment, in which the proportions are those proposed by the circle, the square, the sphere, the cube; only the altar is Baroque.

Since then we have moved to the seventeenth-century Palazzo dello Spagnuolo with its marvellous open Spanish staircase, as guests of the Fondazione Morra, and later to the Chiesa dell'Annunziata, which dates back to the fourteenth century. It is an ex-institute for unwanted babies, waifs and strays, and today a hospital, and has an astonishing subterranean circular chapel by

[2] For an example of this super-contemporary re-use of an ancient church, see the video of one of the performances of the 2002 *Sintesi* festival made available by Danilo Capasso, to be found in the **Multimedia** section.
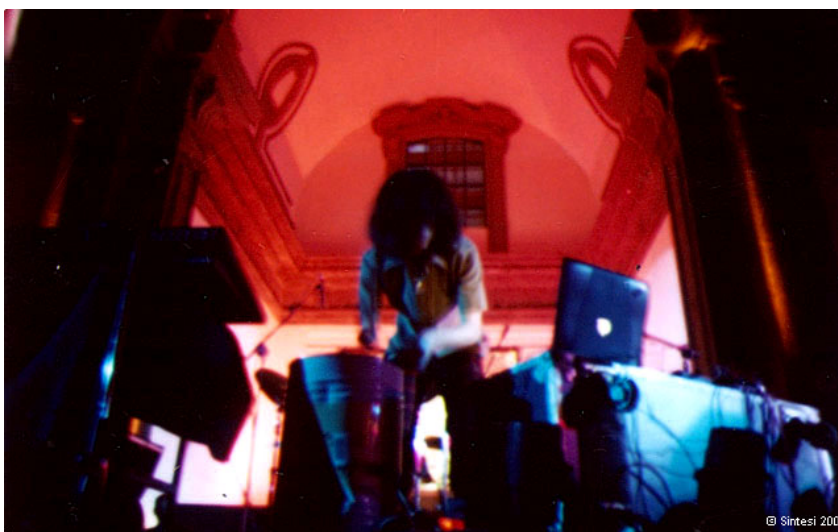

Fig. 2: *Sintesi* Festival, 2002, photograph, courtesy of Danilo Capasso.

Vanvitelli in which we hold the concerts. So, once again, there is this type of dialogue. This morning I was at the National Archaeological Museum; there we want to use the Farnese Hall, or the main entrance to the Museum for the next edition of *Sintesi.*

Iain: Right now at the Museum there is a similar operation taking place, with those exhibitions of modern art (Clemente, Kapoor, Serra, Keifer) in the four large rooms on the ground floor in a building brimming with the relics of Pompei.

I want to ask you something else. Along with all the structural and cultural difficulties of working in Naples, the perspective that *Sintesi* seeks to promote finds itself operating in a situation in which there already exist many sonorial landscapes – from Baroque music to Neapolitan song — so I would like you to comment on this situation, on the possible convergences, conflicts, dialogues or absence of. This is an inherited humus that is extremely persistent, and insistent, in Naples: a sedimentation that weighs on the present.

Danilo: Sure, but with the music here in Naples it becomes a more flexible inheritance that does not readily exclude innovation. So, and returning to young people involved in electronic music, in the last three years in Naples the situation has developed extremely rapidly. For example, my own experience throws some light on all this. After working as a DJ I became actively involved in producing music, not so much as a 'musician' but rather by working with what at the beginning of the 1990s was the most simulating instrument: the electronic sampler. The whole question of music and creativity was for me concentrated in the use of the sampler. I 'sampled' sounds from the streets and surrounding space, and then compiled and composed these sound 'images' or 'photographs' via the computer to produce a music that responded to the immediate environment. Right then I was heavily involved in dance music. So, the sounds, instruments and voices of the Neapolitan tradition, often 'stolen' from the streets, became part of an experimental repertoire in the mid-1990s that also links through to the sounds of such groups as Almamegretta. It was all part of a developing dialogue. I was involved in this sort of thing that I tend to refer to as *dub-trance*, a bit like some of the Asian groups in London such as Asian Underground, which in Naples becomes a sort of Mediterranean Underground, even though I never really managed to bring it to full fruition: local producers were not yet interested in such a proposal. However, it was an interesting idea, and although I no longer do that sort of thing the city has musically grown. It is sufficient to note that today amongst the most important Italian DJs that travel the world, the vast majority are Neapolitan. Today, as always, Naples produces many artists in the world of music. In a musical perspective, Naples is extremely productive. This has always been the case.

Iain: Yes, throughout the whole arc of modernity, from 1500 onwards.

Danilo: In fact, traditional Neapolitan music underwent its canonisation in the sixteenth century. It was Roberto De Simone who theorised that process; however, this has also resulted in a profound historicisation and subsequent mummification of that music. It has become the unquestioned, classical tradition of Neapolitan music.

Iain: The canon.

Danilo: The canon. This has had negative consequences and it has taken some time to unblock this situation. However, it remains interesting to see what remains and continues to circulate, so even electronic music participates in this Neapolitan 'mood'. For example in the last *Sintesi* festival we brought to Naples 'Invisible Cities', an installation created by an Irish collective called Fällt who took Calvino's text and transformed it into an interesting sonorial installation. 'Invisible Cities' proposes a journey through twenty-three cities purely through sound. There are sonorial compositions, without visual accompaniment, that narrate these different cities through five minutes of aural perception. The curator of this installation, Christopher Murphy from Fällt, invited a series of musicians largely involved in experimental electronic music to produce compositions that mixed both abstract motifs and field recordings, entrusting to each musician a city. He subsequently created a large planosphere on which for each city there's a headphone socket. Inserting the headphone in the diverse sockets you journey from city to city. With the acoustic mass of each city in your ears you are left to imagine diversified urban scenes, further underlining that the perception and beauty of sound is physical, and in such a fashion you perceive space.

When this installation came to Naples in the last edition of *Sintesi*, it was suggested that Naples be inserted into the installation. So I and another sound artist and electronic composer who works in *Sintesi* and who is called Mass, aka Mario Masullo from DSP Records, put together this soundtrack, this sound portrait of the city which we've called '*Randomitopoiesis*'. We began with the idea that we did not want to create a stereotypical 'picture' of Naples, we wanted to avoid the common place. So '*Randomitopiesis*': that is, the mythical-poetical elements of the city crossed with the random logic of the software we employed. We went about with our Minidisks, one of us going to the beach, the other to the market, or recording the transit from home to work, or spending an afternoon recording sounds in the middle class Vomero district. In this manner, we recorded a whole series of interesting situations, spaces, events, and then in the studio we sought to compile them in the 'flattest' style possible, reducing our intervention to the minimum. Then we selected some of these sequences and inserted them into a programme that 'randomised' them: decomposing and recomposing them. Out of this

'randomic' language there emerges a city that, even while you are avidly seeking to evade the stereotype, continues, in the five minutes, to present sonorial experience with the unavoidably specific manner it has for narrating itself. In these five minutes there is the street seller hawking out his wares, the fish monger, all the sounds that constitute 'Naples', even though we had no intention of seeking these sounds out. This is it! Even if you would rather not acknowledge the fact, this is it. There exists this unavoidable net. There's no escape. So, even if you want to do John Cage, you remain caught, suspended, in that Neapolitan net. Seeking to escape it, we find ourselves reconfirming local Neapolitan myth and poetics: there's no way out! And if you really want to cancel it you find that you have also to cancel yourself and, with it, the value of an identificatory aesthetics.

Iain: In fact, the real question is how to work with this material, how to re-elaborate, rather than abandon, such sounds.

Danilo: Certainly, and this is not so much music as a sound portrait, an example of sound art. While in the musical field there was, for example, the *Sonar* festival last week in Barcelona: this is a major festival of electronic music that attracts many, many thousands; something that we are trying to explain to the governing bodies of this city. It is not sufficient to offer Anselm Keifer, there is also a potential public composed of young people, aged between 18 and 35, who travel the world to participate in concerts and events of this kind, and who constitute a far greater public than that attracted to contemporary art. Local authorities ought to be thinking in this direction. Naples is a city, like Barcelona, which is perfect for this type of thing. Anyway, at *Sonar* this year, the only Italian artists invited were from Naples. The only two Italian artists invited to perform at *Sonar* were Neapolitan.

Iain: It is this that interests me; the fact that you, these musicians and artists, propose a language that most certainly belongs to Naples while, at the same time, seeking to reconfigure the city and to transport it elsewhere: not to negate Naples, but to re-elaborate it. Here we are clearly touching upon the sensitive issue of how to 'do' culture in Naples. As you yourself suggested in the case of Roberto De Simone, there is often this stumbling block represented by the philological authority of the past that can so easily become a prison. It has such an implacable force that one inevitably respects those who go elsewhere in order to develop their work and seek recognition. It is in this sense that we run the risk of becoming victims of the past, as though predetermined by destiny.

