A Reel in One's Mind: Cultural and Racial Difference, Technology, and Bodies in Amelia Rosselli's Early Work, 1950–1964

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Abstract

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My dissertation focuses on various intellectual currents that shaped poet, composer, and amateur ethnomusicologist Amelia Rosselli's work from 1950 to 1964, before she gained mild fame as a poet on the Italian literary scene. Rosselli had a trilingual background in Italian, English, and French, due to her Italian father and English mother and her family's forced absence from Italy from Rosselli's birth in 1930 until 1946, as a result of her father's political activities. Rosselli is sometimes considered an outsider to Italian poetic movements, but in this dissertation I trace how she fits into various transnational intellectual networks. In doing so, I examine Rosselli through different lenses than what is typical in analyses of her work: I center her understandings of cultural and racial difference according to her studies in various strains of anthropology and ethnomusicology. In doing so, Rosselli's association of these differences with new conceptions of technology comes to the fore: namely, audiovisual recording technology used in ethnographic and ethnomusicological research; tools of electronic music that were bound

up with this research in the 1950s; and new points of view on the body's use as a technology, through a diffusion of the concept of techniques of the body.

What emerges from my investigation is Rosselli's political investments in establishing the universality of humans' physiological and psychological capacities, beyond race (Chapter 1); valorizing previously marginalized cultural techniques, particularly techniques of the body (Chapter 2); seeking new mediatic modes of expression beyond the West (Chapter 3); and remapping relationships between self and other in her poetic output (Chapter 4). Although these political goals did not always result in building networks of solidarity, I argue that taking them seriously as important elements in Rosselli's thought allows for a fuller consideration of how ideas of power dynamics, universality, and relationality play out in relation to cultural and racial difference in her work. In doing so, I reveal how Rosselli inscribed herself into various political and intellectual networks that shaped Italian cultural life in the 1950s and 1960s.

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Introduction

Writing to understand the other

The story of Amelia Rosselli (1930–1996), as it has often been told for many years, is that of an isolated outsider on the Italian literary scene. Early on in her public life as a poet, critics latched onto conceptions of deformity in her poetic language, thanks in large part to Pier Paolo Pasolini's introductory note to the first poems she published in the literary journal *Il Menabò* in 1963.[1] Pasolini comments on Rosselli's use of the "lapsus," her mixing of the three languages she spent her life moving in and out of: Italian, English, and French. He connects the lapsus to the themes of neurosis and mystery that he sees running through her poetic language. For Pasolini, "il revival avanguardistico—così tetro presso gli eterni apprendisti di Milano e Torino—ha trovato in questa specie di apolide dalle grandi tradizioni famigliari di Cosmopolis, un terreno dove esplodere con la funesta e meravigliosa fecondità dei funghi atomici nell'atto in cui divengono forme"[2] [the avant-garde revival—so gloomy in the hands of Milan and Turin's

[1] Lucia Re has analyzed Pasolini's note on Rosselli in "Amelia Rosselli: A Life of Poetry," introduction to *War Variations/Variazioni Belliche*, trans. Lucia Re and Paul Vangelisti (Los Angeles: Otis Books; Seismicity Editions, 2016), 14. Elizabeth Leake, in *After Words: Suicide and Authorship in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), has also noted how Pasolini's discussion of Rosselli's poetics was the first example of how, for many critics, Rosselli's "writerly identity was understood to be nearly devoid of literary antecedents. Indeed, basing their posthumous perceptions of Rosselli as biographically and emotionally *déracinée*, some of her most important critics essentially severed all ties between her opus and the work of her contemporaries" (68).

[2] Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Notizia su Amelia Rosselli," in *Il Menabò di Letteratura*, Vol. 6 (1963), 68–9. Lucia Re, in "Amelia Rosselli: A Life of Poetry," has noted how Pasolini's designation of Rosselli as a "cosmopolitan" represented his ambivalence toward Rosselli: "Pasolini resented her transnational cosmopolitanism, perhaps because he bought into the then fashionable Gramscian myth of the 'organic intellectual.' Rosselli was too cosmopolitan and not an 'organic' voice of the Italian *popolo* in Pasolini's eyes" (14)—despite the fact that Rosselli had no aristocratic background, or even an upper-class one.

eternal apprentices—has found, in this sort of stateless subject from the grand family traditions of Cosmopolis, a terrain in which to explode with the fatal and marvelous fecundity of atomic mushrooms in the moment when they become shapes].[3]

Pasolini's introduction to Rosselli contains many of the primary threads that would be picked up throughout analyses of Rosselli's poetry for years to come. He describes her writing as a terrifying type of soil: it is fertile, but the mushrooms that grow there are atomic, the fruit of explosions. Her stateless ("apolide") status results in a kind of fertility that is dangerous: fatal, marvelous, monstrous. In this, the first official introduction of Rosselli to the Italian litterati, Rosselli herself figures like one of these atomic mushrooms: a mutant poet springing out of the soil after years of wandering.

This dissertation considers Rosselli's years of wandering, before Pasolini's patronage of her work: from 1950 to 1964. By 1948, Rosselli had officially moved to Italy, a country that she barely knew. She was born in Paris in 1930, the second child of exiled Italian antifascist Carlo Rosselli and his wife, British activist Marion Cave. After the murder of Carlo and his brother Nello at the hands of French Cagoulards (and most likely at the direct order of foreign minister Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law), the remaining members of the Rosselli family fled to the United States. After the end of the war, she and her family returned to Europe in 1946. She never received a university degree, and since her primary and secondary schooling had largely taken place outside of Italy (first the United States, then England when her American high school diploma was not recognized in Europe), she did not have the same kind of cultural background as her Italian peers. However, as a young woman Rosselli read broadly, took music composition lessons, and entered into conversations about music, literature, and anthropology with some of

[3] A note on translations throughout this dissertation: all translations are my own unless otherwise indicated in a footnote.

the most prominent thinkers within and outside of Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. In this dissertation, I draw a web of researchers (acousticians, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists) and artists (poets, essayists, performing musicians, composers) with Rosselli at the center, connecting her to various currents and groups with which she was engaging, either directly or indirectly. Rather than focusing on Rosselli's isolation within the Italian literary context, I trace the intellectual and artistic networks that informed her work before she became the well-known "eccentric" poet Amelia Rosselli.

Rosselli famously described herself as a "poeta della ricerca"[4] [poet of research], and much of the actual "ricerca" that she conducted in the 1950s sat at the intersection of the avant-garde and the ethnographic. In fact, she was not pleased with Pasolini's description of her work, in particular his assertion that her work was a manifestation of the "Mito dell'Irrazionale" [Myth of the Irrational]. She wrote to her brother John shortly after reading Pasolini's note about her:

> As to Pasolini's note, it's certainly nice enough, though I don't agree with the word "lapsus" (which is grammatically purely Freudian)—my "mixtures," linguistically, are rarely mixtures, at all, but refer to baroque or absurd turns of phrases or syllables, in use in Italy specially in the South, in the poetry of Campana, in dialect, or in other languages… etc., etc.
> As to "Mystery" + "Neurosis" + "Mito dell'Irrazionale" [Myth of the Irrational]—same type of objection—I would have spoken rather of the "Mito del Razionale" [Myth of the Rational]![5]

Rosselli pushes back against the idea that the otherness of her language springs from her own unconscious. She insists that these are not Freudian slips; these are the fruit of study. The phrases

[4] Sandra Petrignani & Amelia Rosselli, "Perduta in un bosco" (1978), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 24.

[5] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 25 October 1963. A note on the letters: Rosselli mostly wrote to John in English, with Italian freely mixed in (and very occasionally some French—their primary languages seemed to be English and Italian). When I cite the letters, I use brackets to translate an Italian term into English or to explain a false cognate or made-up word that Rosselli uses: i.e., if Rosselli writes "registered," a false cognate for the Italian "registrato," I will put "recorded" in brackets.

and syllables she uses have an origin outside herself: in the South, in dialect, in other languages, in the poetry of Dino Campana. The otherness, the mystery, or the irrationality that Pasolini notices is, for Rosselli, not something that springs from her own psyche. It is a distillation of her studies of other languages, other Italians, and, in particular, of the "outsiders" within Italy: Southern Italians and Dino Campana, the visionary, mentally ill poet who lived on the fringes of various major Italian literary circles in the early 1900s. What reads as "irrational"—perhaps even mad—to Pasolini is, in Rosselli's articulation, a search for aesthetic production that better elucidates relationships between self and other.

The idiosyncrasy of Rosselli's language is therefore not meant to be idiosyncratic at all: she is studying and absorbing the idiosyncrasies of others. And yet, so much of the reception of Rosselli's work has focused on her interiority, on the idea that her poetry is a looking-inward. For instance, journalist Sandra Petrignani, in the introduction to a 1978 interview she had conducted, described Rosselli's life as "segnata dalla scelta fondamentale e disperata dell'isolamento, dal testardo non vivere d'altro che della propria poesia"[6] [marked by the fundamental and desperate choice of isolation, by the stubborn refusal to live on anything other than her own poetry]. At the same time, in that same interview, Rosselli describes writing as a participation in the world, an exploration of how it functions: "Scrivere è chiedersi come è fatto il mondo"[7] [To write is to ask oneself how the world works]. The goal of her artistic endeavors is to see how the world works, and how people work within the world: as she put it in an interview with Francesca Borrelli in 1992, "Per me scrivere serve, in un certo senso, a portare nuova

[6] Sandra Petrignani & Amelia Rosselli, "Perduta in un bosco," 23.

[7] Sandra Petrignani & Amelia Rosselli, "Perduta in un bosco," 24.

ricchezza alla mia e alla altrui interiorità: sta anche in questo la valenza etica della poesia"[8] [For me writing is necessary, in a certain sense, to bring new richness to my and others' interiority: this is also a part of poetry's ethical valence].

This interest in ethics and relationality, in how one's own interior self interacts with the world and with others' interior selves, can be traced back to Rosselli's studies of anthropology, ethnography, and ethnomusicology in the 1950s. I argue that her ethnomusicological formation related to her poetry precisely in its attempts to navigate difference and universality: how to explore alterity between human beings while simultaneously holding onto a sense of shared human experience. Rosselli returns to these three fields of study frequently in interviews and retrospective descriptions of her work—they become a shorthand for her to explain what she thinks is obvious about her work. As she writes in her 1993 "Introduzione a 'Spazi metrici,'" an introduction to her dense theory of her poetics: "Che le mie ricerche in campo 'folk', ossia etnomusicologico, abbiano influito nella ricerca d'un versificare più stretto, più severo, e di formulazioni geometriche, è ovvio"[9] [It's obvious that my research in the field of "folk," that is, in ethnomusicology, influenced my search for a stricter, more severe and geometrically formulated way of writing poetry]. This connection may have been obvious to Rosselli, but it has not always been so to her readers. In order to analyze Rosselli's work, I take seriously her intellectual formations and their influences on her approach to exploring alterity in her writing, along with her attempts to understand broader, shared systems in which all humans participate.

[8] Amelia Rosselli & Francesca Borrelli, "Partitura in versi" (1992), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 144.

[9] Amelia Rosselli, "Introduzione a 'Spazi metrici,'" in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 60.

Ethnographic and ethnomusicological formations

Rosselli actively engaged with figures conducting ethnographic research in France, the United States, and Italy, and these connections developed alongside her studies of composition. In the early 1950s, she traveled to Paris to study recordings of folk music from around the world at the Musée de l'Homme, under the guidance of one of the founders of "comparative musicology" (what is now known as ethnomusicology), Alain Daniélou. Rosselli's early access to French ethnography—which had a broader international reach than Italian ethnography—informed her approach to more Italian-specific ethnography and ethnomusicology. Around the same time, she discovered anthropologist Ernesto De Martino's[10] specific strain of Italian ethnography through her relationship with intellectuals thinking through the "Southern question," like writer and artist Carlo Levi and poet and politician Rocco Scotellaro. Thanks to her work with De Martino, she was exposed to nascent Italian ethnomusicology through the work of Diego Carpitella, with whom she stayed in contact through the 1970s.

Rosselli consistently mentioned her compositional and ethnomusicological studies in accounts of herself that she gave in interviews, but she often included this information almost as a throwaway, mentioning it in half a sentence as the prehistory of Rosselli the poet—the figure that most interviewers wanted to discuss. Only in one interview, a semi-private one given in the early 1990s to a graduate student studying her work, did she provide a more expansive account of her first encounter with French ethnomusicology at the Musée de l'Homme in 1950:

> Cominciai a studiare il sistema intuitivo, mi riusciva molto più facile, non memorizzavo troppo. E siccome l'acustica musicale è basilare negli studi dei sistemi non temperati…

[10] A note on the debated spelling of Ernesto De Martino's name: I have adopted David Forgacs' orthographic decision, described in *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation Since 1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 144, n. 2: "[texts] published recently use the form 'de Martino', whereas 'De Martino' was the spelling always used in publications during his lifetime. I have adopted the latter form except when citing publications or posthumous editions that use the former."

> questo sta come substrato negli scritti [i testi di *Primi scritti*], c'è una sistematica. [...] Quando andavo a Parigi c'era Disdelant [sic] etnologico e Alein Darienou [sic] che si occupava di storia della musica, un famosissimo musicologo che aveva intrapreso tutti gli studi di genere antropologico; aveva una enorme biblioteca ed aveva messo su, quando non era di moda, una discoteca in realtà tutta registrata con tante cassette di musiche di tutto il mondo e aveva tentato una teorizzazione del tutto cumulativa e tutta numerativa, cioè si era costruito una specie di organetto grosso con tutti i possibili intervalli usati nella musica popolare di tutto il mondo. Era solo una raccolta di tonalità diverse, di semitoni più o meno grandi o toni più o meno larghi, non riusciva secondo me a teorizzare questo organetto, non perveniva ad una teorizzazione come credeva di fare. Gli scritti [i primi scritti della Rosselli] studiano il sottostrato musicale, cosa ispira la musica del terzo mondo [...].[11]
>
> [I began to study intuitive systems, it was much easier for me, I didn't [or perhaps couldn't] memorize much. And since musical acoustics are foundational in the study of untempered musical systems…this is like a substrate in the writings [the texts of *Primi scritti*, her early works], there is a system. [...] When I used to go to Paris there was Disdelant [sic] ethnological and Alein Darienou [sic] who analyzed the history of music, an incredibly famous musicologist who had undertaken all kinds of anthropological studies; he had an enormous library and he had created—when it wasn't in vogue—an entirely recorded discotheque, with many cassettes of musics from all over the world, and he had attempted totally cumulative and enumerative theories, that is he had constructed a kind of large portative organ with all the possible intervals used in folk music from around the world. It was only a collection of different pitches, of greater or smaller half-tones and whole-tones, in my opinion he couldn't theorize that portable organ, he didn't end up with a theory in the way he thought he did. The writings [Rosselli's early writings] study the musical substrate, what inspires third world music [...]]