Danilo: Yes, it is as if at a certain point Naples asks you to surrender. Why don't you simply surrender and enter my system, my ways, or do you still have the energy to struggle against me?

Iain: Perhaps this part of the great illusion that many live – the idea that Naples is somehow homogenous, as though it were a unique historical

and cultural bloc, when there are clearly tens or hundreds of 'Naples'. It is in this key that you, *Sintesi* and the artists we are referring to, are proposing another way 'to be' in Naples, rendering a previous, domestic and seemingly homogeneous understanding, to use that deeply suggestive Italian term, *spaesato* or 'homeless'.

Danilo: Yes, one frequently encounters the incapacity to change frequency and tune in to a new perspective, a fresh take. In this manner, the city, its representatives and official culture invariably penalise themselves, closing down discussion on emerging aesthetic and artistic tendencies through an unconsciously imposed silence.

Iain: But then the paradox, as always, is that art tends towards revealing precisely what you have avoided seeing or considering; that is art: it disturbs local coordinates and transposes you elsewhere, rather than reconfirming the already perceived.

Danilo: It holds out the possibility of removing the anxiety before the art work and insisting on the multiplicity of creative activities in the world of electronic music as a branch of contemporary art. It is also about creating difficulty; hence debate, discussion, development.

Appendix 2009

To take up where the interview left off nearly 5 years ago, I wish to quote a statement by Geert Lovink, an important media theorist and director of INC in Amsterdam: "[we are] free intellectuals, not as a bohemian choice, but because it is the last option left".[3] My eclectic path inside creative-artistic disciplines has gone on during these years, turning to the city as an object of study and experience and to the Web as an extension of the urban and social dimension in a 'flaneurised' form. It is, finally, the fusion of the different elements constituting my cultural background, made up, as it is, of architecture/art/new media/contemporary music.

Having put to rest our entrepreneurial ambitions in media communication that were so deeply immersed in the wave of false positivism of the late 1990s, we are now back with our feet on the ground, weighed down by the new global crisis and in search of a re-positioning of existence and experience.

Today, my main activities are in the field of design, whether on paper, for the web, or space design, with my small design firm "Questions of Space"; I am also working for MAV, Museo Archeologico Virtuale of Ercolano, for which I am curator of the internet section, designing its content architecture and interface, as well as coordinating the web developers for the museum.[4]

As for the artistic and curatorial side, my activities are concentrated in a project called N.EST Napoliest, a think tank that combines art and new

[3]<www.networkcultures.org>

[4] <www.museomav.com>

5 <http://www.napoliest.it/>

6 <www.mediartsoffice.eu>

media, architecture and urban studies, dedicated to the Eastern area of Naples.[5] With N.EST, since 2004, I have been carrying out projects and participating in exhibitions, as well as collaborating with a non profit organization, MAO media&artsoffice, which focuses on the spreading and distribution of new media and art.[6]

Naturally, my soundscapist essence is still alive: music runs parallel to my other activities, emerging here and there in experiences of performance and composition, often accompanied by a visual component.

The latest experience embracing both urban practice and musical performance took place in September 2008 in Liverpool. Within the context of a series of events organized by the Liverpool Biennial (Liverpool was European Cultural Capital in 2008), I was invited to contribute to the creation of a "community event" in a suburban area of the city, together with a local community college. The event was organised in a suburban park around a public art installation. Called "La Dolce Vita", it underlined the relationship between Naples and Liverpool, two port cities, two "cities on the edge". It also stressed the interest of Liverpudlians for Italy, and particularly the Southern Italy of the 1960s.

My participation in the event, alongside my conceptual contribution, was a performance as DJ, with a special selection of Italian songs from the decade between 1955 and 1965: soundtracks and pop songs, covers and jingles, all played from the steps of a building overlooking the event. It was a very unique experience, outside any classic club or dancehall conceptions; a whiff of 1960s Mediterranean sounds, splashed with Campari and Italian food offered to the not so wealthy residents of a rather lower-class suburban area.

Fiorenzo Iuliano

Migrating Keys. A Conversation with Wayne Koestenbaum

Music as a Cultural Practice, or, What is Being Manrico?

My encounter with Wayne Koestenbaum is the contrapuntal complement to a week of official meetings. I'm spending a few days in New York after attending a summer school in Dartmouth, New Hampshire, an intense week of lectures, seminars and presentations. I'm happy to replace the onerous duties of academic performance with the pleasure of exploring a city that is mostly unknown to me, and quietly conversing with persons I like.

I am going to meet him in a cafe in Chelsea, a part of NYC that is gradually acquiring a new shape. New buildings are being constructed everywhere, as I noticed yesterday evening while strolling from Greenwich Village to the Upper West Side. My staying in an Asian neighborhood in Queens widens the perception of my own displacement: I'm a stranger who lives in a 'distant', peripheral part of the city, continually experiencing a sense of transitoriness from one place to another without being at home anywhere.

My conversation with Wayne Koestenbaum is destined to a forthcoming issue of *Anglistica*, whose focus is music and cultural studies. I'm immediately fascinated by Wayne's talk, and in the convoluted digressions of our conversation words go astray, as brought by a natural, independent flow of ideas and suggestions. Obviously, I don't read any of the questions I have accurately prepared yesterday.

We just sit in the cafe and have a beer.

To my utmost surprise, it is Wayne who starts asking me about my interest in music; yet it is not after all that strange that I should find myself interpellated by the supposed 'object' of my research. The alternating, interfering rhythm of our questions and answers and the interweaving of our voices and ideas continually relate our talk to the musical subject of the conversation.

Wayne's words focus on the private, corporeal correspondence that connects music and identity, as he shows me by immediately translating my initial remarks on the differences between piano and harpsichord into the different physical effort that marks the limit between the more aggressive, muscular piano performance and the subtler, more cerebral requirements of harpsichord. Music, as an experience closely related to the construction of identity, is intimately connected to one's own corporeality even when it seems far distant from it, and the importance of performance and exhibition, as Wayne reminds me, is no less crucial than the role played by texts and scores.

What immediately emerges in Wayne's words (and, obviously, in his books) is the idea of music as a cultural practice in its own right, even when considered in its exclusive textual, albeit polysemic, dimension. Wayne hints at the questions of music and sexual identity, of music and queerness. And, surprising me for the second time, the first instance he refers to is not melodrama and its innumerable nuances, which we discuss later on, but Chopin and Schubert piano music. He makes me notice the "migrating keys" that characterize Chopin's music, through which identity is aptly staged as a notion that comes to be asserted only while it is performed, finding in its temporary and transitory phases and phrases the apical and at the same time problematic moment of expression: "Think of Chopin's Sonata in B minor: think of its chromaticism. When I practice, I play the supposedly subordinate lines and chords slowly and separately, and thus I hear them take a detour, away from the dominant drama".

Chromatic elaborations trigger a radical reconfiguration of traditional musical genres, and, consequently, undermine the very possibility of conceiving structures and forms as aesthetic and historical data given once and for all. And, as Wayne underlines introducing a theme that will occupy us for another part of our conversation, uncanny hospitality and disguising displacement turn out to be two potential figures capable of questioning and conceivably dismantling any strong sense of identity. Chopin's waltzes, scherzos, sonatas are "perpetual masquerades", the gestures through which something different and differed is materially performed. "Is a waltz the speculum of a masturbatory inner dialog? Is it an inner track scrupulously followed? Is it a repressive fantasy?", Wayne keeps asking me. Chopin's melodic detours trace the unstable limits of a "musica practica", as Wayne terms it, music as experience, in which even the part played by the left hand is a kind of interrogation with which the player addresses his (or her) audience: "Imagine playing very, very slowly the Scherzo of Chopin's third Sonata for piano (which is 'molto vivace')".

Chopin's music conjoins the traits of mimicry and displacement, two words so recurrent in critical theory, which I had never associated with music, or at least not in these terms: "Chopin was always broadcasting the genre he was occupying, and also broadcasting his broadcasting", insists Wayne. I instinctively think of mazurkas, polonaises, waltzes, even ballads and nocturnes. What could it mean that Chopin is "broadcasting his broadcasting"? Is Wayne suggesting that something is displaced in the very act of its performance, and that this displacement is both textual/linguistic and territorial? The queer emphasis on political dimensions of the performative is charged, in his words, with a further, complicating meaning: it is not so much that we are what we stage, or are requested to stage, as that our political location is also constructed and elaborated through the very mechanisms of staging and performing, and that music

succeeds in the twofold goal of staging a text and a genre (namely: an identity), since it is a score, a written page, that acquires an audible and phonic shape, and, at the same time, of replicating the act of this staging, rehearsing it, questioning its rhetorical structure and the ideological bases from which it derives. That is why there's no need to find a connection between music and cultural studies: music is already a political practice, as Wayne suggests, and performance is the vacillating, slippery surface of its practice. He goes on, referring to Chopin's mazurkas: "What mazurka are we in? And then: are we in France? Are we in Poland?" From Chopin, our discussion immediately and naturally shifts to opera, for very similar reasons: "The tenor is a man, he has a penis, probably" – I cannot restrain my laughter – "But what is 'being-Manrico'?"

Call me Liberace: Hotels, Displacement, and Ambiguity

"I'm essentially a poet, I don't work through arguments, I don't like to argue, I present fragments. My work resembles a collage", Wayne tells me, and I'm by now intrigued by the idea of being myself displaced in the very moment I'm doing this interview and listening to Wayne's words about the work of displacement as it is realized in music and through music. As a scholar operating (more or less) in an international context, as a former pianist, as a queer person, as an Italian that is spending some days wandering in the meandering, reticular urban scenario of New York City, displacement comes to me as an almost familiar notion, a modality of assembling ideas, conversations, encounters, cities in a way that I am getting more and more acquainted with. Also noises, and music, set up my unstable location: my iPod provides me with a necessary soundtrack while I walk through the city, and even now, as Wayne reminds me, the loud music played in the cafe where we are sitting and talking literally surrounds us. Music almost inevitably determines the experience of displacement and is determined in turn by it.

I am interested in one of Wayne's books in particular, *Hotel Theory*, "two books in one", as we read on the back cover, two different and parallel narratives: the first, written on the left part of the page, contains scattered reflections about music, space, and 'theory'; the second, on the right part, is a dime novel that features the love story of Lana Turner and Liberace. A musical book, I would say, since it narrates the story of a piano-performer, Liberace, and often refers to Chopin as a key figure to explain its own narrative detours, but also because it is constructed on a rigorous and severe harmony between the two sections, which proceed together like the two parts of a piano score. Besides that, it is Koestenbaum that stages his own role as a performer and as a *virtuoso* here: the whole novel (the right-hand column) does not contain a single article, which makes it an exhausting

and presumably almost exasperating tour de force for the writer and a vertiginous experience for the reader (a book *d'exécution transcendante*, I would say).

I ask Wayne how he wrote his book. Our conversation turns, again, to displacement: "I'm interested in staging my work, in creating a symmetry between, on the one hand, a scene overtly displayed and transmitted to a hypothetical reader and, on the other hand, a scene of internal conflict, self-interrogation and crisis. Even when I use the voice of a critical theorist, I'm behaving as an impostor" - impostor being a word that I decide to understand as a metonymic trick to display, in a single gesture, both the act of showing off, proper to the *virtuoso,* and the act of disguising the lack of any definite location. This sense of perennial estrangement from structures of belonging is made all the more explicit by the label chosen for the love story between Lana Turner and Liberace, 'dime novel', a literary sub-genre that has a clear place in the history of American popular culture. Dime novel was the term used for popular literature, often of a sensational character, largely diffused at the beginning of the XX century. I ask Wayne if he really considers *Hotel Theory* a dime novel, and why. "It's ventriloquism: my voice, but mediated. I impersonated a cheap genre. A 'dime novel' is aesthetically low stakes. Just cheap gossip".

A ventriloquized expression: maybe his own words uttered through the voice of another, maybe the means through which the trivial plot of the Lana Turner and Liberace love story could be conveyed in its essential 'trivial' nature, being at the same time accompanied and sustained by the elaborate and refined digressions that occupy the left part of the pages. Are these digressions Wayne's real voice, opposed to his ventriloquized one? I don't dare ask him, perhaps because the mere hypothesis of a 'voice of one's own', in the middle of a conversation like this, seems quite simplistic if not totally incongruous. Wayne confirms my impressions upon the musical nature of *Hotel Theory,* comparing his writing to a piano performance: "A pianist, on the stage, expresses an 'object' for his audience's delectation, but at the same time the pianist submits that object, that material, to an internal jury".

But displacement is charged with another meaning that I had totally overlooked. Jewish identity is one of the other imperceptible stakes in *Hotel Theory*: "While displacing words and texts in *Hotel Theory* I make clear my exile". The Jewish question haunts both *Hotel Theory* and another book he authored, *Cleavage,* as he points out: "I'm not religious, I'm not very Jewish. But I see a connection between my aesthetic structures and a Jewish intertext, concerned with diaspora and displacement. My father is a Jew from Germany, and *he* is one of the 'hotel figures' in my life. Displacement, an inherited element, is something I consciously deploy as aesthetic scaffolding".

I am pushed back to an intricate textual interplay: first, Derrida, for displacement and Jewishness, and then Henry James, who broadly discusses in *The American Scene* the "hotel-spirit" that permeates the US national culture and tradition. I ask him if 'his', too, are American hotels, metaphoric tricks that mirror political processes presently going on in the US and in the world. America and the hotel, in Wayne's words, share a symbolic structure that is to some extent based on a specular recognition (and I cannot but think of the 'specular' strucure of *Hotel Theory* again, its two columns of text facing and mutually resorting to each other). "In the US we don't have social welfare: during the Reagan administration, patients were 'deinstitutionalized' from mental hospitals, rendered homeless, and put in hotels. A similar thing has happened with immigrants. The hotel is not a place of hospitality, it is not a 'guest-house'. It is a kind of prison. Guantanamo is a hotel. This U.S. politics of inclusion and exclusion, this ambivalent relation to outcast immigrants, is part of the American political unconscious".

Hosting people amounts to making them aware of their precarious status, and, at the same time, to hold them hostage, to enclose them in a symbolic framework that turns hospitality into a condition of perennial subjection. *Hotel Theory* is characterized by a visible and powerful sense of political self-awareness, which deeply and controversially questions the stability of any belonging, subtly highlighting its transitional status. Identities are as precarious as hotels, and so are national and sexual identities, and music too is one of the tracks along which this precariousness can be better displayed and understood. It is because I'm back from a Summer school in American studies, maybe, that I cannot but notice that there's a passage in *Hotel Theory* where Liberace declares: "Call me Liberace", which is for me a blatant reference to the much more notorious "Call me Ishmael", one of the milestones of the American canon. Wayne argues: "Identity is a hotel-like structure, and ambiguity is inscribed into its design. This character is just a figment whose name happens to be Liberace. He is not the actual Liberace. I'm calling him Liberace".

A Music to Fight Against

Let's turn back to music. Thinking of another of Wayne's books, *The Queen's Throat,* I suggest the possible connections between two powerful, emblematic 'musical protagonists': the *virtuoso* and the *diva*. I ask Wayne to discuss the figure of the *diva* and its thematic articulations, in terms of both musical performance and identification of gender, and I hypothesize that the music performer, or the *virtuoso,* could somehow be perceived as the male counterpart of the *diva,* as if they were the opposite extremes of the same spectrum. The more so since, as I was arguing above, Wayne's

writing is also an example of virtuoso art. "Virtuosity is a kind of exhibition in writing", he says. "As a pianist, I'm always counting, shaping and collaging. Most of my writing is a way of counting and rearranging. I like to play – self-consciously, idiosyncratically – with increments". Is it a kind of performance? "A masochistic one. And not so different from the *diva*. She is an example of self-sacrifice, of self-punishment, for the sake of the score". Subjecting oneself to a strenuous regime of discipline in order to serve a text seems to me the hidden connection between the *virtuoso*, the *diva*, and the writer. "Maria Callas was an admirable example of imposed control, in every instance of her expressivity. What was required of a master singer was, first, to obey a maestro, and second, to obey the composer. It's a kind of monastic subordination. Everything is written in the score: nothing is a matter of temperament or individuality. The singer undergoes a rhythmic discipline, as well as a vocational commitment. And the same goes for a piano *virtuoso*. Think of Glenn Gould. Perhaps he was autistic, we don't know. But his performance was an example of scrupulous, philological submission to the score. There is no 'affect', the dynamics are terraced, every phrase is absolutely precise. He stopped performing to avoid the exposure to the 'other' altogether. The interrogation by his audience was a kind of unbearable inquisition".

I finally ask Wayne to talk about opera, voice and gender. It is a complex question, and Wayne's answer is an elaborate and, as he remarks, an oblique one.

"Let's start with the mouth. The mouth is a sexual organ, in its own right. Sexuality is displayed and displaced to neutral organs. I insist that the mouth is like the anus or vagina; the mouth is sexual, but it doesn't need to be genital". He insists: "Mine is an indirect answer, but also the queer meaning is not the most obvious one, it is the meaning I decide to impose – and I decided to impose this meaning on the mouth, in a gesture that conjoins perversity and willfulness. And after all, preposterous things are the ones that give pleasure, like voice itself. Pitch is gendered. We think that we can tell gender by a person's voice, but voice can be very misleading, and gender is not a secure location but something that opens interrogations. The tenor's high note doesn't represent masculinity or femininity, it represents a scene of binary failure or success. Is it a man, or someone who has successfully crossed over into a third sex? Every aria is a test of what he is".