Rosselli's narrative is not necessarily coherent, and there are some errors in the graduate student's transcription of the interview (for example, Alain Daniélou's name is misspelled).[12] More salient in this description, however, is that for Rosselli, ethnomusicology—the study of differences in music across cultures—is centered around new technologies, ways of recording and communicating beyond written words or musical notation. Even in the early 1990s, Rosselli,

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[11] Rosanna Inchingolo and Amelia Rosselli, "Leggere Dylan Thomas" (c. 1991), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 133–4.

[12] Monica Venturini and Silvia De March note that the incomprehensible "Disdelant etnologico" may be a reference to Maurice Leenhardt, an ethnographer at the Musée de l'Homme—but, seeing as Rosselli never mentions him in any other context, personal or public-facing, this may not be the case, and we may never know to what or to whom she was referring. In *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 372.

looking back at her studies in the 1950s, seems to marvel at Daniélou's collection of recordings. She had probably never had access to a collection of recorded material of that magnitude; as she notes in the interview, a "discoteca" was not "di moda" or typical at this time. The other technological marvel Rosselli mentions is the musical instrument that Daniélou made, the "organetto" that contained all possible musical intervals found in all different kinds of music across the world.

But for Rosselli it is not enough to catalog, to accumulate and enumerate information, as she describes Daniélou's project ("una teorizzazione del tutto cumulativa e tutta numerativa"). Instead, Rosselli is looking for some kind of common ground among all this difference. As Rosselli reiterates, she is interested in bases, in substrates: she claims twice that her early writing is searching for what lies beneath the artistic expression of cultural others ("l'acustica musicale è basilare negli studi dei sistemi non temperati… questo sta come substrato negli scritti, c'è una sistematica"; "Gli scritti studiano il sottostrato musicale, cosa ispira la musica del terzo mondo qualcosa che non è stato scritto"). This is both a quest for physical realities that underlie aural phenomena (the laws of acoustics) and a quest for a more psychological explanation, for something "intuitive" that elucidates the inspiration behind art made in various cultures and highlights universal aspects of perception. The pairing of Rosselli's understanding of physics and her desire to make the perception and production of art similarly comprehensible and universal comes to the fore in her essay "La serie degli armonici" [The Overtone Series], which Rosselli started researching in 1950 and first published in 1954, and which I analyze in Chapter 1. In it, Rosselli examines the idea that the overtone series (the various frequencies that make up a single musical sound, and that form the basis of many musical scales) constitutes the basis for music-making in all cultures—though the West, she argues, has strayed too far from it. Rosselli's

proposed solution involves a new mode of music-making, through a synthesizer instrument that only emits single-frequency sounds in the order of the overtone series for any given fundamental. Not only does Rosselli hope that this instrument will elucidate more precise information about musics beyond the West, she also predicts that her instrument will codify the expression and perception of music, thereby making all musics interculturally intelligible.

Rosselli worked on "La serie degli armonici" for most of her life, but most fervently during the period before she was known for her poetry. Rosselli's early creative writings (written as she was working on "La serie degli armonici" and published later) never explicitly mention acoustics or "third world" music-making. But I see in them an interest in a certain nexus that comes up in Rosselli's early ethnomusicological endeavors: an attempt to investigate both the ways that humans are different—culturally and perhaps racially—and what they share. These endeavors were deeply tied with notions of technology, as is evidenced by Rosselli's dream of a synthesizer-instrument. In my analysis of Rosselli's early creative writings, I argue that, as in "La serie degli armonici," an interest in cultural difference appears alongside an interest in new technologies or new conceptions of what counts as a technology. Ultimately, I maintain that taking seriously the notions of cultural difference and new ideas of technologies that Rosselli gleaned from her ethnomusicological studies offer a new perspective on how she thought through new understandings of subjectivity in her aesthetic production.

Rethinking relationships between self and other in light of 1950s anthropology

Rosselli herself placed a spotlight on the conflicted nature of the relationship between self and other in her poetry through the title of her first poetry collection, *Variazioni Belliche* [War Variations] (1964). As Florinda Fusco notes, "In *Variazioni belliche* l'io è un io plurale e in

guerra con se stesso. Non vi è cioè una soggettività unica e intera che esprima una singola posizione. La Rosselli sembra porre al centro dell'opera il rapporto con la differenza, o *alteritas*, sia all'esterno che all'interno del sé"[13] [In *War Variations* the I is a plural I, at war with itself. That is, there is not a single, whole subjectivity that can express a coherent position. Rosselli seems to put, at the center of her work, the relationship with different, or *alteritas*, both outside and inside herself]. This kind of conflictual relationship has been historicized by Nelson Moe, who maintains that Rosselli's poetry contains a "particular engagement in and negotiation of the power relations operant in contemporary capitalist society,"[14] and by Jennifer Scappettone, who reads Rosselli's poetry as "staging microdisplacements of so-called national languages, imploding the boundaries of Italian from within."[15] This kind of contentious, grappling relationship between the subject and the other has largely not been brought to bear on the few scholarly accounts of Rosselli's engagement with cultural difference, which tend to focus on Rosselli's sympathy for the other. Chiara Carpita emphasizes Rosselli's "sguardo empatico" [empathetic gaze] and her "volontà di identificazione con chi non ha voce" [willingness to identify with the voiceless], along with her interest in "la condizione degli oppressi nella società, sempre a rischio di invisibilità"[16] [the condition of the oppressed in society, those always at risk of invisibility]. In this sense, Carpita is picking up on Emmanuela Tandello's emphasis on Rosselli's poetry as an anthropological quest for the "'parola che esprima anche gli altri', gesto

[13] Florinda Fusco, *Amelia Rosselli* (Palermo: Palumbo, 2007), 41.

[14] Nelson Moe, "At the Margins of Dominion: The Poetry of Amelia Rosselli," in *Italica*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (Summer 1992), 177.

[15] Jennifer Scappettone, "'Cantonidisintegratidella / miavita': Closure and Implosion of the Canto(n) in Amelia Rosselli, and the Dream (or Nightmare) of a Transnational Language," in *Moderna*, Vol. XV, No. 2 (2013), 133.

[16] Chiara Carpita, "Spazi metrici tra post-webernismo, etnomusicologia, Gestalttheorie e astrattismo: su alcune fonti extra-letterarie del 'nuovo geometrismo' di Amelia Rosselli," in *Moderna*, Vol. XV, No. 2 (2013), 99.

che ‘va verso l’altro’ [...] È questo il gesto infinitamente generoso, e coraggioso, della poesia rosselliana”[17] [‘word that can express others,’ an act that ‘goes toward the other’ [...] This is the infinitely generous and courageous act of Rosselli’s poetry].

Rosselli herself described her poetry as a demonstration of her political commitment, as in this 1980 interview: “In poesia mi esprimo anche politicamente. Qualcuno intravede nella mia tematica un’ombra di umanesimo rivoluzionario. Sul piano sociale la poesia può servire se tocca la collettività, non tanto l’esperienza personale. È poesia secondo me riuscire a trasmettere questa esperienza del reale collettivo”[18] [In poetry, I also express myself politically. Some people see, in my themes, a shadow of revolutionary humanism. On the social level, poetry can only be useful if it touches the collective, not so much personal experience. Poetry, in my mind, is being able to transmit this experience of collective reality]. The term “umanesimo rivoluzionario” [revolutionary humanism] recalls De Martino’s “nuovo umanesimo” [new humanism] or “rinnovato umanesimo” [renewed humanism], which saw ethnology as key in a broader humanistic reform.[19] As Gino Satta puts it, De Martino presented “l’etnologia come scienza *del rapporto* tra l’Occidente e l’*ethnos*, l’incontro etnografico come duplice tematizzazione del proprio e dell’alieno, la necessità di non abdicare alle proprie categorie, ma di partire da queste per modificarle e estenderle attraverso il confronto con l’alterità in vista di quell’allargamento dell’autocoscienza dell’Occidente che costituisce l’orizzonte ultimo dell’umanesimo

[17] Emmanuela Tandello, *Amelia Rosselli: la fanciulla e l’infinito* (Rome: Donzelli, 2007), 117–9.

[18] Aurelio Andreoli & Amelia Rosselli, “L’esperienza del reale collettivo” (1980), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 40.

[19] For more on De Martino’s new humanism, see Dorothy L. Zinn, “An Introduction to Ernesto de Martino’s Relevance for the Study of Folklore,” in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 128, No. 507 (2015): 3–17. Sara Sermini, in *“E se paesani/zoppicanti sono questi versi”: povertà e follia nell’opera di Amelia Rosselli* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2019), has a different genealogy for Rosselli’s idea of revolutionary humanism: she connects it to the humanism espoused by Rosselli’s father, Carlo Rosselli (23 in particular).

etnografico"[20] [ethnology as the science *of the relationship* between the West and the *ethnos*, the ethnographic encounter as double thematization of the self and the other. This does not mean rejecting one's own categories, but starting from these in order to modify and extend them through the encounter with alterity, toward the expansion of the West's self-awareness, which constitutes the final horizon of ethnographic humanism]. Similarly, in Rosselli's work, an opening up toward the other coexists with the difficult attempt to parse what is the self's and what is the other's, along with the struggle to find some kind of common ground, a universal substrate of perception that could make the self and the other legible to one another. In the rest of this section, I trace ideas in anthropology that oriented Rosselli's quest, which I argue are necessary context to understand the relationship between self and (cultural) other in Rosselli's aesthetic work.

Rosselli's quest for common ground is, in some ways, related to De Martino's engagement with Gramsci and Marxian historicist perspectives (interests and political commitments that Rosselli also shared). But, in others, it is reflective of a more wide-scale "allargamento dell'autocoscienza dell'Occidente" [expansion of the West's self-awareness], in Satta's words, taking place in the years when Rosselli was most invested in anthropological research. Many anthropologists were reconsidering the West's relationship to other parts of the world, and reevaluating the cultural and racial hierarchies that they had inherited. UNESCO's 1950 Statement on Race, for instance, emphasized biological commonness among humans and insisted on humans' plasticity, malleability, and educability: in other words, centralizing the role

[20] Gino Satta, "L'etnocentrismo critico e le alterne fortune dell'umanesimo etnografico demartiniano," in *Lares*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (September–December 2018), 524.

of culture, rather than biology, in analyzing human differences.[21] The anthropologists of the Musée de l'Homme, where Rosselli studied in the early 1950s, were similarly invested in reevaluating perceptions of the West's supposedly "innate" cultural superiority. Claude Lévi-Strauss—interim director of the Musée de l'Homme in 1949–1950, just before Rosselli visited—was asked by UNESCO to write an essay for a pamphlet on "Race and History." In it, Lévi-Strauss focused closely on the technological differences between the West and other parts of the world, careful to assert that the West's "technical innovations" were a result of history, along with chance and environmental factors, rather than cultural or racial superiority.[22] He states: "The West, for all its mastery of machines, exhibits evidence of only the most elementary understanding of the use and potential resources of that super-machine, the human body. In this sphere, on the contrary, as on the related question of the connexion between the physical and the mental, the East and the Far East are several thousand years ahead."[23]

Lévi-Strauss' statement is, of course, indicative of an Orientalizing perspective of "Easternness" as connected to a closer understanding of the body, but it also reflects a broader reevaluation of *techne* as related both to machines, instruments, artifacts *and* to techniques of the

[21] UNESCO's commitment to scientific anti-racism did not necessarily combat colonial ordering. In a recent article, Sonali Thakkar analyzes how UNESCO's 1950 statement on race, with its emphasis on biology and educability, functioned as a strategy that "evaded the problem of racism as a political question produced by power interests and instead proposed that racism could be overcome because race itself could be overcome thanks to its malleability and potential for change [...] the statement makes the promise of a common life contingent on the formation and reformation, the education and reeducation, of some human beings." Sonali Thakkar, "The Reeducation of Race: From UNESCO's 1950 Statement on Race to the Postcolonial Critique of Plasticity," in *Social Text* 143, Vol. 38, No. 2 (June 2020), 82–4. Michelle Brattain, in "Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 5 (December 2007): 1386–1413, has also noted that, even as ethnologists attempted to dispel evolutionary understandings and classifications of inferiority and superiority of races and cultures, deep-rooted assumptions of innate differences between peoples proved difficult to eradicate.

[22] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Race and History" (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 38–9.

[23] Lévi-Strauss, "Race and History," 27. This is not unlike some of Jung's statements in these years, to which Rosselli was surely exposed in her time in analysis with one of Jung's students, Ernst Bernhard.

body. This reevaluation had begun a few decades earlier, in 1935, in the soon-to-be Musée de l'Homme circle of anthropologists through Marcel Mauss' conception of techniques of the body. In "Techniques of the Body" Mauss departs from some of his sociological contemporaries in his acknowledgement of the presence of sophisticated bodily techniques in *all* societies.[24] Carrie Noland sees Mauss as participating in a wave of cultural relativism in sociology, in which, by acknowledging advanced bodily techniques in all cultures, he asserted that "even [cultures] lacking in machinic technologies, could be considered more evolved with respect to, at least, kinesthetic concerns."[25] In fact, Mauss specifies that machinic technologies or instruments of any sort are not necessary for a technique to be present.[26] Other anthropologists at the Musée de l'Homme developed Mauss' ideas. For instance, Jacques Soustelle established a department of comparative technology at the Musée de l'Homme in 1938,[27] and, in 1956, Paul Rivet stated that the goal of the museum was, as Alice L. Conklin puts it, "to relativize 'white' achievements by showing that technical accomplishment was the shared heritage of all humanity."[28] The exhibits in the Musée de l'Homme always took care to illustrate a typical technique from a given area or group;[29] in Rivet's words, the goal of including technical elements from other cultures was "[t]o demonstrate that our civilization, of which we are rightfully proud, is in part the result of

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[24] Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 19.

[25] Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*, 19.

[26] Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," in *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, ed. Nathan Schlanger (Oxford; New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 77–95.

[27] Alice L. Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850–1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 139.

[28] Conklin, *In the Museum of Man*, 149.

[29] Conklin, *In the Museum of Man*, 153.

contributions that we owe to the entire world, and that therefore the genius of invention is not the privilege of the White [Man]."[30]

Rosselli would have been exposed to these new modes of thinking about cultural difference—and, in particular, technological differences between cultures—in her studies at the Musée de l'Homme, but she would also be exposed to similar thinking occurring in De Martino's strand of anthropology in Italy, in which she actively participated, starting in 1952 and continuing through the rest of the 1950s. Rosselli was introduced to De Martino through Carlo Levi and Rocco Scotellaro; Scotellaro functioned as a go-between for De Martino, facilitating encounters between ethnographers and rural Lucanian subjects, allaying preoccupations and suspicions. De Martino's wife and research partner, the social worker Vittoria De Palma, remembers Rosselli as a friend of Rocco Scotellaro and an observer during the ethnographic trip that De Martino and his troupe conducted in fall 1952.[31] Rosselli participated in a short-lived "ethnologic center" with De Martino and young ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella in 1952–1953, and there was apparently hope that together, she and Carpitella could begin distributing records of folk music from around the world, accompanied by texts, through the publishing house Einaudi (perhaps as a part of the famous "Collana viola" founded by Cesare Pavese and Ernesto De Martino, though De Martino's involvement had largely faded after Pavese's death in 1950).[32]

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[30] Quoted in Conklin, *In the Museum of Man*, 149.

[31] Chiara Carpita, "*Spazi metrici*," 98.

[32] Rosselli writes her brother John about this on April 27, 1953: "Am become musical consulente of the Italian Ethnological Society, a scientific organism, which digs all the folklore out of Italian countryside: it has asked me to set up a vast discoteca, together with a musicologist, including all italian folkmusic, which for its beauty and originality is something apart; and also a discoteca of folkmusic from all over the world. [...] The society itself is being connected to a vast commercial enterprise: we plan to collect as many records as possible and place the best ones on the market, both here and abroad. Many industrialists are putting in 'qualche milione', among which the editor Einaudi: i am to be the musical consulente here too, and direct, together with Carpitella, all eventual

De Martino focused on reinterpreting aspects of the Italian South through the lens of cultural techniques. He sought to break away from "naturalistic" models of ethnology, that treated subjects' cultural forms as "materiale da praticamente *ordinare* in una scienza naturale dell'uomo"[33] [matter to *order* in a natural science of man]. Instead, De Martino analyzed the ways in which cultural forms like the lament or (later in his research) the taranta constituted techniques to protect the subject from destructive psychic forces. De Martino paid particular attention to how these cultural forms were standardized, true techniques of the body employed by Southern subjects (he would later classify them as such in his final work, *La fine del mondo,* published posthumously).[34]

All these intellectual influences form the substrate of Rosselli's interest in and engagement with cultural and racial differences, differences that, as I outlined, in these years were often framed in terms of technological differences. Rosselli's early engagement with "otherness" came in the form of thinking through these differences, and I argue that an examination of the self's relationship with the other in her poetry can be enriched through an analysis of anthropological ideas with which she came into contact. I also argue that these

publications touching the subject either scientific or divulgative. [...] The ethnological society has no particular political bend and purely scientific work can be done under its auspices; the commercial enterprise for records is however tied up with left wing politics: we shall be publishing a great deal of folksongs from Hungary, Russia, Cina, ecc, and all of this material is handed over free: the affare is clear. The difficulty lies rather in finding a large market; I think Einaudi and the others connected to the enterprise are particularly suited for the creation of a market in Italy."

[33] Ernesto De Martino, "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno," in *Società*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1949), 412.

[34] Diego Carpitella notes De Martino's engagement with Maussian techniques of the body in his article "De Martino e le nuove discipline," in *La Ricerca Folklorica*, No. 13 (April 1986), 69. In the same article, he highlights De Martino's role in the new fields of Italian demo-ethno-anthropology (as he puts it): cinema, kinesics, photography, and ethnomusicology.

anthropological ideas were foundational for Rosselli's ideas of technology, and help us to make sense of the numerous references to new technologies and new media in her work.

Conceptions of new technologies and new media

Rosselli's engagement with new technologies—primarily sound and film recordings—initially came through her ethnomusicological research. She was originally introduced to recordings of folk music from around the world through Alain Daniélou's "discoteca," and in 1952 a letter to John stated her desire to buy her own means of recording, a "registratore a nastro," or tape recorder.[35] She then observed ethnographic recordings being made in the field in fall 1952, when De Martino's troupe visited Lucania; during the unusually collaborative expedition, Carpitella recorded audio and Franco Pinna took photographs.[36] This interest predates Rosselli's serious engagement with electronic music, but in 1959 and again in 1961,[37] she attended the Darmstadt Ferienkurse, meeting prominent European and American electronic composers. In 1962, she visited the Studio di fonologia musicale di Radio Milano, where she worked on her compositions and conducted research. During this trip she met Luciano Berio and Bruno Maderna, founders of the studio and two of Italy's most prominent electronic

[35] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 27 July 1952. It seems she wanted to buy a new one in 1956 as well, as evident from another letter to John Rosselli, 14 June 1956, begging him for money so that she could buy one.

[36] As David Forgacs notes, Pinna took some footage of funeral laments, but it is not extant. David Forgacs, *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation Since 1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 144.

[37] Siriana Sgavicchia has argued for the centrality of Rosselli's experience at Darmstadt in her intellectual formation, in "Gli armonici di Amelia Rosselli," in *Atlante della letteratura italiana. Dal Romanticismo a oggi*, ed. Sergio Luzzatto, Gabriele Pedullà, and Domenico Scarpa, Vol. III (Turin: Einaudi, 2012), 831–835. Sgavicchia only looks at Rosselli's participation in 1961, since this is the only record, in the Darmstadt archives, of Rosselli's registration in the course. However, from Rosselli's own archives, and from a few of Rosselli's letters in David Tudor's, it emerges that Rosselli also went to Darmstadt in 1959 and was supposed to go in 1960, although in 1960 she ended up being unable to attend due to another institutionalization.

composers.[38] Rosselli was recording her own compositions on tape at least from 1954 onward;[39] her compositions were played publicly in concerts in Rome and in Palermo, in 1958 and 1960 respectively.[40] Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, she also improvised and recorded soundtracks for ethnographic documentaries on the Italian South.[41]

None of Rosselli's musical compositions are extant, and concrete details on the kinds of recorders she used are difficult, if not impossible, to come by. However, all these details serve to contextualize the way Rosselli uses metaphors of recording technologies to describe the writing process of her poetry, starting around 1955. In her description of how she wrote her early multilingual work, *Diario in tre lingue* [Diary in Three Languages], she associates her writing with a "transcription" of her interactions with the environment during her walks around Rome's Trastevere neighborhood; she describes a process of transcribing a "magnetic field."[42] In a written recollection of these years from 1992, she talked about engaging with photography and film, and how her poetry was a continuation of these mediatic practices: "Poi ho abbandonato la cinepresa e anche la fotografia e ho continuato con la poesia, e i problemi di architettura

[38] Rosselli writes about her trip to the Studio in various letters to John throughout 1962, and in some letters to Pasolini. Further information about her trip does not appear to be extant in the Studio's archives.

[39] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 25 May 1954: "Working a good deal on music, atimes with success. You'll be able to hear some of it recorded on the tape - 'registratore' – may frighten you, though (very fierce)."

[40] She mentions the Rome concert in a letter to John on 11 May 1958; she mentions the Palermo concert in a letter to John on 20 May 1960. This concert was probably part of the first Settimana Internazionale Nuova Musica.

[41] These are documented in the letters to John. She refers to her soundtrack work in the letters to John on 11 October 1959, 25 November 1959, and 23 April 1964; another letter, dated March 11, has no year but may have been written in 1963, 1964, or 1965. In a letter to David Tudor, from September 8, either 1962 or 1965, she mentions "[i]mprovising percussive music for films of short length and documentaries" (Amelia Rosselli, *Due parole per chiederti notizie: lettere (inedite) a David Tudor*, ed. Roberto Gigliucci (Genoa: Fondazione Giorgio e Lilli Devoto, 2015), 54.

[42] Maria Lazzari and Amelia Rosselli, "A cavalcioni dell'avanguardia" (1979), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 205.

dinamica sono divenuti i problemi di *Spazi metrici*"[43] [Then I abandoned the videocamera and even photography and I went on with poetry, and the issues of dynamic architecture became the issues of "Spazi metrici"]. "Spazi metrici," Rosselli's 1962 explanation of her poetics, does indeed continue applying metaphors of recorded media to her poetic process. In it, Rosselli talks about transcribing the "rullo," the reel, of her thought into poetry—the poems of her first published collection, *Variazioni Belliche*.[44] Rosselli turns to metaphors of recording when describing attempts to communicate her own lived reality—her corporeal experience of the world around her—in ways that are intelligible to an interlocutor. Rosselli aspires to a communication of the "reale collettivo" [collective reality], as she put it in a 1980 interview with Aurelio Andreoli, while also trying to transcribe her own reality, as she put it in a 1979 interview with Orazio Converso and Guido Galeno.[45] New technologies and new media, for Rosselli, offer opportunities to get at the realities of others: her ethnomusicological research entails attempts to understand the musical techniques and technologies of other cultures, using her own recording techniques and technologies to gain this insight. At the same time, it also represents a dream of making her reality accessible to others. In other words, technological difference is emblematic of cultural difference, but at the same time technology, in Rosselli's work, also elucidates the fantasy of making the self totally intelligible to the other, and vice versa.

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[43] Milo De Angelis, Isabella Vicentini, and Amelia Rosselli, "Cosa era Roma per me" (1992), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 148–9.

[44] Amelia Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 64.

[45] Guido Galeno, Orazio Converso, and Amelia Rosselli, "Non è la mia ambizione essere eccentrica" (1987), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 191–222.

Part of this project entailed an interest in uncovering "universals" that underlie human experience, and which, when deployed artistically, would make cultural products legible to all human beings. Rosselli outlines this fantasy in a 1965 roundtable discussion of the work of painter Piero Dorazio (transcribed and published in the cultural journal *Marcatré*). At this point, Rosselli was gaining a reputation as a poet, but she was still active in musical circles; this may account for her presence at the roundtable, which took place at an exhibition of Dorazio's work and following a concert of electronic music by composers Vittorio Gelmetti and Pietro Grossi. Rosselli spoke alongside Dorazio, Gelmetti, and Grossi, painter and writer Giordano Falzoni, architect Luciano Rubino, music critic Mario Bortolotto, and art critic Eugenio Battisti. Rosselli's interventions in the roundtable focus on a desire for art as a form of research into the science of perception: "Io trovo che, come nella musica, il problema della percezione nella pittura è completamente secondario, quasi senza importanza. Cioè si potrebbe completamente tralasciare, e concentrarsi completamente invece *su quello che provoca la percezione, senza preoccuparsi dei suoi risultati*, anzi lasciando questi risultati del tutto al caso"[46] (my emphasis) [I find that—as in music—the question of perception in painting is completely secondary, almost insignificant. That is, one could completely ignore it, and instead focus completely *on that which provokes perception, without worrying about its results*, even leaving these results completely to chance]. She asserts that "Dorazio è in fondo il pittore che più si avvicina a un mio sogno di adolescente: di dipingere analizzando prima di tutto gli spettri di luce e traendone conseguenze estremamente logiche. Io aspiro alla panmusica, alla musica di tutti, della terra e dell'universo, in

[46] Piero Dorazio, Giordano Falzoni, Pietro Grossi, Vittorio Gelmetti, Luciano Rubino, Amelia Rosselli, Mario Bortolotto, Eugenio Battisti, and Franco Di Vito, "Musica e pittura. Dibattito su Dorazio," in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 40.

cui non ci sia più una mano individuale che la regoli"[47] [Dorazio is ultimately the painter who comes closest to an adolescent dream of mine: of painting by analyzing, above all, light spectra, and drawing from these extremely logical conclusions. I aspire to panmusic, the music of everyone, of the earth and the universe, in which there is no individual hand regulating it].

Dorazio did not agree with Rosselli's characterization of his work, and the roundtable devolved into an argument between the two of them, in which Gelmetti intervened, differentiating between Rosselli's approach— "una ricerca strettamente scientifica i cui risultati potrebbero, se classificati, essere utili poi al pittore che voglia fare delle opere visive" [a strictly scientific research project whose results, if analyzed, could later be useful to the painter who wants to make visual works]—and Dorazio's, which he terms "artigianesco, in cui si esperimentano direttamente, usando se stessi come cavie, i risultati della percezione"[48] [artisanal, in which one directly experiences the results of perception, using oneself as a test subject]. Rosselli's ideal mode of art gets at the universals of perception; as she says toward the end of the debate, "Strano a dirsi, io penso che sia il lavoro fatto in musica che in pittura e forse anche in letteratura, puntano a una visione inaspettatamente platonica dell'universo. Noi finiremo per non dipingere, per non scrivere, per non fare rumori e contemplare i numeri felicemente, pur avendo dietro le spalle una ricerca scientifica estremamente complessa, addirittura aristotelica"[49] [Strange to say, I think that the work done in music, painting, and maybe even in literature aim toward an unexpectedly platonic view of the universe. We will end up not painting, not writing, not making noises, and instead happily contemplate numbers, having extremely complex, even

[47] Dorazio et al., "Musica e pittura," 38.

[48] Dorazio et al., "Musica e pittura," 41.

[49] Dorazio et al., "Musica e pittura," 42.

Aristotelian, scientific research behind us]. However, Rosselli's actual poetry is not orderly or scientific; instead, as I argue throughout the course of this dissertation, her aesthetic projects rehearse the conflict between an extreme consciousness of human particularity and an intense desire to find the substrates that unify human experience of the world.