I insist on the question of voice and gender, and, more broadly, of how music, and opera, can undergird the politics of gender representation and identification. There is a passage in *The Queen's Throat* where he writes: "Music can allow people to come out without saying a word". I ask him what he means by these words, what role music plays in relation to identity politics. "It is an oblique answer that I'm giving you. You see, we're fighting

against music here, in this bar. We've been struggling for one hour against music: a typical urban experience. Here is music that we are not listening to". Background music has insistingly interfered in our conversation for an hour, so much so that we have asked the bartenders to kindly turn it down a bit, also because other people are coming and the cafe is getting crowded with the voices of young men and women chatting and drinking around us. "Music helps us have a good time, and creates a space of conviviality, but it can also be invasive and coercive. People can identify with divas, but identity can be as coercive as music, and we will find ourselves compelled to fight against it. I'm listening much less to music now than when I wrote *The Queen's Throat*, maybe because I live in New York, where there is too much noise, which drowns out my music. Even when I play piano I can't hear myself. In my book, I don't make an issue of noise, although I imply that divas can make a lot of noise. But noise is a political issue. When we're forcefed music by the environment, we succumb to 'false consciousness'. Every day, we're coercively interpellated by music. I'm fighting against music even as I fight to articulate myself through musical practices".

We've come to the end, I am going to turn off my recorder, and ask Wayne my last question. "Do you think that gay people still listen to opera?"

"I think they do. Opera is a code for dissidence and excess, and I believe that there's a queer relation to vocal power and vocal excessiveness. That relation has a history; it can't disappear, simply because 'coming out' has become, in some cultures, banal. Opera culture may have sedimented over time, but, like religion, opera remains alive because it answers an unspeakable craving".

While walking from the 23rd Street to Washington Square, where I have to meet a friend for dinner, I am suddenly aware that on my iPod Glenn Gould is playing Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. The starting, linear theme, unfolds, sometimes totally unrecognizable, through thirty magnificent elaborations; yet, each variation is imperceptibly linked to the essential, perspicuous *aria* from which it derives. Nothing could have rendered the sense of Wayne's words better than that. Once again, my route is accompanied by a musical track; once again, music is displacing me while infinitely displacing itself.

Marta Cariello

Bodies, Voices, Gendered Identities and Postcolonial Subversions of Maps

Lindsey Moore, *Arab, Muslim, Woman. Voice and Vision in Postcolonial Literature and Film* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 208 pp.

Merete Falck Borch, Eva Rask Knudsen, Martin Leer and Bruce Clunies Ross, eds., *Bodies and Voices. The Force-Field of Representation and Discourse in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), 459 pp.

In Assia Djebar's short story "The Woman in Pieces" (1997), a murdered schoolteacher continues talking after her head has been cut off by fundamentalists in Algeria. The teacher's voice resounds and goes on with her lesson on the *One Thousand and One Nights*, in a pool of blood staining the desk, the floor, the classroom. In this paradigmatic scene, Djebar fixes the coordinates of subalternity, of its suppression, and, at the same time, its survival through the (female) voice. The woman speaks on, her voice not silenced by knives or bullets, her stories told despite repression. The voice, here, is shown to be the key not only to a form of immortality, but also to resistance. On the battlefield of culture and in the construction of dominant discourses, resistance is articulated (not only) against physical violence, but also as a response to epistemic violence, and the voice becomes, then, both locus and means for the construction of challenging epistemes, critical discourses and 'other', unpredictable representations of the world.

It is useful, with reference to the concept of representation and its articulation with the coordinates of the subaltern voice, to recall Stuart Hall's definition:

> Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer to* either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events.[1]

Hall further elaborates on the different ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts, and of establishing complex relations between them, referring to such multiple systems of representation as "conceptual maps":

> [I]t could be the case that the conceptual map that I carry around in my head is totally different from yours, in which case you and I would interpret or make

[1] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997), 17.

sense of the world in totally different ways ... However, we are able to communicate because we share broadly the same conceptual maps and thus make sense of or interpret the world in roughly similar ways. That is indeed what it means when we say we 'belong to the same culture'.[2]

[2] Ibid., 18.

The formation of conceptual maps, of course, involves power struggles – both on an individual and a broad, collective level – between signs, resistance and the affirmation of certain semiotic relations over others: representation is deeply connected to politics, where the production of meanings – and of systems of meanings – produce, in turn, entire cultural systems and the way the world is narrated: the way in which it is 'registered into existence'. It is what Foucault calls the "production of knowledge" (and what Hall himself grounds his study of representation on): the power-knowledge relation constitutes the very canvas of the conceptual maps upon which we draw our sense of the world. As Hall investigates, the rupture brought upon the shared conceptual maps of Western modernity by postcolonial voices crucially challenges, rearranges, mixes up, and basically re-writes the maps of our senses.

The politics of representation in relation to postcolonial voices and their irruption in the systems of representation of Western modernity are exactly the main focus of the two volumes reviewed here, both addressing the production of meaning in highly charged systems of signification, such as the colonial and postcolonial body and voice and the performance of a gendered identity in the postcolonial Arab and Muslim world.

In *Arab, Muslim, Woman*, Lindsey Moore engages with an urgent and fundamental area in contemporary postcolonial studies, namely the themes and techniques that Arab women writers, filmmakers and visual artists foreground in their representation of postcolonial experience. In particular, Moore investigates ways in which women, working in North African, Middle Eastern and Western contexts, appropriate visual and textual modes of representation, challenging Orientalist/colonialist, nationalist, Islamist and 'multicultural' paradigms.

Analysing literary and visual works by women from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and (postcolonial) Europe, the text constitutes an important and broad overview of those voices that make up a very lively and composite network of re-signification of discourses on women in the Arab world, of the relation of postcolonial studies to Islam and religion in general, of gender as it is articulated within Arab/Muslim contexts, and of the inscription of identity within the terms of tradition and modernity, especially insistent in discourses on and around the Arab and Muslim world.

As Moore writes, "'Arab', 'Muslim', and even 'woman' are categories that place dynamic and heterogenous identities under erasure and, while this may be done strategically, the position from which one does so matters"

(10). This premise serves as a precious and basic assumption in Moore's analysis, a reading which never fails to contextualise the layers of significance that both the bodies and the collective spaces accrue in the works selected. Under such perspective, Moore proposes the presence of "an overarching *poetics of the threshold* in work that resists in advance a hermeneutical approach" (16; italics in the text). This means attending to "sartorial, temporal, historical, spatial and translational threshold motifs generated *within* creative works..." (ibid.). Moore thus addresses feminism not as something predetermined elsewhere, but rather as the production of challenges to patriarchal discourses as well as the affirmation of an "oppositional tracing of existing modes of representation" through performance, translation, strategic visibility/invisibility, and "third-eye tactics" that reconfigure the very field of representation.

Moore's volume opens with what she calls a "preliminary case study" on Egyptian writer and doctor Nawal el Saadawi. Indeed, Saadawi's work lays out some of the main tracks that the volume follows, dealing with the painful relationship between mother and daughter, an equally painful search for an identity based on a founding lack, the need to go back and fill such lack with writing (in connection, for Saadawi, also with the return to a pre-symbolic/feminine/mother), and finally the relation, overarching this inner search, to an anamnesis that is in contrast with what Saadawi calls "sanctioned memories surveyed by a censorious single eye" (20). Saadawi thus offers much of the alphabet that serves to articulate Moore's analysis of further (and also more recent) literary and visual works: the alphabet of a feminist genealogy.

An entire section of *Arab, Woman, Muslim* is dedicated to Algeria, which, as Moore rightly observes and demonstrates, comes to represent "a site of radical contestation over the meaning of women's bodies, in which the stakes of transmitting oppositional perspectives have been particularly high" (49).

Reading, among other Algerian women's works, Fettouma Touati's novel *Desperate Spring* (first published in 1984 as *Le printemps déséspéré*), in which a generation of women's stories is narrated in relation to their grandparents, Moore finds an overall didactic generalization about women's lives and their physical relations to the scopic, male eye, both in Algeria and abroad, that leave "Algerian women ... locked into private and public conceptions of the female body that define it as the symbolic repository of kin-based honor" (51). By contrast, Malika Mokeddem's first novel (and the only one translated into English), *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), is seen by Moore as taking a more nuanced position against the postcolonial Algerian context, influenced in its articulation by the pains of exile.

Algerian is also the 'poet-theorist' that serves Moore with the thematization and aesthetic research that outline the critical approach of

the volume: Assia Djebar, who indeed holds a fundamental place in the subversion and re-definition of a colonial map of representations with reference specifically to women's bodies and the "feminist genealogy" mentioned above.