Chapter summaries

This dissertation proceeds mostly chronologically through Rosselli's work, although parts of the different chapters overlap. I begin, in Chapter 1, with an analysis of Rosselli's article "La serie degli armonici," fruit of her study at the Musée de l'Homme and her own personal explorations of ethnomusicology, acoustics, and electronic music. Rosselli began work on "La serie degli armonici" in the early 1950s, and returned to it consistently through the 1980s, making it one of the pieces with which she had the longest running intellectual engagement. I trace Rosselli's intellectual influences for the piece, largely cited in the bibliography she includes in the 1980s, focusing on the inextricability of cultural difference and technological difference in Rosselli's work. I also look at her ideas for her electronic instrument and her new system of musical notation, both of which are partly sketched out in "La serie degli armonici," incorporating the information on the instrument and the notational system from the essay with an analysis of archival materials: letters to John from the early 1950s, and sketches from her work at Darmstadt in 1959. In my reading of these materials, both the instrument and the notational system—neither of which was ever completed—reveal an impulse to find universal elements of sensory perception that transcend cultural differences.

In Chapter 2, I turn to Rosselli's engagement with Southern Italy specifically, the "other within" Italy in the 1950s, through an analysis of Rosselli's poetic sequence *Cantilena* (1953),

written on the occasion of her friend Rocco Scotellaro's death. I argue that *Cantilena* functions as a version of a Lucanian funeral lament, the lament that had captivated Ernesto De Martino in his fieldwork. De Martino and his troupe began capturing the lament through various recording technologies, and thanks to this research De Martino began considering the lament itself as a technique or a technology, a codified cultural form that protected the subject from the potentially annihilating forces of grief and loss. In *Cantilena*, Rosselli tries her hand at engaging with the bodily technique of the lament in written form, contemplating the way that techniques of the body represent cultural forms that negotiate physiological/biological forces and culturally and contextually specific human experiences.

Chapter 3, instead, focuses on the fantasy of making one's own bodily experience accessible to others. I turn to two texts Rosselli wrote during the same time period, between 1954 and 1956: *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue*. These two texts are among the most eclectic of Rosselli's, both formally and linguistically: they are mixtures of verse and prose, and they combine French, Italian, and English more obviously than in any other text of hers. Additionally, both of them contain frequent references to Chinese. I trace the valence of references to Chinese in Rosselli's intellectual influences and cultural context, and argue that the way these texts use Chinese is indebted to longer traditions of viewing Chinese—and Chinese writing in particular—as a foil to Western concepts of mediality. In *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue*, Chinese is a fantastical corrective to illegible subjective experiences: it represents the ability to record and communicate one's perceptions of space and time. I connect Rosselli's use of Chinese in this way to ideas of Chinese circulating in Italian cultural life in the 1950s.

In the fourth and final chapter of this dissertation, I turn to two of the most studied of Rosselli's texts: her first published poetry collection, *Variazioni Belliche* (containing poems from 1959 to 1961; published in 1964) and her accompanying statement of poetics, "Spazi metrici" (1962). The chapter focuses on how Rosselli's explanations of her poetics focus on systematicity and technological precision, inscribing the unsettling mélanges of self and other of the poems into specific fields of research. Her paratexts cast *Variazioni Belliche* as an exploration of the ethnographic relationship between observer and observed, as well as an exploration of the relationship between humans, technologies, and modes of creating knowledge about universals in human perception.

Finally, my conclusion considers how Rosselli's fantasies of deploying technologies as a way of accessing universal intelligibility among subjects, no matter what their cultural formations might be, turned into nightmares in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. I consider how the rise of the "strategia della tensione" [strategy of tension] entailed an association between various technologies and modes of surveillance, and Rosselli's work reflects this shift, for example in the personal narrative essay "Storia di una malattia" [Hi/story of an illness] (1977, purportedly reporting on events from 1969 to 1977), along with related passages from her letters to John. These documents reveal a fear that the same technologies that Rosselli had deemed necessary for revealing universal modes of perception might be turned against herself. Rosselli's reconsiderations of the menacing potentials of technology coincide with a shift in Italian ethnographic practices, as well, while considerations of the potential for violence in the ethnographic relationship begin to creep into the public discourse.

Centering "la straniera": creating networks in the face of archival absences

In conducting research that centers Rosselli within various networks, I join a number of scholars working to flesh out the traces of her in archives beside her own. Thanks to John Rosselli's donation of her letters to him to the Università di Pavia after her death; dedicated scholars like Francesca Caputo who have collected her essays and tracked down letters between Rosselli and her publishers; and the recovery of Rosselli's personal collection of books through the Università della Tuscia, there are two primary Rosselli archives, in Pavia and in Viterbo. John Rosselli's decision to house Amelia Rosselli's personal papers at the Università di Pavia, at the Fondo Manoscritti that contains similar collections of personal papers by other twentieth-century Italian authors of great stature, reveals his desire to see Amelia Rosselli recognized and preserved as a major player in the twentieth-century Italian literary scene.

And yet, even then, memories of Rosselli as an Italian author are tinged with her outsider status, a sense of her being "straniera": an Italian word that means foreigner, but that also contains "strano," strange.[50] As Elizabeth Leake has noted, this sense comes in part from the effects that Rosselli's suicide had on critics' evaluation of her work, who "bas[ed] their posthumous perceptions of Rosselli as biographically and emotionally *déracinée*" and "essentially severed all ties between her opus and the work of her contemporaries."[51] Leake states that because of Rosselli's gender, mental illness, and finally her suicide "her readership reassigned her a new 'genealogy,' so that previous associations such as with other neo-avantgarde poets, beginning with the Gruppo '63, that were motivated by facets of her

[50] The word is derived from the Latin *extraneus*, foreign/foreigner or strange/stranger/outsider. In addition to "straniero," another word derived from *extraneus* in Italian is "estraneo," which is used to denote a stranger or an outsider.

[51] Leake, *After Words*, 68.

writings—radically innovative, and frequently opaque almost to the point of illegibility—were supplemented with references to her 'suicide sisters,' real and fictional female figures from the world of literature"[52] (all the more so since the day Rosselli died by suicide, February 11, 1996, was the thirtieth anniversary of Sylvia Plath's death, also by suicide). Lucia Re, in analyzing Rosselli in the context of the neo-avant-garde movement Gruppo 63, has observed that she was one of only two women included in the group's first anthology; in addition to marginalization by the group due to her gender, Re also draws attention to the fact that Rosselli was one of few members of the experimental group who had created work that "crossed national and linguistic barriers and opened itself up to a variety of discourses and disciplines."[53] Umberto Eco, in looking back at the founding of the Gruppo 63 in 2003, defines Rosselli as a "vagante," a wanderer,[54] without acknowledging, in Re's words, the "doubly marginal and isolated position at the edge of Italian society and of the neo-avant-garde" experienced by women experimental poets.[55]

If Rosselli as a poet has been pulled out of her historical context and the ways she contributed to poetic, political, and aesthetic discourses in postwar Italy, despite the ways in which her archive in Pavia has enshrined her as a twentieth-century Italian author alongside the likes of Giorgio Manganelli and Eugenio Montale, the situation is even more complicated in (the mostly musical) archives that only contain the smallest traces of Rosselli. Letters have been

[52] Leake, *After Words*, 66–67.

[53] Lucia Re, "Language, Gender and Sexuality in the Italian Neo-Avant-Garde," in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 119. No. 1 (January 2004), 167.

[54] Umberto Eco, "Prolusione," in *Il Gruppo 63 quarant'anni dopo. Bologna, 8–11 maggio 2003. Atti del Convegno*, ed. Renato Barilli, Fausto Curi, and Niva Lorenzini (Bologna: Pendragon, 2005), 37.

[55] Re, "Language, Gender and Sexuality," 173.

found from Rosselli to composer and pianist David Tudor in Tudor's archives, along with letters from Rosselli to Pier Paolo Pasolini and to Luciano Berio in these men's respective archives. Siriana Sgavicchia has found a record of Rosselli's registration at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse in 1961, but Rosselli attended in 1959, too, and there is no trace of her then; nor is any of her work from Darmstadt preserved.[56] Joanna Helms, in a recent study of Luciano Berio and Bruno Maderna's Studio di Fonologia musicale in Milan, collaborated with the Studio's archivist Maddalena Novati to try to find a recording of a piece Rosselli recorded there, to no avail. Helms attributes the lack of Rosselli's tape piece in the archives as an indication of the lack of value that men at the Studio felt toward women's pieces (Rosselli was not the only woman composer in this position). Helms turns to Sara Ahmed's work to illustrate this phenomenon: "Ahmed notes that 'organizations can be considered as modes of attention: what is attended to can be thought of as what is valued: attention is how some things come into view (and other things do not).'[57] Women were not given attention by the electronic music studios they sought to enter, and this inattention has continued to reproduce itself in present-day understandings of mid-century studio space."[58]

At the same time, once women's movements became better established in Italy, many of these women respected Rosselli, but did not quite understand how Rosselli fit into their movements. Feminist author Dacia Maraini wrote a 1976 review of Rosselli's collection *Documento*, in which she insisted on Rosselli's desire to be alone, apart from other women: Maraini states that in Rosselli's poetry "si può riconoscere la donna, anche se Amelia è tutt'altro

[56] Sgavicchia, "Gli armonici di Amelia Rosselli," 831–835.

[57] Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2012), 30.

[58] Joanna Helms, "Electronic Music History Through the Everyday: The Rai Studio di Fonologia (1954–83)," Ph.D. diss. (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2020), 154.

che una femminista troppo occupata a combattere da sola contro il mondo intero per accorgersi delle altre donne"[59] [woman is recognizable, even though Amelia is anything but a feminist; she is too busy fighting by herself, against the whole world, to notice other women]. Rosselli herself did not always seem to understand how her work related to Italian feminist movements, as emerges from her bewildering answers to questions in interviews about how she fit into the Italian feminist landscape.

Rosselli's absence is in so many of the archives of the networks she was, in fact, a part of: Joanna Helms and Maddalena Novati were unable to find her in the Studio di Fonologia musicale; Siriana Sgavicchia only found her name on a registration form at Darmstadt; Viviana Ponta found no record of her working with Farfisa, though she spent years collaborating with engineers there to make her instrument. I am not sure if there are traces of Rosselli in other archives that might speak to the aspects of Rosselli's work that I focus on: whether there is any extant correspondence with Alain Daniélou, Ernesto De Martino, Diego Carpitella, or groups of Roman composers with whom she interacted (Goffredo Petrassi, Roman Vlad, Guido Turchi, Franco Evangelisti, Egisto Macchi, Daniele Paris, Domenico Guaccero). In this dissertation, rather than trying to find possible traces of Rosselli in these archives, I look at how she decided to situate herself: whom she cited, how she represented her background in interviews, with which movements and interlocutors she was trying to engage. My findings provide new ways of interpreting her experimentalism through the light of her engagement with cultural, racial, and, to a lesser extent, sexual difference.

Scholars like Lucia Re and Jennifer Scappettone have interpreted Rosselli's poetry in a transnational political light: as Re puts it, "The Italian employed by Rosselli, with her three-

[59] Dacia Maraini, "Sola contro il mondo" (1976), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 10.

dimensional linguistic sensibility and knowledge, as well as her performance and musical training, finally undermines the myth of the organicity of a national language, culture, canon and literary tradition, even as it transmits a true passion for performing creative linguistic acts across languages that promise new, meaningful, and non-oppressive connections between humans."[60] In tracing Rosselli's movements between UNESCO-affiliated institutions like the Musée de l'Homme, Gramscian-influenced ethnographic research in the Italian South, and 1950s beginnings of Italy's Third Worldist movements, Rosselli's political investment in opposing oppression rooted in colonialism, economic conditions, or perceptions of others' cultural and/or racial inferiority comes to the fore. At certain points, as in her understanding of the condition of Southern Italian women in particular, she also considers sex-based oppression.

At the same time, as I demonstrate throughout this dissertation, in her artistic production Rosselli returned over and over again—consciously and subconsciously—to dynamics of oppression and dominion (to use Nelson Moe's term, who takes it from Pasolini). Her interest in and valorization of non-Western and non-hegemonic forms of art reveal an openness toward combating oppressive stances toward cultural and/or racialized others. However, many of her assumptions about these others reveal fantasies of their aesthetic contributions that benefit hegemonic Western subjects more than building networks of solidarity: take the anonymous "Asian," "African," and "folk" subjects whose musical techniques are intended to revitalize Western classical music in "La serie degli armonici," or Southern Italian women's lament techniques meant to assuage the crisis of mourning for the industrialized Western subject in the poetic sequence *Cantilena*, or the nebulous role of "Chinese" in seeking to create a new kind of

[60] Lucia Re, "'The Wary Meaning of the Word': Reading and Translating Amelia Rosselli's Poetry," in *On the Fringe of the Neoavantgarde. Ai confini della Neoavanguardia. Palermo 1963 - Los Angeles 2013*, ed Gianluca Rizzo (New York: Agincourt Press, 2017), 104.

textual medium rooted in the body in the experimental works of *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue*. It is my contention that Rosselli was, to some extent, aware of the power dynamics between herself and the subjects to whom she was gaining access through new media and recording technologies, and my reading of *Variazioni Belliche* and "Spazi metrici" in the fourth chapter of this dissertation reflects that view.

By tracing Rosselli's networks, according to Rosselli's own references in interviews, bibliographies, citations, and what remains of her library, I open paths for readers to consider how Rosselli's work provides new insights into received histories of a number of aesthetic movements in 1950s and 1960s Italy. The light I shine on Rosselli's associations between cultural and/or racial alterity and various ideas of techniques and technologies could offer new ways of exploring how techniques and technologies were considered in relation to cultural difference in other Italian aesthetic projects or intellectual movements like Third Worldism and reconsiderations of the Italian South. My investigations of the role of recording technology in Rosselli's poetry could provide a starting point for reevaluating multimediality in the poetry of the Italian 1950s. Her experimental use of language to point toward cultural difference in her poetry underscores how avant-garde or experimental techniques were paramount in works looking to engage with questions of alterity (especially in the Italian South). All of these potential avenues for new research can only emerge by centering "the outsider" in her various intellectual networks.

Chapter 1: Discovering universal musics and universal bodies.