Analysing both her writing and her first film, Moore rightly describes Djebar's aesthetic choices as a "creative archeology of *petits récits*". Particularly interesting is the analysis of the 1978 film *La Nouba des femmes de Mont Chenoua*, which Djebar authored after a long period of silence and self-questioning. The film is made up of flashbacks, fantasies, dreams, documentary footage and re-enactments of historical events. It also includes a polyphonic voicing through the juxtaposition of the protagonist's voice, that of other women, and of the narrator.

Among Djebar's other works, *Women of Algiers in their Apartments* (1979) is widely analysed and offers a poignant view of the "emancipatory potential of corporeal concealment" (57), reversing what Djebar sees as a "culturally specific structure of scopic mastery" and delivering a representation of the circulating woman as a 'blind spot' emasculating the observing male through the slit in the cloth covering her body.

This passage introduces the other fundamental critical thread underscoring the analyses Moore has excellently interwoven in her book: the theme of public versus private space and the way such spaces are construed in relation to gendered discourses and women's sartorial practices and performances. Following Blunt's and Roses's invitation to think of gendered space "'less as a geography imposed by patriarchal structures, and more as a social process of symbolic encoding and decoding' that produces homologous spatial, symbolic, and social orders" (100), Moore addresses the fundamental issue of spatiality and the production of heterotopias in the re-imagined maps of Arab Muslim female identity.[3]

In relation to space and the charged terms associated with feminine space and Islam, Moore re-inscribes the concept – and the object – of *hijab*, underlining how complex and rich its semiotics are: it can be used and read as a boundary marker, to extend private space into the public domain, readdressing women's relationship to embodiment and space in much richer and more mobile ways than the media currently do.

One of the texts Moore reads with reference to the trope of private and domestic space is Jordanian-born writer Fadia Faqir's second novel, *Pillars of Salt* (1996). In this work, the theme of women's confined bodies conflates the spaces of 'home' and a psychiatric asylum in a re-writing of the hegemonic representation of woman's 'proper place'. Franco-Algerian novelist Nina Bouraoui also re-inscribes the home as prison and asylum, especially in *Forbidden Vision* (1991), where the Algerian domestic space is configured as "a site in which the experiences of Algerian women are silenced and encrypted and these acts are legitimized" (103). Both authors

[3] See Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (New York: Guilford, 1994).

point to a reading of the home as it has been produced in Arab Muslim contexts as akin to a prison or asylum, drawing however our attention to "the heterotopic nature of marginal space" (ibid.).

Moore analyses a number of other authors, among them Fatima Mernissi, who engage with the construction of space and notions of boundary-building and crossing. On the textual-textile performance and production of space, a particularly interesting passage is devoted by Moore to French-born Algerian – now British resident – visual artist Zineb Sedira, whose *Self Portraits of the Virgin Mary* triptych projects computer generated full-length images of the artist covered in full *haik*. As Moore writes, "Sedira evokes purity through the white-on-white mis-en-scène but, by juxtaposing hijab and Mary, reminds us that chaste female bodies are ideologically imbued in more than one cultural context" (133). Among the artist's intentions is that of issuing a statement that can remind the public that female veiling did not originate with Islam.

Within the works of the wide number of writers and artists selected in her volume, Moore indicates what she sees as the possibility of restoring a conversation between women, both in the reconstruction of often silenced or suppressed legacies, and in the transversal and horizontal level of solidarity and community building through shared experience. In such direction, women's artistic work, Moore argues, resonates beyond a single national discourse, building instead heterotopias where boundaries are subverted or even erased.

The issue of subaltern voices charting a cartography of problematic if not often subversive embodiment proves to be a pressing and widely debated one, so much so that the 2002 EACLALS (European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies) Conference, held in Copenhagen, was dedicated to this theme. The *Bodies and Voices* volume contains the conference proceedings and presents a reflection on representation and its power, as the editors state in their Introduction. The volume includes a consistent number of articles, covering a wide range of topics, particularly around the representation of 'the body', and, to a lesser degree, that of 'the voice', in postcolonial contexts, through the lenses of literature, anthropology and cultural studies.

In many of the essays, the voice is explicitly referred to and analysed as a fundamental key in the ethics of representation, as is underlined in the Introduction, which quotes Mladen Dolar:

> the voice cuts both ways as authority over the Other and as an example to the Other, an appeal, a plea, an attempt to bend the Other. It cuts directly into the interior, so much so that the very status of the exterior becomes uncertain, and it directly discloses the interior, so much so that the very supposition of an interior depends on the voice. (xxv-xxvi)

This direct link between the voice and the Other underlies the editors' choice of bringing together critical works on embodiments and voicings of bodies that have been 'othered' and deprived of voice. The idea followed by both the editors and the conference organizers in putting the volume together is that "[w]hat language and the body have in common is the voice, but the voice is part of neither language nor of the body. The voice stems from the body, but it is not its part, and it upholds language, without belonging to it" (xxv).

Indeed, the introduction to the volume is in itself an excellent piece of critical theory, not only on 'bodies and voices', but also on the misrepresentations and representations of cross-cultural and postcolonial body/bodies and the discourses produced by the voicings of silenced stories and histories. The richness of the volume is obviously not conveyable in the space of a review, and the outstanding essays mentioned here are only part of a complex and multivocal critical reflection.

The book is organized regionally, with separate sections on Africa, Asia, the Settler Colonies, the Caribbean, Britain and Eire, and a final section titled "Other Perspectives". Despite the apparently rigidly geographic subdivision, the essays do "have an implicit, highly polyphonic, argument" (xxvi).

The first section, dedicated to Africa, includes articles on a number of different literary works, as well as social and cultural constructions of bodies and voices, focusing principally on South Africa during and after Apartheid. The opening essay, by the late André Viola, "Martyred Bodies and Silenced Voices in South African Literature Under Apartheid", is a particularly interesting analysis of the way in which Apartheid South Africa constitutes perhaps the most systematic colonial attempt at segregating "the corporeal envelopes of its inhabitants" (3). It studies figures of confiscated dead bodies and the traumas left by these bodies on the victims' relatives, as well as apartheid narratives in which martyred bodies become substitutes for the silenced voice of the land. Viola's article ends with an analysis of the construction of the suffering body as central to post-apartheid South Africa.

Alongside the quite amply covered South African scenario, the section on Africa includes an essay by Eleonora Chiavetta on the symbolic bodily function of clothes in stories by African-Caribbean Nigerian-resident Karen King-Aribisala, and a study by Gregory Hacksley of the colonial period in Southern Rhodesia, concentrating on the struggle by the English-born poet Noel Brettell to find an aesthetic form for his new surroundings, in verses always uncannily and self-reflexively sounding like the voice of a stranger.

The chapter dedicated to Asia includes a work by Aparajita Nanda addressing another multi-bodied, polymorphic voice; that of the protagonist

of Meena Alexander's *Nampally Road* (1991). In this novel, Nanda observes, the multiple voice and body of the main character is not only tied to the experience of returning after having expatriated, but also to the specific (and strategic) experiences of women and variously embodied identities. As Nanda writes,

> By 'voicing' a history and a language ensconced in the female 'bodies' of [the novel's female protagonists], Alexander creates the multi-layered personality of Mira Kannadical. Drawing on ideas of simultaneity (of multiple identities) and the hybridization of metaphor, she creates Mira, whose identity is in constant flux. (124)

The "Asia" section also includes, among others, essays on representations of the Indian immigrant labourer in Malaya, and on the changes in the social function of the Tingayyun, a dance and song belonging to the tradition of the Sama-Bajau, the most widespread sea nomads of South East Asia. Perhaps the most interesting work in this section is Maria Pimentel Biscaia's "Can Women Speak? Can the Female Body Talk?", which studies the figure of Shahrazad as appropriated and subverted by Githa Hariharan in her novel *When Dreams Travel* (1994). For Hariharan, Dunyazad and Dilshad (a slave girl who is also Dunyazad's lover) re-narrate the stories both of Shahrazad and of Satyasama, who has turned into a half-monkey, and becomes completely silent when the eunuch she has fallen in love with is killed in Shahryar's harem. Monstrosity, Biscaia argues, is shown in the novel to be a politically central figure of womanhood within the symbolic order. The monstrous body, no longer speaking but moaning and breathing, does indeed produce a voice that continues to narrate, like Shahrazad.

The sections dedicated to the Settler Colonies, the Caribbean and Britain and Eire are as abounding as the previous ones, both in terms of the variety of themes and literary works analysed, and of the approaches and perspectives adopted. The topics span from the monstrous and mutant bodies of Cronenberg's films, to contemporary Maori literature; from the history of education in Trinidad from a postcolonial perspective, to "carnivalesque strategy" in Sam Selvon's works, and, finally, to the status of Scotland as a postcolonial nation through the works of Jackie Kay and Liz Lockhead.

Perhaps a conclusive note on *Bodies and Voices* should address the essay titled "Can the Postcolonial Critic Speak – And If So, Who Is Listening?", by Marc Colavincenzo, included in the section titled "Other Voices". The author formulates a critique of the "dissociation of postcolonial studies from the still-colonized world" (406), strongly advancing the hypothesis that academic discourse has limited influence beyond the academy. While the claim that this limitation is (at least in part) due to the hermetic language

used in postcolonial studies may perhaps be considered somewhat frail, the essay does raise questions that though in no way new or groundbreaking are indeed always useful to keep at the fore, especially with the institutionalization that postcolonial studies is undergoing inside the academia.

The two volumes reviewed here both engage with the relation between power and representation, and the way such relation becomes fundamental in the construction of our 'conceptual maps' of the world. The subtitle of *Bodies and Voices* offers a term that indeed conflates the tension and articulation of representation, power, production of meaning and the coding and de-coding processes involved in such maps: the "force-field". The term is used alongside the Benjaminian term of 'constellation', recalling Benjamin's statement that "[e]very historical state of affairs presented dialectically polarizes and becomes a force-field (*Kraftfeld*), in which the conflict between fore- and after-history plays itself out. It becomes that field as it is penetrated by history".[4] Both the terms 'constellation' and 'force-field' are often rightly understood as an "intellectual attempt non-deterministically to locate and dynamically connect elements (historical, socioeconomic, cultural) that are not initially given as relational, but that, when animated – constellated – into conjunction create or reveal a signifying force-field".[5] Adorno also frequently uses the term to refer to a "nontotalized juxtaposition of changing elements, a dynamic interplay of attractions and aversions, without a generative first principle, common denominator, or inherent essence".[6] The same term, moreover, is often employed in science fiction to indicate a barrier enabling work in areas that can be exposed to the vacuum of space, keeping the atmosphere inside while allowing certain other objects to pass through.[7] This use is particularly evocative as it indicates a 'space' in which only 'certain objects pass through', and the presence, in such space, of a vacuum-force determining the conditions inside it.

The forces at work in the force-field of representation of postcolonial bodies and voices are shown, in the two volumes reviewed, to be drawn, interrupted, reconfigured and often subverted by new 'objects' thrown into the force-field, diverse or interrupted vacuums of space, or different spaces altogether, be they embodied by Arab Muslim women writers, or voiced by postcolonial subjects claiming new sounds from confiscated vocal chords.

Both *Arab, Woman, Other* and *Bodies and Voices* trace important lines of critical thought in the field of postcolonial studies, and particularly in that very force-field of representation constituted by 'othered' voices, contributing to the (multi-layered) definition of 'the voice' as both power of representation, and point of intersection between body and language: the performative assertion of an impossible silencing.

[4] Quoted in Andrew Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and Art* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 142.

[5] Andrew Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and Art*, 142.

[6] Martin Jay, *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 2.

[7] See for example <http://stardestroyer.net/Empire/Tech/Shields/Nature.html>, 12 September 2009.

Neelam Srivastava, *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel. National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), x + 210 pp.

Reviewed by **Fiorenzo Iuliano**

Neelam Srivastava's *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel* discusses the question of secularism as a political and rhetorical strategy that finds its appropriate and, at the same time, controversial concretion in the Anglophone Indian literature of the 1980s and 1990s. Through the analysis of six novels (Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*) that cover a time span from 1981 to 1996, the author explores the multiple connections between the question of secularism, as it has been broached and thematized in the works chosen, and other terms, such as historicism, language, postcolonial subjectivity and citizenship, and finally the transnationalism/cosmopolitanism dyad, crucial to understand recent Indian history and its narrative and rhetorical reformulations. The book can also be read as an attempt at rewriting the history of India as a nation-state and the different forms of Indian nationalism as narratives of secularism.

This approach seeks to blur the linearity of historicism, which traditionally reads events as clearly disposed along an ordered and progressive trajectory; it reconfigures the past as a set of discursive practices, aimed at substantiating the ideologies of power and nation. The novels chosen by Srivastava reflect the contradictory stances towards religion and secularism at play in the historical and political debate, and the different configurations that secularism has assumed in the Indian past. The emphasis on the linguistic and narratological aspects of the novels, along with their historical and ideological articulations, is a crucial feature of Srivastava's book: it shows the political applicability of the semiotic elements of literary texts, and points out that the ideological stances characterizing the controversy about religion and the public sphere, in the Indian context, are crucially embodied and articulated through the polyphonic architecture of the novel.

On the whole, the book discusses and analyzes the six novels in depth, but concentrates most particularly on two of the five authors, Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth, whose main works are read as two different, if not opposite, ways to articulate secularism. Srivastava uses the notion of 'rational secularism' with reference to Seth's most famous novel, *A Suitable Boy*, which opposes Indian nationalism in the 1990s, harshly marked in religious terms, to the universalistic secularism of the 1950s, clearly influenced by Jawaharlal Nehru's political thought. On the contrary,

Rushdie's works are analyzed as the expression of a more subversive 'radical secularism'. On the one hand, the heritage of Nehru's thought is noticeable in Seth's novel, whose position, not differently from the European tradition, does not deny the importance of religion for Indian culture and history, but simply relegates it to the private sphere; on the other, the radical perspective endorsed by Rushdie considers religion and secularism as cultural practices in their own right, narrative and mythical elaborations that build up the nation as a cultural and rhetorical artefact. As Srivastava argues, "Rushdie … by placing secularism within a diachronic, allegorical unfolding of the nation's history, historicizes secular nationalism and effectively reveals it as a myth" (58); Rushdie's swaying between religion and secularism as cultural and narrative practices is, moreover, read as the expression of the stylistic and linguistic devices of magical realism.

The divide between rational and radical secularism is one of the central hinges around which the whole book is constructed; by opposing the perspective of Seth's work, linear, narratively fluent and ideologically univocal, to Rushdie's syncretic and convoluted style both in terms of language and cultural references, Srivastava displays two different perspectives at play in recent Indian literature in English. The first represents and narrates India as a nation with a clearly defined history, which can be neatly recapitulated and articulated in narrative terms; the second, on the contrary, features the Indian past as a narrative, a rhetorical and ideological construction, with religion as one of its components. Srivastava's emphasis on the use of metaphors, allegories and symbols in *Midnight's Children* and in *The Great Indian Novel*, opposed to the strict realism of *A Suitable Boy* and *A Fine Balance*, reveals their political potentiality and their capability of reweaving Indian history as a complex set of rhetorical constructions and ideological projections.

Srivastava resorts to Bakhtin's work on the novel as an intrinsically dialogic genre, capable of assembling and entwining different and contrasting voices and reducing to the minimum the presence of an external, omniscient author. Interestingly, she juxtaposes the narratological approach, articulated in Bakhtin's lexicon, to the postcolonial stance expressed by Edward Said and his well-known thematization of counterpoint as a significant strategy of discursive construction and cultural analysis. Semiotic structures and cultural practices are, thus, once again brought together in the book, according to a perspective that combines the linguistic devices at work in literary texts and their historical and political references, showing their mutual dependence.

In devoting her attention to novels in English only, Srivastava crucially highlights the opposition between Indian Anglophone literature and the *bhasha* literatures, i.e. , literatures written in the official Indian languages. In this respect, a more in-depth analysis of Indian linguistic policy (which

refers to English and Hindi as Indian 'national' languages, and to the other Indian languages, among which Hindi again, as 'official' ones) and its effects on literary works would have been appropriate. Srivastava resorts to the notion of "imagined community", established by Benedict Anderson, to define the transnational, English-speaking, highbrow and, in a certain sense, elitist audience of Indian novels in English, as opposed to the more traditional and conservative market of the literatures written in the state-languages. In her words, novels in English "create an imagined community of readers who are not defined by national boundaries, but by the transnational scope of English" (12). The viable notion of postcolonial community is implicitly elaborated in this analysis; Srivastava openly theorizes the audacious idea of postcolonial citizenship, instanced in Rushdie's work and in his construction of a diasporic and transnational subject, capable of switching among different histories and languages, never exclusively belonging to any of them. The idea that "linguistic heteroglossia … [expresses] the idea of a pluralistic, secular nation-state" (156) reinforces one of the book's crucial assumptions, the necessity to couple narrative and political questions, underlining their interaction and their mutual, and often contrasting, influence.