"La serie degli armonici" and ethnomusicological formations between the Musée de l'Homme, Gramscian ethnology, and electronic music

Introduction

The piece of writing to which Amelia Rosselli returned for the longest time throughout her life was one of the first she had written: an essay published in 1954, titled "La serie degli armonici" [The Harmonic Series]. It was first published in the second volume of *Civiltà delle macchine* [Machine civilization/culture], a journal founded the previous year by poet, mathematician, and engineer Leonardo Sinisgalli. The journal was quickly gaining a reputation as a unique space where conversations about aesthetics and technology in Italy could come together.[61] The same year, Rosselli published the essay in a more music-focused venue, as well: the journal *Il Diapason* [The Tuning Fork], the first Italian journal dedicated to contemporary music. Copies of *Il Diapason* are virtually unfindable at this point, and it seems that the publication was short-lived; nevertheless, before Luciano Berio began his journal *Incontri musicali* in 1956, *Il Diapason*, under the direction of musicologist Luigi Pestalozza, published critical works by Italian electronic composers from 1950 to 1956.[62] Rosselli's choice to publish in these two journals speaks to the different audiences with whom she was trying to engage: through *Il Diapason*, the Italian contemporary music scene; and through *Civiltà delle macchine*, Italian intellectuals attempting to understand how Italy could engage with technology, on an

[61] Claudio Pogliano, "Civiltà delle macchine," in *La rivista dei libri*, n. 11, November 1993.

[62] According to the Centro Studi Luciano Berio, Berio published two pieces in *Il Diapason*: "Invito a *Wozzeck*," in *Il Diapason*, III (1952), 3–4: 14–20; and "Musica per Tape Recorder," in *Il Diapason*, IV (1953), 3–4: 10–13.

economic and political level, after fascism. At the same time, Rosselli was also discussing the theories in "La serie degli armonici" with exponents of a new strain of anthropology and ethnomusicology in Italy: anthropologist Ernesto De Martino and ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella, with whom she was involved in a short lived "Centro etnologico italiano," Italian ethnologic center, from 1952 to 1956.[63]

With "La serie degli armonici," Rosselli sought to situate herself at the intersection between three groups: intellectuals thinking about technology, politics, and economics; composers considering questions of contemporary music, particularly electronic music; and the new ethnologists beginning to turn their gaze on isolated areas of their own country. Although Rosselli wrote the essay in Italian and published it in Italy, her ideas were also influenced by broader questions about new relationships between humans, cultural and/or racial differences, and technologies throughout Europe and the United States in the postwar period. In this chapter, I discuss Rosselli's theories in "La serie degli armonici" in the context of anthropological research and electronic composition, primarily in Italy and France (although, in some instances, research from the United States, Hungary, and Germany is also relevant). I incorporate materials from Rosselli's interviews in the press and from her archives in Pavia to explore additional historical background to some of the concepts that crop up in her essay. I draw primarily on

[63] Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 27 July 1952: "all this great ado about musical theory and construction of instruments may fruttarmi [produce for me] a borsa di studio [scholarship/grant], or anyway some kind of finanziamento [financing] from either the Istituto Italiano per le Ricerche Scientifiche (statal) or the Ford foundation. I'd not asked for help, but others are doing it for me, through their more or less influential friends, or through the Ethnological Center, which is beginning to bloom forth quite pompously. To tell the truth I doubt that these people know what they're letting themselves in for, and i'm [sic] afraid that as soon as they do, and get to understand the solution I propose, they may totally back out." On 14 June 1956, Rosselli again mentions the Center in a letter to John, as she begs him for money to buy a new tape recorder and, above all, a gramophone: "the same sum again for what is called a 'registratore su nastro' [tape recorder], which registers music, and allows one to hear own music, and preserve improvisations: necessary for new instrument, which is strictly tied to improvisation. this [sic] registratore [recorder] generally has to be switched unto [sic] a gramophone: this is the lowest price it can be found at. at [sic] the moment i [sic] use the gramophone of the ethnological center, and keep it in my room: don't know how long this idyllic situation may last."

letters that Rosselli wrote to her brother John during the early 1950s, music-notational sketches from 1959, a letter about her research that she wrote to scholars in Yugoslavia in 1981, and a bibliography listing works she thought were important to understanding the essay that she made in 1987. Turning to the output of scholars, composers, and institutions with which Rosselli engaged, I situate her statements about technology, bodies, and cultural and racial difference within the network of ideas that shaped her. I argue that, in her ethnomusicological research, Rosselli reveals the roots of her intellectual interest in how humans relate to one another across cultural divides; how ideas of techniques and technologies are being reevaluated in Europe through analyses of other cultures; and how these concerns relate to new ideas of what is "universal" in humans' perception and production of music. In other words, Rosselli's investment in finding a mode of expression that allows for a totality of sounds, musical traditions, and techniques of producing music reflects a key element of her oeuvre: every time Rosselli engages with cultural difference across her work, she is also engaging with new ideas and uses of technologies and how they interact with bodies. Above all, she is contending with how to make sense of vast cultural differences, and how they play out through techniques and technologies, while also maintaining an underlying belief in the possibility of a universal aesthetic that reflects a physical reality shared by all human beings.

"La serie degli armonici" between serialist and structuralist modes of understanding music

"La serie degli armonici" is the typical starting point for scholars attempting to understand Rosselli's musical studies. It is an ambitious essay: it seeks to delineate a new music theory and to argue for the importance of a new instrument that Rosselli was making with the

Italian electronics company Farfisa. These goals were declared simply and explicitly in the title given to the version published in *Il Diapason*: "Nuovi esperimenti musicali con un nuovo strumento" [New musical experiments with a new instrument].[64] Rosselli begins the essay by explaining that her theories derive from a study of twelve-tone music, Bartók, folk music, and encounters with new musical instruments that play scales different from the ones playable on the piano. She then describes the new instrument that she is making:

> Partendo dallo studio della teoria dodecafonica e da quello della musica di Bartók, ho tentato di introdurre ciò che si potrebbe chiamare un allargamento della teoria, in rapporto con la musica popolare, e in particolare con la costruzione di strumenti le cui scale differiscono da quella del pianoforte, poiché sono basate sulla realtà fisica e le leggi acustiche, mentre è noto che questo non è il caso nella scala temperata. A questo scopo, ho fatto costruire da una fabbrica italiana, la Farfisa, un piccolo pianoforte che riproduce ciò che comunemente viene chiamato la serie degli armonici, cioè gli armonici di una data nota bassa, fino al 64° armonico incluso: —e che comprende sei ottave [...].[65]
>
> [Starting from the study of twelve-tone music and that of Bartók's music, I tried to introduce what could be called an enlargement of theory, in relation to folk music, and in particular to the construction of instruments whose scales differ from the piano's, because they are based on physical reality and acoustic laws, whereas it is known that this is not the case with the tempered scale. To this end, I had an Italian factory, Farfisa, construct a small piano that reproduces that which is commonly called the harmonic/overtone series; that is, the partials of a given fundamental, up to and including the 64th partial: —and that covers the space of six octaves [...].]

Rosselli starts with a mention of two aspects of a preceding generation of experimental music: first, twelve-tone music, or twelve-tone serial music, which she sometimes also called "postwebernismo" or post-Webernian music, after the composer Anton Webern (1883–1945). She places it alongside the music of Hungarian composer Béla Bartók (1881–1945), who was invested in exploring folk music, especially the folk music of his country, and finding ways to

[64] This title did not stick. In Rosselli's subsequent republication in *il verri* in 1987, she used "La serie degli armonici" as a title.

[65] Amelia Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 45.

mix it into Western classical music techniques to create an experimental musical idiom. By the time Rosselli articulated these influences at the beginning of her essay, she had been studying music seriously for around eight years (she started as a teenager); she had been exposed to twelve-tone serial music through private compositional studies with Luigi Dallapiccola, Roman Vlad, and Goffredo Petrassi.

The importance of serialist compositional techniques to Rosselli's thought has been noted by Paolo Cairoli and Lucia Re.[66] Many exponents of twelve-tone serialism were invested in creating new codes by giving various arbitrary rules to the series that made up their compositions. As serialist composer Pierre Boulez put it in his 1960 lecture "Time, Notation, and Coding," the serialist composer creates the structure that will guide the composition: "A. the *composer* originates a *structure* which he *ciphers* / B. he *ciphers* it in a coded *grid* / C. the interpreter *deciphers* this *coded* grid / D. according to his decoding he reconstitutes the *structure* that has been transmitted to him."[67] The structure that the code is based on is therefore arbitrary, created by the composer and not based in any kind of universal law. As Umberto Eco noted in his piece "Series and Structure," in serial thought, every message calls the code into question, and new codes are discovered, experimented with, or allowed to evolve historically. Eco's idea of the inverse of the serial method is the structural method, which aims for "the discovery of *constant* structures, simple, *universal* articulations capable of generating all the various systems

[66] Lucia Re, "Amelia Rosselli and the Aesthetics of Experimental Music," in *Galleria*, Vol. 48, No. 1/2 (January–August 1997): 35–46 (see 39 in particular; and it is important to note that Re does not claim that Rosselli's theme-and-variation technique in *Variazioni Belliche* and some of her other work is solely based on serialist techniques); Paolo Cairoli, "Spazio metrico e serialismo musicale," in *Trasparenze. Supplemento non periodico a "Quaderni di Poesia,"* Vol. 17–19 (2003): 267–288.

[67] Pierre Boulez, "Time, Notation, and Coding," in *Orientations: Collected Writings*, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, trans. Martin Cooper (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 87.

that they underlie" (my emphasis).[68] Some scholars, like Viviana Ponta, Florinda Fusco, and Valentina Peleggi, have focused on the importance of universal codes and systems—an underlying investment in structuralist thought—throughout Rosselli's work, pointing to her interest in natural laws and substructures.[69] At the time when Rosselli was writing "La serie degli armonici," structuralism as a term was not widespread, but later, in interviews from the 1970s and 1980s, Rosselli would define her musical research as structuralist.

I consider the music theories that Rosselli puts forward in "La serie degli armonici" to be a mixture of both serialist music composition and early structuralist ideas about musical form. She was interested in series, codes, structures, and, in particular, mixing avant-garde or experimental series, codes, and structures with ones that she deemed tied to "physical reality" and "acoustic laws," which she associated with folk and non-Western music. Rosselli sought to uncover basic, fundamental structures—phenomena she believed to be observable in nature—and expand and elaborate on these structures in new, experimental ways.

When Rosselli articulates ideas of "physical reality" and "acoustic laws" in "La serie degli armonici," she is speaking of the harmonic series, a physical, acoustic phenomenon wherein a note, when played, is also composed of more or less audible partials that sound over a fundamental. These partials proceed in an established order: the next highest note, after the fundamental, is an octave above the fundamental. For example, if the fundamental is 110 Hz, the lowest partial will be 220 Hz, forming a 2:1 ratio. This 2:1 ratio is followed by a partial with a

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[68] Umberto Eco, "Series and Structure," in *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 227.

[69] Viviana Ponta, "'e risuona come idea nella mente.' Musica, fisica del suono e forme universali. L'acustica silenziosa nella poesia di Amelia Rosselli," Ph.D. diss. (Università di Pavia, 2014), in particular 16, 46, 53, 61; Florinda Fusco, *Amelia Rosselli* (Palermo: Palumbo, 2007), 68–9, 72; Valentina Peleggi, "Amelia Rosselli. Musica in poesia," in *Quaderni del circolo Rosselli* n. 2 (2010): 67–104.

3:2 ratio to the previous partial, a perfect fifth (330 Hz); then a 4:3 ratio, a perfect fourth (440 Hz); and so on. The relative audibility of the different partials that make up a tone determines a sound's timbre. Rosselli proposes that, in almost any kind of music from around the world, with the exception of Western classical music revolving around twelve-tone equal temperament, a scale's notes are limited to pitches that are derived from the partials of the tonic.

Rosselli remarks that scales based on the harmonic series differ from the scales on the piano, which are all tempered scales ("la scala temperata"). In order to make transposition between keys easier, the piano uses twelve-tone equal temperament: it splits each octave into twelve equal half-steps or semi-tones, meaning that, although the octave intervals align in terms of frequency (2:1 ratio), other intervals do not quite align. For example, the fifth does not have a 3:2 ratio with the tonic (instead of 1.5000, it is 1.498307) and the fourth does not have a 4:3 ratio (instead of 1.3333, it is 1.33484). Rosselli's relationship with the piano was an ambivalent one: she played it throughout her life, but in certain moments in the early 1950s, when she was first writing "La serie degli armonici," in letters to her brother John she was particularly outspoken against the piano. On October 12, 1952, for instance, she writes to him of her new instrument with Farfisa and her desire to play it (and the organ) instead of the piano: "As to the instrument, no news yet: will go nutty if the musical substance does not get itself under my fingers soon: trying to get hold of an organ, as yet, cannot, As to piano, the refusal on my part is net [clear]: no more of this dead beast; that is, for creative purposes."[70]

Part of the issue with the piano, the culprit for the diffusion of equal temperament, was Rosselli's belief that the "physical realities" of acoustics—that is, the acoustic phenomenon of the harmonic series—are realities to which all human bodies are physiologically attuned (and

[70] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 12 October 1952.

therefore, human bodies are not physiologically attuned to the purportedly false ratios of equal temperament intervals). She asserts that Asian and African musics, as well as folk musics from other places (including Europe), use scales that follow the harmonic series. (In reality, there is no evidence that all these musics follow the same systems of tuning.) In the fourth paragraph of "La serie degli armonici," she justifies her idea that the harmonic series is "un *a priori* o una forma ideale"[71] [an *a priori*/general principle or an ideal form] first by mentioning that her study of various musics from around the world bear this out and by stating "il fatto che è stato provato che la voce, quando canti liberamente, segue questa scala con maggiore aderenza della scala temperata e delle scale pitagoriche"[72] [the fact that it has been proven that the voice, when it sings freely, follows this scale [based on the harmonic series] with greater adherence than tempered scales and Pythagorean scales].[73] Rosselli therefore reveals an investment in an idea of bodies that produce and perceive music in one, unified way, revolving around concepts in physics like the harmonic series.

This investment also appeared in the first article Rosselli had ever written: another article for the journal *Il Diapason*, and thus directed at avant-garde Italian composers, titled "Armonia di gravitazione" (1950). Rosselli wrote this article as an exercise in her composition lessons with Guido Turchi, and it is largely an examination of a brief treatise, also titled "Armonia di gravitazione," by composer Roberto Lupi (1946). In his treatise, Lupi proposes a new musical theory based on scales whose intervals adhere to the ratios in the harmonic series. Both Rosselli

[71] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 45.