The problem of history is central to Srivastava's analysis, and, in particular, to her elaboration on the connection between the novels she analyzes and the period in which they were written, a period marked by the emergence of Hindutva chauvinist nationalism. Starting with Indira Gandhi's patriotic and autocratic rhetoric ("India is Indira, Indira is India"), and after the state of emergency declared in 1975, an increasingly intense nationalistic tendency bourgeoned in Indian politics, culminating in the 1980s with the triumph of the conservative Bharatiya Janata Party and its cultural and religious counterpart, the Hindutva movement. The identification of a supposedly glorious and awesome Indian past with Hindu religious tradition was one of the main tenets of the Hindutva, along with the exclusion from this construction of history of other communities, in particular the Muslim one. Srivastava reads the texts analyzed as different examples of reaction to Hindutva chauvinism: here, a counter-narrative of national history is elaborated as a multicultural and communal experience, constructed through the contribution of different Indian religious communities. Moreover, the position of the Subaltern Studies research group rejected the idea of history as linear progress, dismantling the categories provided by European historicism and, more radically, theorizing the impossibility of conceiving the Indian past according to the terms of European historiography. Thus the necessity to construct an ideological and quasi-mythical 'usable past' for India as a nation-state is opposed to the two different secularist approaches that Srivastava discusses in her book, as they are chiefly instanced, respectively, in the works of Seth and Rushdie.

Srivastava traces a history of secularism through the analysis of the controversial relationships between religion and the public sphere that have characterized Indian events. In the XIX century, Indian nationalism had a marked religious connotation, aimed at differentiating the Indian nation and tradition from the British (secular) ones. Gandhi and Nehru elaborated two different forms of secularism: Gandhi encouraged a kind of pan-religious ideology that embraced all Indian cults, subsuming them under the comprehensive authority of a non-identified deity and thus marking Indian national identity in spiritual, if not overtly religious, terms. On the contrary, Nehru, as Srivastava often recalls in the book, espoused the European attitude that confined religion to the sole private sphere. The contradictory stances towards the relationship between religion and state, expressed over the centuries, are reflected in literary texts and subsequently elaborated in the works analyzed. Srivastava often mentions *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao's seminal novel in English, published in 1938, in which Rao narrates daily life in Indian rural villages, scrupulously adhering to the ideological paradigms of Gandhi's teaching. The comparison between *Kanthapura* and the corpus of novels discussed in the book highlights the progressive shift from a nation identified with the local and 'traditional' identity to a cosmopolitan definition of the nation-state, considered as the latest form of Indian secularism.

The last chapter focuses on the cosmopolitan and metropolitan subject as the most recent ideal repository of the Indian secular tradition; according to this perspective, cosmopolitanism is configured as "a non-nationally oriented version of secularism, which is understood not only as a state policy, but as a version of Indian nationhood, thus shaping concepts of both nation and state" (158). The different strategies at work to display the cosmopolitan configuration of secularism are particularly interesting, as Srivastava aptly notices. Among other paradigmatic examples of this tendency, it is worth remarking the role of the city, which often recurs in postcolonial novels referring to both Indian and diasporic contexts; and – in Seth's works – the theme of homosexuality, analyzed as another possible locus of identification of the displaced and cosmopolitan postcolonial subject, thus providing a further element to the definition of present Indian secularism.

Paola Bono, *Il Bardo in musical*
(Roma: Editoria & Spettacolo, 2009), 223 pp.

Reviewed by **Alessandra Marino**

"Spectacular spectacular!" shouts Harold Zidler (Jim Broadbent), owner of the "Moulin Rouge" in Baz Luhrmann's film with the same title (2001). This slogan, repeated again and again, describes Zidler's theatrical art so faithfully that it becomes the very name of his future show. What is a musical, the character seems to ask, if it does not make you "dumb with wonderment"?

The definition of a genre is the most complex question for film critics, but Luhrmann's meta-filmic reflection on the nature of his work neatly inserts the musical within the frame of surrealism. Hybrid and impure, *Moulin Rouge!* is a mosaic of film quotations and musical reverberation, filled with dreamlike scenes and presenting a continuous tension between realism and fantasy. Surprisingly enough, in its ending, this sparkling bohemian world is translated into black and white pages typewritten by the hero (Ewan McGregor).

In her latest book *Il Bardo in musical*, Paola Bono undertakes a similar experiment of double translation: she analyzes the transposition of the Shakespearian plays into flamboyant musical performances and ties them once again to the page. In this transcodification, as Walter Benjamin argues in "The Task of the Translator", if something is lost something else is happily gained.

The 'skin' of musicals – constituted by dances, songs and atmosphere – cannot be thoroughly captured in a book, but the irreverence towards Shakespeare's authority underlying the transformation of his plays into musicals is successfully transmitted and visualized. The symbolic figure of the universal genius representing Western modernity is displaced in the very form of Bono's work, which does not construct a whole, coherent body or linear narration of Shakespearean musicals, but plays with the fragments of a long history of appropriations.

In the first chapter, "Panorama", no straight chronological order is followed; a mobile network arises from the relations between appropriations of comedies such as *The Taming of the Shrew* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Among the films inspired by these 'love and sex' affairs, Bono considers *You Made Me Love You* (Monty Banks, 1935) and *Kiss me, Kate* (George Sidney, 1953), but also Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle's *Dream* (1935), *Sogno di una notte d'estate* by Gabriele Salvatores (1983) and the recent queer film *Were the World Mine* by Tom Gustafson (2008). Even though some of the works quoted cannot be strictly classified as

musicals, a category subdivided after Altman into 'show', 'folk' and 'fairy tale', in all of them music seems to have the function of enriching the narration with an additional level.

The following chapters are dedicated to *Kiss me, Kate*, *Love's Labour's Lost* (Kenneth Branagh, 2000), *West Side Story* (Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, 1961) and its Italian remake *Sud Side Stori* (Roberta Torre, 2000). Mostly adapting comedies and euphuistic plays, musicals seem to be close to the preciosity and baroquism of Shakespeare's language but are far from restoring the authority of the Bard. Their spectacular and comic components prevail over fidelity to the narrative plot, thus challenging Shakespeare's belonging to the high strata of culture. *Kiss me, Kate,* for example, presents a commodification of the poet's highbrow figure in the song "Brush up your Shakespeare!", where the two gangsters, Slug and Lippy, transform him into an instrument for 'getting the girls'. In this attempt to popularize English drama, high and popular culture overlap. Their coexistence, as Bono highlights, is embodied in *Kiss me, Kate* by Lilli and Lois. Since the casting scene, where roles are distributed for the play within the play, they materialize the two poles of culture: Lilli, proud of her ability to cheer up the audience without showing her legs, stands for the literary 'elevated' entertainment and faces Lois's popular sexy tip-tap.

But the convergence of England with the Hollywood dream-machine does not guarantee success. Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*, though combining Shakespeare's text with the classical American musicals of the 30s, was a box office failure and provoked contradictory reactions from the critics. Bono rehabilitates the film, presenting it as a hybrid product in which songs interrupt and give resonance to the 'original' poetic form; like fragments from Western film history, the songs compose Branagh's postmodern mosaic. Indirectly, Bono's criticism seems to question the very possibility of succeeding in the production of a modern version of Shakespearian comedy while keeping its complex language. Her doubt echoes Katherine Eggert's statement, in an article on Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost* and Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*, that "to film a Shakespearean comedy is to know that one's production, despite its high culture imprimatur, will never be designated 'great', that it will never be taken seriously" (in Richard Burt and Lynda E. Boose, eds, *Shakespeare, the Movie II: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, Video, and DVD*, 85).

Eggert's implied suggestion that comedies cannot attain the universal success of tragedies, though debatable, is somehow confirmed by the fame gained by the musical adaptation of the only tragedy discussed in the book: *West Side Story*, a cult remake of *Romeo and Juliet*. The family antagonism of the Venetian tragedy is transposed to New York in the mid-50s, where the love story between the white Tony and the Puerto Rican Maria takes place against a backdrop of harsh ethnic fights. Both *West*

Side Story and *Sud Side Stori*, its Italian appropriation by Roberta Torre in which Romea is a Nigerian prostitute and Giulietto a Sicilian boy, represent urgent social issues like immigration and racial hatred; their political commitment shows that musicals are not just timeless fairy tales, but share the function of 'holding a mirror up to nature' that Hamlet attributes to theatre.

Torre's language is particularly interesting for its combination of a hallucinatory and unrealistic style with documentary-like scenes presenting the real stories of the immigrant women who appear as actors in the film. This technique increases the social/gender tension of the plot, but it also underlines the film's distance from both Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story.* Because of its eccentric relation with the poet, *Sud Side Stori* might be considered one of the "camp" films that "maintain a measured distance from their source-texts – even when they launch most fully into them", as Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe explain in *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (24).

The genre/gender question is inscribed at the very core of *Il Bardo in musical* and sustains the *Disseminazioni* series, to which the book belongs. As Bono affirms, the project reconsiders the intersections between Shakespeare, film, genre and gender. From these overlapping border zones, the author does not look at Shakespeare as a stable entity or authentic origin, but her queering gaze, "questioning his transcendent universality, seem[s] to re-confirm his disposition to become the common ground for thinking upon relevant contemporary issues" (13; my translation).

Paola Splendore, ed. and trans., *Passaggi a ovest: Poesia femminile anglofona della migrazione* (Bari: Palomar, 2008), 170 pp.

Reviewed by **Katherine E. Russo**

"If we pause for a moment on the meaning of 'states' as the 'conditions in which we find ourselves', then it seems we reference the moment of writing itself or perhaps even a certain condition of being upset, out of sorts: what state are we in when we start to think about the state?": these are the words with which Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak recently redressed the relationship between language, national belonging and the state (*Who Sings The Nation State? Language, Politics, Belonging*, 2007, 2-3). The stateless, yet steeped in power, condition of Anglophone migrant women writers, their heightened experience of the discursive power of language and of linguistic belonging as rift, is the focus of the collection and translation of poems, *Passaggi a ovest: Poesia femminile anglofona della migrazione*.

The task of editing a collection of poems is not easy; all collected works inevitably exclude or level out. From the outset, the editor warns the reader against the homogenizing tendency of studies on migration and acknowledges the need for more differentiation in the way migration is represented and theorised. Yet, *Passaggi a ovest* successfully overcomes this impasse as it asks its readers to face the 'current' multiplication of life risking journeys across deserts and seas but at the same time to consider the colonial 'cosmopolitan' histories lying beneath the ordinary multiculturalism of Britain, the U.S.A., Canada and South Africa. Within the anthology, the middle passage is pluralized and embodied in the 'passaggi/passages' of M. NourbeSe Philip, Moniza Alvi, Gabeba Baderoon, Sujata Bhatt, Merle Collins, Choman Hardi, Grace Nichols, and Karen Press.

Passaggi a ovest bears witness to the contemporary effects of forced migration and the new routes it sets off. It opens with a difficult and engaged translation of M. NourbeSe Philip's poem, *Discourse on the Logic of Language*, which actively deconstructs the scientific and historical discourses of racism and slavery through the sharing of what lies within the silences and erasures of official documents and edicts: the pain and anguish created by the imposition of the English father-tongue. Yet, the poet also writes about how the mother-tongue tries to repair the father-tongue by blowing, licking, forcing 'her' words into 'her' mouth. In between the father- and mother-tongue, the poet shares her attempts to 'tongue' English, as she babbles, stutters and stretches her tongue to appropriate it,

English,	L'inglese
is my mother tongue.	è la mia lingua madre.
A mother tongue is not	La lingua madre non è
not a foreign lan lan lang	no, una lin lin ling
language	lingua straniera
l/anguish	lingua
anguish	l/angoscia
- a foreign anguish.	- un' angoscia straniera. (18-19)

By re-installing the inescapably suffering character of her experience of hybridity, Philip enables the emergence of an interstitial agency that refuses the binary representation of social inclusion/exclusion, but does not renounce its unique ground and time. Her use of co-existing but different languages and texts is a perfect opening to the collection as it introduces the reader to the migrant condition of in-betweenness, but also to the possibility of refusing assimilation and staking out areas of difference that cannot be mediated or redrawn.

Questions of language and gender, and the troubling relationship migrant women have with language, lie at the centre of the collection. Yet the relationship with the English language is represented very differently in the poems collected by Splendore. At times, language is the repository of a nostalgic search for origins and for an imaginary homeland, as in Moniza Alvi's longing for Urdu and Hindi, the languages which could have been hers if she had grown up in Pakistan (92-93). At others, writing in English is a means to communicate the existence of a country, Kurdistan, surrounded by silence and whose sole existence lies in books about genocide; elsewhere, it is represented as the liquid space of linguistic rebirth, as in Grace Nichols's "Epilogue";

I have crossed an ocean	Ho attraversato un oceano
I have lost my tongue	la mia lingua s'è perduta
from the root of the old one	dalla vecchia radice
a new one has sprung.	una nuova è spuntata. (28-29)

Nichols explicitly voices the desire not to recover or repeat the conceits of empire, but to shift into a different state of being, appropriating the streets of London, changing its habits, customs, language, as in "The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping" and "Two Old Black Men on a Leicester Square Park Bench" (30-31, 40-41). Nevertheless, appropriating English is often a process analogous to inhabiting a language 'like a rented apartment' (Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* 1984). Inevitably, the mother-tongue of migrant women writers haunts the house of English as in Nichols's "We New World Blacks", "whatever tongue/ we speak/ the old ghost/ asserts itself/ in dusky echoes" (38). Habitation does not necessarily entail belonging, as Paola Splendore aptly clarifies in the introduction. Hence, although it may be chosen, migration is often a condition of permanent foreignness.

While nations reinforce their frontiers and multiply their border controls, the migrant's condition is more intricate than a mere opposition of exclusion/ inclusion in the nation's imagined space. The nation-state, sovereign, limited and fraternal on an 'imagined basis' exerts and extends its sovereignty through diffused practices such as a renewed insistence on assimilation; new forms of biopolitical intervention; punitive responses to asylum seekers; the redefinition of citizenship in ethnocultural terms. Thus, English is the language of the state department, of the applications for naturalization, of access to the job market, of the discursive construction of the 'permanent migrant', of the vacuous enterprises of multiculturalism, and of othering as one is always "defined by someone else – one who cleans the toilets, burns the dead" (Moniza Alvi, "And If", 90-91). Certain bodies, certain gestures, certain desires are naturalized as authentically 'ethnic' through the reiteration of definitions and representations; thus Merle Collins emphasizes how colonial history often shapes the character of contemporary multicultural programmes:

Then is how come I become a ethnic minority?	Allora com'è che sono diventata minoranza etnica?
It sound like a germ. It sound like a worm. It sound like something that doesn't quite make the grade	Sembra un germe. Sembra un verme. Sembra qualcosa che non ce l'ha fatta
the minority in me mouth it have a vinegar taste the ethnic you know it sounding like nigger to me?	La parola minoranza sa d'aceto in bocca a me Eenica sapete è come dirmi negra. (62-63)

The racist connotations behind certain multicultural policies, the "grade" as mark and as colour chart, the woman behind the term "nigger" (significantly translated by Splendore with the feminine grammatical gender in Italian), reveal a country that struggles to come to terms with the official diagnosis of institutional racism (Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, 2005). As in Collins's poem, the language of the poems collected in *Passaggi a ovest* is always double. It is the echo of a movement into alterity or, as Splendore notes, it is "a voyage that has taken them far from home to inhabit the body of the foreigner" (my translation, 9). Hence it may happen that a mother is considered a foreigner in her own house, as in the lines by Choman Hardi, a poet from Iraqi Kurdistan:

I can hear them talking, my children fluent English and broken Kurdish And whenever I disagree with them they will comfort each other by saying: Don't worry about mum, she's Kurdish. Will I be the foreigner in my own home?	Li sento parlare, i miei figli inglese sciolto e curdo stentato. E ogni volta che ci troviamo in disaccordo loro si consolano a vicenda dicendo *Non fare caso alla mamma, lei è curda.* Diventerò straniera in casa mia? (162-163)

Language may be one of the few repositories of identity and belonging for those whose greatest fear is that of "entering the ranks of invisible and stateless citizens" (my translation, 14). The different, at times conflicting, layers of signification in these poems are a clue to the writers' agency, thus their performativity and rhetoric is crucial, since by erasing difference translation may reinstate the founding violence at work within hegemonic languages. As Spivak notes, translation may be defined as the experience of contained alterity in an unknown language. Translations should sketch the itinerary of the trace that the subaltern author has left. In every translation, she urges readers to hear the faint whisper of what could not be said in order to mark the sites where the subaltern was effaced (*Outside in the Teaching Machine*, 1993). Conversely, feminist translation studies have revealed how translators actively rewrite texts by following Barbara Godard's and Sherry Simon's proposition that feminist writing and translation meet in their common desire to foreground female subjectivities in the production of meaning. Splendore is an acclaimed translator and is not afraid of using Italian turns of the tongue, recognizing her involvement and investment in translation (see Sujata Bhatt, *Il colore della solitudine,* 2005; Ingrid de Kok, *Mappe del corpo*, 2008). Yet, an ethical aspiration safeguards the translations in this collection as the translator 'surrenders to the text' by relinquishing the desire of visibility which dominates current debates in Translation studies. While feminist methodologies often entail a reconceptualization of the translator as writer, Splendore's translations are dominated by a desire to listen and collaborate; thus they question the relative cultural homogeneity of womanhood suggested by feminist translation studies. In her translator's note, Splendore states that the poems with translation on the opposite page are a testimony of "the original in its integrity" but also of the 'necessary' "surrenderings and losses of translation" (my translation, 15). Translation thus becomes the space of a voluntary relinquishing of self to others, the page a transnational conversation.

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