[72] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 45.

[73] Pythagorean scales are only constructed from perfect fifths (3:2) and octaves (2:1), whereas the scales based on the harmonic series that Rosselli speaks of are also constructed from intervals with different ratios.

and composer Alfredo Casella, who wrote the preface to Lupi's treatise, connect Lupi's theory to that of German composer Paul Hindemith, a great influence on Rosselli. In Hindemith's 1941 multi-volume work *The Craft of Musical Composition*, he justified the decision to base scales on the harmonic series through their universality: "certain intervals make similar impressions upon all men. When even the man of the lowest civilization hears the interval of an octave, he will feel that the upper note is the higher image of the lower [...] Nature, in fact, has herself introduced this order, and put at our disposal a whole series of other intervals as well."[74] Although Rosselli did not subscribe to Hindemith's conception of "levels of civilization," the primary merit she saw in Lupi's system was in its similarity to Hindemith's, and therefore in a universality of musical production and perception uninfluenced by cultural contingency. In her analysis of Lupi's scales, she asserts that this is the only way forward for Western art music: "nell'intuizione armonica proveniente da una più profonda consapevolezza e realizzazione delle scale naturali"[75] [in the harmonic intuition derived from a deeper awareness and application of natural scales]. In this natural harmonic intuition, there would be a possibility to "universalizzar[e]" [universalize] music-theoretical principles "attraverso studi esatti di psicologia e acustica musicale"[76] [through precise studies of psychology and acoustics in music].

After the few introductory paragraphs of "La serie degli armonici" in which Rosselli justifies her choice to focus on the harmonic series, the bulk of the article focuses on the instrument itself. It is an abstruse article (something that Rosselli herself acknowledged in a

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[74] Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, Volume 1, trans. Arthur Mendel (London: Schott & Co., 1941–2), 15.

[75] Amelia Rosselli, "Armonia di gravitazione," in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 31–2.

[76] Rosselli, "Armonia di gravitazione," 27.

1994–5 interview)[77] with a good amount of ratios and graphics. After a few introductory paragraphs describing why she has chosen to focus on the harmonic series, she explains how the instrument will look like a piano, with the same amount of physical space between each key. Vibrationally, each key increases by 40 Hz: she proposes starting with the fundamental note at 40 Hz, which means the key next to it would be 80 Hz, and the following key would be 120 Hz. But, as Rosselli notes, this does not mean that each interval will be the same. In fact, the intervals diminish in size: 40 Hz to 80 Hz constitutes an octave, but 80 Hz to 120 Hz constitutes a perfect fifth, 120 Hz to 160 Hz is a perfect fourth—and the intervals continue diminishing until the 64th partial, 2560 Hz. Rosselli explains her choice to stop at the 64th partial by saying that the two extremes—40 Hz and 2560—cover the range of most music.[78] The interval between the two final partials would be 64:63, Rosselli explains, or 1.0158730159. By contrast, the smallest interval in twelve-tone equal temperament, the minor second (also known as a half-step or a semitone), is 17:16, or 1.0625. The graph Rosselli uses to draw out these relationships does not show these proportional relationships, though she states that that is how she wants to represent it eventually. Rosselli states that any of the first 32 partials can be chosen as a fundamental: 80 Hz, for instance, has its own series with 160 Hz, 220 Hz, and so on; but these partials do not necessarily end up with a complete series. For instance, if you take the 32nd partial of the original series, 1280 Hz, as a fundamental, the first partial of the new series would be 2560 Hz, the final partial of the original series that the instrument can play.

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[77] Maria Pia Ammirati & Amelia Rosselli, "Non si può diventare poeti forzati" (December 1994–January 1995), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 162.

[78] The range of human hearing is generally acknowledged to be 20 to 20,000 Hz. For reference, the 2560 Hz at which Rosselli proposes stopping is close to the upper limit of what a violin can play; the piano's upper limit is about 4186 Hz. In contrast, the piano's lowest note is about 27 Hz, a little lower than where Rosselli begins her series, at 40 Hz.

Rosselli then goes on to discuss a "hypothetical series": an "undertone series" of 64 partials that is the mirror image of the overtone series of the notes. She notes that this would mostly be inaudible. One of the few scholars who have examined "La serie degli armonici" in great depth, Viviana Ponta, has observed that Rosselli knew that this "hypothetical series" has no basis in observable reality: as Ponta points out, Rosselli had criticized Roberto Lupi, in "Armonia di gravitazione," for including the mention of a hypothetical undertone series, stating in her notes on his treatise that these constitute "[un] procedimento inverso a quello acusticamente giustificabile"[79] [a procedure that is the inverse to the acoustically justifiable one]. About Rosselli's later adoption of the hypothetical undertone series for her instrument, Ponta merely says that Rosselli is opting for an overtly mathematical procedure ("il procedimento qui è dichiaratamente matematico").[80]

Technically, though, *all* of the statements that Rosselli is making are hypothetical. The harmonic series does exist in nature, and as an acoustic phenomenon, but "La serie degli armonici" does not spend any time providing examples of specific field recordings, analyzing them, and proving their adherence to the tuning of the harmonic series. It is, of course, true that scales in many musical traditions are based on the intervallic relationships that emerge in the harmonic series; but Rosselli does not set out to prove whether the tuning of any of these various scales matches the ratios of the harmonic series more closely than equal temperament, or whether the various scales match each other in tuning and/or where and why they differ. She

[79] Ponta, "e risuona come idea nella mente," 72. Rosselli also cited psychologist Géza Révész's *Introduction to the Psychology of Music*, trans. G.I.C. de Courcy (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954 [1946; 1952]), as an influential work, and Révész stated that the undertone series is "a purely constructive series [...] conceived as an inversion of the overtone series," and that it "is of only theoretical importance. Practically it plays no role in music, since under normal conditions the undertones are inaudible" (13–14).

[80] Ponta, "e risuona come idea nella mente," 87.

simply takes as a given, according to her auditory observations, that Eastern, African, and folk musics—thanks to the supposed adherence of their intervals to the ratios present in the harmonic series—have a kind of cohesion that is lacking in Western classical music.

In part, this cohesion is, as explained previously, due to their purported conformity to the tuning of the harmonic series, but over the course of the rest of the essay, Rosselli asserts even more alleged evidence for the unity of musical systems outside of Western classical music. Namely, she includes two or three dense paragraphs about a supposed relationship between harmonic series and hypothetical rhythmic series, about which she includes another graphic. In the graphic, she notates the "fundamental" of this rhythmic series as a 64th note (i.e., 1/64 the duration of a whole note). The second duration in this series is a 32nd note, followed by a dotted 32nd note (1/24 the duration of a whole note), and then a 16th note, and so on. Rosselli believed that, if a melody had, as the tonic note in its scale, the third partial, then it would have, as its basic rhythmic unit, a dotted 32nd note. Rosselli explains that "[i]l tempo e lo spazio, quali vengono rappresentati dal ritmo e dall'armonia, stanno, a mio modo di vedere, in una stretta correlazione; questo vale, se non altro, per la parte maggiore della musica orientale e popolare, in quanto questa possa veramente venire chiamata 'naturale'"[81] [time and space, represented by rhythm and harmony respectively, are, in my view, strictly correlated; this holds true at least for most Eastern and folk music, since this music can actually be called 'natural']. Here, Rosselli includes a footnote that is meant to provide a justification for this concordance of melody and rhythm from the realm of physics: "La considerazione di movimenti vibratori stabilisce un legame tra le progressioni armoniche delle serie e le progressioni ritmiche di un pendolo che, abbandonato a se stesso, produce spontaneamente esattamente lo stesso rapporto diminuente di

[81] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 48.

oscillazioni quale si verifica nella propagazione del suono"[82] [The consideration of vibrational movements establishes a link between the series' harmonic progressions and the rhythmic progressions of a pendulum that, left to its own devices, spontaneously produces the exact same diminishing relationship of oscillations that is verifiable in the propagation of sound]. The correspondence of her proposed system and a natural phenomenon explicable through the laws of physics is paramount for her.

Rosselli then goes on to include one of the few references to a presumably specific field recording (although, here too, she barely provides any details about it) as another purported proof of this observation, saying, "[i]n un brano di musica africana autentica, sono stata in grado di avvertire il passaggio da un'unità ritmica a un'altra, nel momento nel quale il passaggio da serie a serie, o da piano armonico a piano armonico, avveniva nella melodia o nell'armonica [sic]"[83] [in a piece of authentic African music, I was able to detect the passage from one basic rhythmic unit to another, in the moment when, in the melody or harmony, a shift from one series to another, or from one harmonic plane to another, occurred]. Although none of this information is verifiable—and it is very improbable that Rosselli's theory bears out—it is yet another demonstration of Rosselli's desire for a kind of total, organic music that she sees in Eastern, African, and folk musics, and not in Western classical music. Her hope is that "[i]n un tempo successivo, l'interpretazione disgregatrice, analitica, della musica, con le sue arbitrarie suddivisioni metriche e le sue formazioni artificiali di accordi, potrebbe cedere il posto a uno schema che riproduca quattro dimensioni in una continuità spazio-temporale; nel quale intensità, altezza, ritmo e timbro verrebbero derivati dalla serie degli armonici, determinandosi e

[82] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 56.

[83] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 48.

producendosi a vicenda"[84] [at a later date, the disaggregating, analytic interpretation of music, with its arbitrary metrical subdivisions and its artificial chord formations, could give way to a schema that can reproduce four dimensions in a spatial-temporal continuity; in which intensity, pitch, rhythm, and timbre would be derived from the harmonic series, determining and producing each other].

Rosselli's statements, again, are hypothetical, and are not verifiable by any measures of contemporary music scholarship. Still, through this examination of the 1954 version of "La serie degli armonici," the main question that emerges is: why did Rosselli have such an investment in a potential musical universality, a common foundation supposedly rooted in physics and humans' shared physiological perception of the natural world, especially considering the lack of evidence for many of the claims that Rosselli considers fundamental and obvious (i.e., that musical systems around the world all closely adhere to the tuning of the harmonic series, that there is an organic unity between pitch, rhythm, intensity, and timbre in these musical systems, and that an "undertone series" might be possible)? As I stated in the introduction to this dissertation, this investment in universality is political for Rosselli: it constitutes a turning away from theories that maintained that there were physiological and psychological differences among human beings that accounted for cultural and racialized differences.

Conceptions of humans' physiological and psychological sameness in the 1950s

This investment in showing that cultures and peoples outside of Europe were not fundamentally or evolutionarily different from Europeans is not unique to Rosselli; it was one

[84] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 51.

that was taking place both in Italy and in the larger European context. Laura Barile has noted that, for Rosselli, part of this political commitment was due to her Marxism, "la sua passione 'marxista' per il popolo"[85] [her "Marxist" passion for the people]. By 1949, she had read Antonio Gramsci's recently published *Quaderni del carcere*,[86] and in the early 1950s she became involved with the Italian anthropologists most influenced by Gramsci's work; around the same time, she either officially became or considered becoming a member of the Italian Communist Party (Partito comunista italiano, or PCI).[87] In later interviews, Rosselli explicitly stated that her investment in non-Western music and the music of isolated or oppressed Westerners was one shaped by her political views. In this way, her interest was, perhaps, influenced by a network of Italian leftist intellectuals who saw the support of decolonization movements in the so-called Third World as a continuation of anti-fascist struggle, as Neelam Srivastava has analyzed.[88] For many of these leftist intellectuals, oppressed Italians—for instance, the peasants of the Italian South—were potential allies in anti-colonial endeavors.[89] As Srivastava notes, even before the

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[85] Laura Barile, "'Trasposizioni': I due mestieri di Amelia Rosselli," in *California Italian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2018), 3, https://doi.org/10.5070/C381038273.

[86] In a September 1949 letter, she let John know that she had read the *Quaderni* and offered to send him a copy (he was living in England).

[87] Barile, in "'Trasposizioni,'" suggests that Rosselli joined the Pci in 1958 (15); Rosselli, in interviews, said that she had joined earlier, before her friend Rocco Scotellaro's death in 1953, and when she was undergoing psychoanalysis with Ernst Bernhard, who had been a student of Carl Jung, around 1952.

[88] Neelam Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930–1970* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3. Most of the time, the beginnings of Third-Worldism (as loose as that movement and that term is) in Italy are generally identified as occurring in the early 1960s (Srivastava 212), but there were similar movements before. Srivastava traces Italian anti-colonial movements in anti-fascist backlash to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s and to Italy's support of Algeria when the Franco-Algerian War began in 1954.

[89] Srivastava makes an interesting argument about this, analyzing a passage from Gramsci that she sees as countering Italian "imperial cosmopolitanism" with a "proletarian internationalism as a way of Italy's being in the world and being open to the world" (*Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire*, 204). Namely, she notes how Gramsci rereads Italian migrants as "diasporic migrants" failed by the Italian state and the states in which they come to reside, rather than the "colonizers" that the Italian fascist state wished them to be (204). Many of these diasporic

advent of so-called Third Worldism in the 1960s, the PCI, while developing their anti-colonial arguments against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the 1920s and 1930s, considered Southern Italian peasants: "the brutal economic and political oppression of the Italian working class, especially the peasants of the South, highlighted the parallels, and hence the possible solidarity, between the Italian and the colonized subalterns. Let us not forget that the term 'subaltern' was being elaborated precisely in those years by the imprisoned Gramsci, a term whose semantic applicability transcended class oppression to embrace many other forms of it, and whose comparability with racial oppression was made all the more visible by the practice and discourse of fascist colonialism."[90] The Gramscian connection between various subalterns was carried on in the Italian postwar, especially through the work of Ernesto De Martino, who, as stated above, was a major influence on Rosselli. In 1949, for instance, just after the publication of Gramsci's *Quaderni del carcere*, De Martino wrote his article "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno" [Regarding a history of the subaltern folk world], in which he aims for connections between "popoli coloniali e semicoloniali, e proletariato operaio e contadino delle nazioni egemoniche"[91] [colonial and semicolonial people, and the working and rural proletariat of hegemonic nations].

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migrants were from rural Italy, in particular the rural Italian South—an element that comes up, over and over again, in an early key text offering an antifascist perspective on the Italian South, Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (1945) (I turn to *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* more in depth in Chapter 2 of this dissertation). Miguel Mellino and Angelica Pesarini, as well, have both also analyzed how processes of subjugation and racialization of southern Italian peasants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prefigured and informed the racialization of other groups during and after. See Miguel Mellino, "De-provincializzare l'Italia. Note su colonialità, razza e razzializzazione nel contesto italiano," in *Mondi Migranti*, No. 3 (2011): 57–90, and Angelica Pesarini, "When the Mediterranean 'Became' Black: Diasporic Hopes and (Post)colonial Traumas," in *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship*, ed. Gabriele Proglio, Camilla Hawthorne, Ida Danewid, P. Khalil Saucier, Giuseppe Grimaldi, Angelica Pesarini, Timothy Raeymaekers, Giulia Grechi, and Vivian Gerrand (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 31–55.

[90] Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire*, 49.

[91] Ernesto De Martino, "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno," 411.

In the larger European context, the statements on race put forth by UNESCO in the early 1950s were likely influential for Rosselli, since UNESCO was closely associated with the Musée de l'Homme, where she studied non-Western musics. UNESCO brought together a wide array of anthropologists across Europe and the United States in order to publish its Statements on Race, which attempted to dispel evolutionary understandings and classifications of innate inferiority or superiority of races and cultures. The statements turned away from ideas that biological differences among humans accounted for cultural differences; instead, they emphasized humans' biological commonalities—although, as a variety of scholars have noted, deep-rooted assumptions of innate biological differences between peoples proved difficult to eradicate.[92] This was such a contentious topic that UNESCO put out two statements in two years: one written in Paris in 1950, and one written in Paris in 1951, each by different groups of anthropologists with different specializations. The statements included assertions like "[the genes] responsible for the hereditary differences between men are always few when compared to the whole genetic constitution of man and to the vast number of genes common to all human beings regardless of the population to which they belong. This means that the likenesses among men are far greater

[92] Conklin, *In the Museum of Man*; Michelle Brattain, "Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, Issue 5 (December 2007), 1386–1413. Sonali Thakkar, in "The Reeducation of Race: From UNESCO's 11950 Statement on Race to the Postcolonial Critique of Plasticity," in *Social Text*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (June 2020), notes how "UNESCO's project was a decidedly biopolitical one. It sought to ground the meaning of humanity in the fact of species life and to elevate the fact of biological commonness to a governmental principle that would determine the political shape of the postwar world" (76). She goes on to state that UNESCO's emphasis on plasticity and educability in the Statements on Race ultimately "not only accommodated but extended the logics of biopolitical management that had long been integral to colonial racism" by "tr[ying] to interrupt racism with the promise that race itself can be transformed and that changes to racial form are not only possible but inevitable" (76). Kamala Visweswaran makes similar observations about the anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss in "The Interventions of Culture: Claude Lévi-Strauss, Race, and the Critique of Historical Time," in *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 226–248.

than their differences."[93] When it came to intellectual capacities of various cultures and races, both statements asserted equal intellectual capacities, saying, in the 1950 statement, that "given similar degrees of cultural opportunity to realize their potentialities, the average achievement of the members of each ethnic group is about the same."[94] Neither the 1950 nor the 1951 statement had the participation of Italian anthropologists, but both included French anthropologists attached to the Musée de l'Homme: Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1950, who was then the interim director of the Musée de l'Homme, and Henri Vallois, the successor of Lévi-Strauss as director of the Musée de l'Homme.

As I stated above, many researchers at the Musée de l'Homme were deeply connected to UNESCO (which, like the Musée, was based in Paris), and the Musée de l'Homme's collections were integral in Rosselli's intellectual formation. Although she does not name the Musée in "La serie degli armonici," its resources and the musicologists attached to it were how she gained access to the majority of recordings of musics from other cultures mentioned in her article (the musical section of Musée de l'Homme was associated with UNESCO's International Commission on Folk Arts and Folklore/Commission internationale des arts et traditions populaires, known as CIAP). Italian anthropologists' access to producing field recordings was behind what was possible in France,[95] and, overall, Italian anthropologists' ability to conduct

[93] Ernest Beaglehole, Juan Comas, L.A. Costa Pinto, Franklin Frazier, Morris Ginsberg, Humayun Kabir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Ashley Montagu, "Statement on Race, Paris, July 1950," in Jean Hiernaux, Michael Banton, et al., *Four Statements on the Race Question* (Paris: UNESCO, 1969), 30.

[94] Beaglehole et al., "Statement on Race, Paris, July 1950," 32.

[95] Pietro Sassu, "Dall'etnofonia all'etnomusicologia: un secolo di studi sulla musica popolare italiana," in *Archivio di etnografia: rivista del dipartimento di scienze storiche, linguistiche e antropologiche*, Vol. 6, No. 1/2 (2011), 51–52; 55; 57.

fieldwork had been limited during the fascist era.[96] Italian anthropology was undergoing vast shifts during the time when Rosselli began approaching ethnomusicological studies, and Rosselli, despite her lack of university education and formal schooling, did engage in the new kinds of fieldwork that people like Ernesto De Martino and Diego Carpitella were undertaking in the early 1950s (the effects of their fieldwork on some of Rosselli's early artistic production is the focus of the following chapter of this dissertation). Rosselli's work at the Musée de l'Homme may have appealed to someone like Ernesto De Martino, who was well aware of the shortcomings of Italian institutions when it came to field recordings, especially as he sought to put studies of the Italian peasant population in a global context throughout the 1950s. In the early 1950s, it seems he valued the Musée de l'Homme as a place where Italian anthropologists could gain access to information on peoples beyond Europe in a way they could not in Italy, as emerges from De Martino's positive reception of young anthropologist Alberto Mario Cirese's work at the Musée de l'Homme, researching how laments carried out by populations in the Americas and Oceania compared to Italian and French folk laments.[97]

As I demonstrate in the next section of this dissertation, Rosselli's insistence on proving the organic principles of music perception and production, principles that are linked to physics

[96] In Italy in the 1950s, there were various squabbles around the different names of disciplines related to anthropology: *demologia*, or the study of European folklore; *etnologia*, the study of peoples outside of Europe; and *antropologia*, which was largely considered to be physical anthropology. Much of the knowledge produced in these disciplines in Italy was influenced by the regime, leaving it in a state of crisis after the advent of the republic. For more background, see: David Forgacs, *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation Since 1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Vinigi Grottanelli et al., "Ethnology and/or Cultural Anthropology in Italy: Traditions and Developments" with comments and replies, in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (December 1977): 593–614; Alberto Mario Cirese, "Sulla storiografia demo-etno-antropologica italiana," preface to P. Clemente, A.R. Leone, S. Puccini, C. Rossetti and P.G. Solinas, *L'antropologia italiana. Un secolo di storia* (Bari: Laterza, 1985), ix–xvi; Enzo Vinicio Alliegro, *Antropologia italiana: storia e storiografia, 1869–1975* (Florence: SEID, 2011); and Enzo Vinicio Alliegro, "Tra demologia, etnologia e antropologia. Alberto Mario Cirese e il 'paradigma impossibile,' in *Lares*, Vol. 81, No. 2/3 (May–December 2015), 233–262.

[97] Alliegro, "Tra demologia, etnologia e antropologia," 238–9.

and physiology, is related to similar developments in anthropology and ethnomusicology across Europe. At the same time, the lack of evidence she provides for her claims, along with their improbability, reveals a certain *desire* projected onto cultural and/or racialized differences, a desire related to the political movements that Rosselli was following in the postwar. I use the term "desire" here in part as an echo of what Kofi Agawu has said about European conceptions of African music in particular: the differences between European and African music that European ethnographers highlighted over the centuries "betra[y] a subconscious *desire* to cast African music"—or, in Rosselli's case, Asian, African, and various folk musics—"into an-Other sphere where it can complete Europe's lack"[98] (my emphasis). I analyze the networks of anthropological and ethnomusicological concepts—along with other researchers' desires regarding music that was not Western classical music—that influenced Rosselli's desire to find a type of music that could be viable for every cultural tradition, every human body. As I demonstrate, various ideas of technology play a primary role in the articulation of these concepts. European and American ethnomusicologists, and others interested in musics outside of the Western classical tradition, viewed various forms of new recording technologies as essential to uncovering the different bodily techniques used in the musics of cultural and/or racialized others. This linking of cultural and/or racialized differences and new technologies, a pairing to which Rosselli was exposed thanks to her engagement with new anthropologies, continued to be a common thread across many of her aesthetic pursuits, as Rosselli contemplated universal artistic forms, produced and perceived by a universal human body.

[98] Kofi Agawu, *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 104.

At the Musée de l'Homme: the role of recording technologies in accessing information on music beyond Europe

Although, as stated above, direct references to the Musée de l'Homme do not appear in "La serie degli armonici," Rosselli cited her research there as foundational for her theories.[99] It is unclear how Rosselli gained entry into the Musée de l'Homme, but she visited Paris between 1951 and 1952, staying with the family of Louis Joxe, a French statesman under Charles de Gaulle (he is best known for negotiating Algeria's independence in 1962); perhaps her connections with the Joxe family helped her gain entry into the Musée de l'Homme. Or perhaps Rosselli simply wrote to the researcher with whom she most wanted to work and won him over: Alain Daniélou, who considered himself a "comparative musicologist," a term in use before "ethnomusicology" became widespread.[100] Rosselli explained her engagement with Daniélou and the Musée de l'Homme more extensively in a letter she wrote, in 1981, to Professors Vladimir Ibler and Branko Soucek at the Inter-University Centre of Postgraduate Studies in Dubrovnik; the letter offers useful insights into her original research process for "La serie degli armonici." In the letter (which she wrote in English), she points to the genesis of her studies as the time that she spent at "'Le Musée de l'Homme' in Paris, mostly listening to hundreds of 'folk tapes', now about 15 years later, or 20, on records for gramophones. I spoke in [sic] some length with Mr. Daniélou, the musicologist then in charge of 'Le Musée de l'Homme'. My studies then turned

[99] Giacinto Spagnoletti and Amelia Rosselli, "Fatti estremi" (1987), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 82; Rosanna Inchingolo and Amelia Rosselli, "Leggere Dylan Thomas" (1990–1), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 134; Maria Lazzari and Amelia Rosselli, "A cavalcioni dell'avanguardia" (1979), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso*, 184.

[100] Dutch ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst coined the term in 1950, in his *Musicologica: A Study of the Nature of Ethno-Musicology, Its Problems, Methods, and Representative Personalities* (Amsterdam: Indisch Instituut, 1950). The term "comparative musicology" had emerged in 1885, coined by Austrian musicologist Guido Adler (see Erica Mugglestone and Guido Adler, "Guido Adler's 'The Scope, Method, and Aim of Musicology' (1885): An English Translation with an Historic-Analytical Commentary," in the *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 13 (1981), 1–21).

structuralist, but also scientific through the studies of not only musical acoustics, but also electronics and its equipment, and mathematics."[101]

It seems that Branko and Soucek did not reply to the letter, but the letter is useful in revealing the importance of recordings in Rosselli's development of her theories, and in showcasing their provenance. These two points emerged in an interview of Rosselli that a doctoral student conducted in the early 1990s, which I also cited in the introduction to this dissertation. In the interview, it seems that Rosselli still marvels—forty years later—at the recordings and the equipment that she saw at the Musée de l'Homme and through her work with Daniélou: "[Daniélou] aveva messo su, quando non era di moda, una discoteca in realtà tutta registrata con tante cassette di musiche di tutto il mondo e aveva tentato una teorizzazione del tutto cumulativa e tutta numerativa, cioè si era costruito una specie di organetto grosso con tutti i possibili intervalli usati nella musica popolare di tutto il mondo"[102] [he had created—when it wasn't in vogue—an entirely recorded discotheque, with many cassettes of musics from all over the world, and he had attempted totally cumulative and enumerative theories, that is he had constructed a kind of large portative organ with all the possible intervals used in folk music from around the world]. From this account, Rosselli was particularly taken with the technological innovations she saw at the Musée de l'Homme and through Daniélou's work: the repository of recordings and Daniélou's portative organ. These two forms of technology structure "La serie degli armonici": the recordings provide the purported basis for the observation of cultural and/or racialized others' musical techniques, and the instrument is intended to provide Westerners

[101] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to Vladimir Ibler and Branko Soucek, 10 July 1981.

[102] Rosanna Inchingolo and Amelia Rosselli, "Leggere Dylan Thomas," 133–4.

access to alternative musical techniques that complement the laws of acoustics and lead to allegedly universal ways of perceiving and producing music.

As Rosselli acknowledged in the above-cited interview, the archives of the Musée de l'Homme and Daniélou's role in building various discotheques in Europe were key for her development, pointing to the importance of recordings in her research. Daniélou was a specialist of Indian music, and he compiled a collection of recordings between 1950 and 1958 that American ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax released as a part of the Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music.[103] Daniélou traveled between India, the Asian continent, and Europe extensively between 1937 and 1960, recording local musical traditions in places besides India, as well, and in 1963 he founded the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD) in then-West Berlin, which he directed until the mid-1970s, upon the request of UNESCO and the International Music Council (IMC). The collection was made up primarily of reel-to-reel tapes, along with Daniélou's very first field recordings on acetate from the 1950s, as well as other recordings he had collected—some of which Rosselli may have listened to in her research.[104]

In 1943, Daniélou had published a volume titled *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*, which he later translated into French and slightly expanded in 1959, as *Traité de Musicologie Comparée*. Rosselli's personal library, at the time of her death in 1996, contained two of Daniélou's books: the 1958 *Tableau des intervalles musicaux*, a reference volume full of

[103] Sarah Morelli, "Review: *India: A Musical Anthology* by Alain Daniélou, Alan Lomax, Nazir Jairazbhoy and Amy Caitlin," in *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Fall 2004): 475–478.

[104] For a thorough overview of Daniélou's work constructing the later IICMSD archive, see Linda Cimardi, "'One of the Richest and Most Refined Forms of Art in the World.' Alain Daniélou, the IICMSD Archive, and Indian Music," in *The World of Music*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2021): 71–92. It is difficult to find more specifics on his personal collection of reel-to-reel tapes prior to 1963 and the beginning of the IICMSD archive.

intervals, ratios, frequencies, etc., and the *Traité de musicologie comparée*. It is probable that Rosselli read the *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales* before the *Traité* was published, since many statements that are taken for granted in "La serie degli armonici" seem to come from Daniélou's volume. In the *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*, Daniélou stated that Western art music was "far from being a logical and absolute system based on irrefutable acoustic realities," and represented instead "a mixture of traditions which has been arbitrarily simplified without taking into account, or without the knowledge of, the principles on which the component systems were based."[105]

In his book, Daniélou begins with analyses of Chinese and Hindu musical theories. In these two traditions, he believes that it is clear how music is "the key to all sciences and arts, the link between metaphysics and physics, through which the universal laws and their multiple applications could be understood."[106] He then turns to ancient Greek theories of music, which for him begins the "[c]onfusion of the systems,"[107] and then to the Western scale and equal temperament. In Daniélou's mind, unlike ancient Greek music or Western equal temperament, music theories from China and India take into account "irrefutable acoustic realities" through ancient metaphysical principles that had been intuited in these cultures and that attempt to uncover the "subtle relations of Nature" present in every vibration.[108] Musical scales that reflect these relations of nature—that is, adhere to the physical properties of musical sounds, containing intervals with simple ratios found in the harmonic series—evoke the same "symbolical and

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[105] Alain Daniélou, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales* (London: The India Society, 1943), 22.

[106] Daniélou, "Foreword" to *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*.

[107] Daniélou, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales,* iii.

[108] Daniélou, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales,* 8–9.

psychological" experiences for all human beings, universally, because they are tied to natural laws. Daniélou explains that

> musical intervals appear under two aspects: one mathematical, of numbers and logical ratios, the other symbolical and psychological, in which the relations of sounds, their harmony, awaken in us feelings, ideas and precise visions. These two aspects obviously have their origin in the same principles, but this unity is beyond the scope of experiment and, consequently, beyond the understanding of modern Occidentals. This deficiency naturally brings them to the illogical situation of leaving aside one aspect of experience whenever they study the other, as if the laws of acoustics and those of musical expression did not refer to the same sounds.[109]

Rosselli echoes such statements when she refers to the "disaggregating" nature of Western music, as compared to her understanding of other musics, whose adherence to the laws of acoustics, she claims, leads to a unity of intensity, pitch, rhythm, and timbre that is unheard of in Western classical music.

Daniélou's claims about two kinds of Eastern music theories were not necessarily unique to him; as Linda Cimardi has written, his research was considered to be in line with a broader UNESCO initiative, the Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values (1957–1966).[110] And, as Laura Elizabeth Wong has claimed, in the early-to-mid-1950s there were "fears of imminent, if not perpetual, East-West conflict" as Asian and Arab countries in UNESCO called for "greater agency in the international sphere," leading up to but especially after Bandung.[111] At this point, the "East" or "Orient" broadly referred to Asian and Arab regions, whereas the "West" or "Occident" broadly referred to Europe and North

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[109] Daniélou, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales,* 39.

[110] Cimardi, "'One of the Richest and Most Refined Forms of Art in the World,'" 82.

[111] Laura Elizabeth Wong, "Relocating East and West: UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values," in *Journal of World History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (September 2008), 350.

America.[112] In a 1952 essay called "Race and History," which Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote for UNESCO, emphasis is placed on the fact that the West is not culturally superior to other parts of the world, simply that it is richer and has access to more machinic technologies (a statement echoed in other UNESCO statements at the time).[113] But Lévi-Strauss stated that the East had a closer relationship to "techniques of the body": "The West, for all its mastery of machines, exhibits evidence of only the most elementary understanding of the use and potential resources of that super-machine, the human body. In this sphere, on the contrary, as on the related question of the connexion between the physical and the mental, the East and the Far East are several thousand years ahead."[114] As I stated in the introduction to this dissertation, Lévi-Strauss' statement is an Orientalizing one, but it also reveals how a new conception of technology as related not only to machines, instruments, and artifacts, but to techniques of the body as well, was permeating Western anthropology. This was particularly true of the environment at the Musée de l'Homme, which, by 1938, included a department of comparative technology[115] and adhered to Marcel Mauss' idea that techniques of the body attested to the presence of technology beyond the machinic. Rosselli's stance seemed similar to Lévi-Strauss': toward the end of "La serie degli armonici," she describes her "speranza di trovare una sintesi della tradizione musicale

[112] Wong, "Relocating East and West," 350.

[113] Wong cites the views of Tara Chand, Indian minister of education, who made similar claims in 1951, claiming that "the spirituality of these Eastern cultures would enrich Western, more technologically driven cultures" (357). Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1951, focused on the unity of East and West, stating that "what had defined the place called the 'modern West—meaning thereby a great part of Europe and the Americas,' was 'scientific industrial growth.' The more significant differences concerning the contemporary world were those 'between the industrialist country and the non-industrialist country'" (358).

[114] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Race and History" (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 27.

[115] Alice L. Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850–1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 139.

razionale e scritta dell'Occidente, e quella orale e istintiva dell'Oriente"[116] [hope of finding a synthesis of the rational musical tradition of the West, and the oral and instinctive one of the East]. The supposed orality of the East, and its supposed instinctual nature, implies the idea of its privileged connection to the body.

The issue for Westerners interested in understanding the techniques of the body of other cultures was access to observing these techniques. Rosselli, for instance, observed minimal fieldwork, and then only in Southern Italy; the only access she had to try to understand bodily techniques from other places and cultures were recordings. She was aware of the fact that attempting to notate music using Western musical notation cut off access to an understanding of how that music was embodied: as she wrote, in "La serie degli armonici," if intensity, pitch, rhythm, and timbre are to be connected in a piece of music (a unity she attributed to non-Western musics), then a different kind of notation of pitch and rhythm would be necessary. She states, at various points, "Per quanto riguarda il ritmo della melodia, non credo che esso possa venire rappresentato nella maniera corrente, cioè metricamente"[117] [As far as the melody's rhythm goes, I don't think it can be represented in the current manner, that is, metrically], and "Risulterebbe la necessità di trascrivere l'altezza del suono su un sistema di righe più complesso e preciso di quello del solito pentagramma"[118] [it would end up being necessary to transcribe pitch on a system of lines that is more complex and precise than the usual staff]. In a letter to John from 1952, she explained that "it is rovinoso [ruinous] for the understanding of popular [folk] music to

[116] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 49–51

[117] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 48.

[118] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 48.

transcribe it with normal notations on the basis of classical musical systems and scales."[119] Unlike Daniélou, Rosselli included European folk music as another tradition that followed the laws of acoustics—Daniélou was primarily interested in Asian musical traditions.[120]

The Musée de l'Homme's collection, contrary to Daniélou's personal collection, included few field recordings of Asian music in 1952. It had field recordings on acetate from Malaysia, Indonesia, and present-day Thailand from 1932.[121] The majority of the field recordings held by the Musée de l'Homme in 1952 had been recorded on the African continent: present-day Senegal, Sudan, Cameroon, and Ethiopia in 1931–33; from the Algerian Aurès Mountains in 1936 and the Algerian Hoggar Mountains in 1948; from Tunisia in 1938; from Madagascar in 1938; and from present-day Gabon and Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1946. Some recordings were made in France: when regiments made up of African soldiers moved through various French cities, ethnographers would record them. The 1939 Guerpillon collection, for instance, contains recordings made in La Rochelle of soldiers from a regiment of the "Tirailleurs sénégalais" who hailed from Guinea, Niger, and present-day Burkina Faso; the 1944–1945 Edo collection contains recordings made in Paris of soldiers from present-day Benin, Ivory Coast, and Morocco. All of these recordings existed alongside recordings that had been made at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, containing folk music from Europe, Asia, North Africa, and West Africa.[122]

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[119] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 9 November 1952.

[120] Cimardi, in "'One of the Richest and Most Refined Forms of Art in the World,'" notes how Daniélou's conviction in the primacy of Asian musics over all others resulted in an IICMSD Archive that was primarily composed of recordings of these musics, rather than others, during Daniélou's tenure as director of the archive.

[121] The Cuisinier Collection, recorded by Jeanne Cuisinier (Commission internationales des arts et traditions populaires (CIAP), *Collection Musée de l'Homme (Paris)* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 20).

[122] The music of the peoples recorded at the Exposition Universelle are described as follows in the 1952 Musée de l'Homme record catalog: "*Europe*: 95 (Ruthenians, Yugoslavs, Czechs, Turks, Jews from Constantinople, Magyars,

Rosselli, like the Musée de l'Homme discotheque that she apparently studied, mixed together all kinds of musics in her theories: Asian, African, folk music of any kind, even from Europe. She extended Daniélou's insistence on the coincidence of the laws of acoustics and musical experience in Chinese and Indian musics to "una grande parte della musica che non sia stata influenzata dalla scala temperata"[123] [a large part of music that has not been influenced by equal temperament]. Rosselli's interest in folk music, along with her insistence on the inability of Western notation to capture the intricacies of musical expressions so closely linked to the body, is an element that can be found in another scholar who influenced Rosselli: Béla Bartók, whom she cites as an influence in the first sentence of "La serie degli armonici."

The problem of notation and the role of recording

Béla Bartók was a Hungarian composer and ethnomusicologist, whose fieldwork in Eastern Europe from the 1910s until his flight to the United States in 1940 was an inspiration to a number of newly-minted ethnomusicologists of the Italian South within Rosselli's circle beginning in 1954.[124] Rosselli had been exposed to Bartók before then, in the late 1940s, when

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Finns, Letts, Swedes, Norwegians, Icelanders, Germans, French, Italians, Spaniards) [...] *Asia*: 195 (Chinese, Japanese, Laoans, Tonkinese, Siamese, Singhalese, Indian, the peoples of Turkestan, Persians, Armenians, Caucasians, Georgians, Syrians) [...] *North Africa*: 20 (Berbers and Arabs) [...] *West Africa:* 35 (Senegalese, Dahomans, Nigerians, natives of Zanzibar); *Madagascar* and *Grande Comore*: 30." (CIAP, *Collection Musée de l'homme*, 19–20).

[123] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 45.

[124] One of Italy's leading ethnomusicologists at the time, Diego Carpitella, served as editor for a collection of Bartók's ethnomusicological essays published in Italian in 1955: Béla Bartók, *Scritti sulla musica popolare*, ed. Diego Carpitella (Turin: Einaudi, 1955). It was published as a part of Einaudi's "Collana viola," under the supervision of Ernesto de Martino and Cesare Pavese, through which most major anthropological texts from contexts outside of Italy were published. The RAI also produced a radio broadcast on Bartók's collections of European folk musics, curated by scholars like Carpitella, Giuseppe Cocchiara, Paolo Toschi, Alberto Mario Cirese, Roberto Leydi, and Sergio Spina, in 1954 (Letizia Bindi, "Ernesto de Martino alla radio," in *Panorami e spedizioni*, 171).

she was studying music in London at St. Paul's Girls' School. Bartók sought a way of "rejuvenat[ing]" Western art music, asserting that the structures, styles, and forms of folk music uncovered through fieldwork could become a way to carry out this rejuvenation.[125] The folk musics that Bartók recorded in his lifetime were Hungarian, Romanian, Turkish, Romani, and Arab and Berber (from Algeria). A kind of radical alterity, even within Hungary, was essential in Bartók's definition of folk music: he sought out peasant communities that were rural, disconnected from the industrialized West—it is not difficult to see why his research resonated with so many young Italian ethnomusicologists carrying out the same kind of work in the Italian South.[126] Bartók's understanding of the "instinctiveness" of the peasant's musical impulse,[127] along with his statement that "the peasant's art is a phenomenon of Nature,"[128] reveals a perception of folk music akin to Daniélou's perception of Eastern music: a musical art inextricably connected to natural principles and bodily expression, and implicitly *more* connected to the body than Western classical music.

For Bartók, recording technologies and devices to measure different aspects of sound in field recordings were essential. This impulse predated even Bartók; the recording and measuring of sound was a key component of ethnomusicology when the discipline was still called comparative musicology. Early comparative musicologists, at the end of the nineteenth century, were mostly physicists and mathematicians. For instance, Alexander John Ellis, in his 1885 essay

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[125] Béla Bartók, "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music" (1931), in *Béla Bartók Studies in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 340–1.

[126] Bartók states the parameters of his definition of folk music in "What is Folk Music?" (1931), 6.

[127] Bartók, "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music?," 15.

[128] Béla Bartók, "The Folk Songs of Hungary" (1928), in *Béla Bartók Studies in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 338.

"On the Musical Scales of Various Nations," stressed the importance of calculating musical intervals through a combination of comparing pitches to sounds produced by tuning forks and mathematical processes, in order to be able to discuss intervals in terms of the "cents" (a unit he he invented, which is still in use today) of which they were made.[129] In doing so, he was actually adapting even earlier systems of measuring sound from phonographs.[130] As the twentieth century progressed, ethnomusicologists and acousticians sought ever more precise ways of measuring sound in ever less subjective ways.[131] Bartók, in his time conducting fieldwork and writing about it from the late 1920s to the late 1930s, dedicated large portions of his essays to praising the use of the phonograph and a "variety of measuring and fixing instruments" in the context of comparative musicology.[132] He even went so far as to state that "only material thus collected [i.e. recorded by the phonograph] is to be considered authenticated from the scientific viewpoint."[133] Bartók believed this to be the case because of the details of embodied performance that the phonograph could capture, but notation could not: "No matter how experienced the collector is,

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[129] Alexander John Ellis, "On the Musical Scales of Various Nations," in *The Journal of the Society of Arts*, no. 1688, Vol. 33 (London, 1885).

[130] David Cooper and Ian Sapiro, "Ethnomusicology in the Laboratory: From the Tonometer to the Digital Melograph," in *Ethnomusicology Forum*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (November 2006), 302. Cooper and Sapiro explain that Ellis was adapting previous systems relying on tuning forks and reeds by Johann Friedrich Scheibler (1834) and Anton Appunn (1876). The Appunn tonometer was developed from Scheibler's set of tuning forks: to determine a sound's exact frequency, the operator would loop a phonograph recording while comparing the sounds against 64 reeds, tuned in four Hz increments from 256 to 512 Hz, and searching for the closest frequency. Again, notably, the determination of frequency happened through an analysis of a recording.

[131] American acoustician D.C. Miller sought to automatically record the forms of soundwaves with his phonodeik (1916). Acoustician and amateur American folk music collector Milton Metfessel developed a system called "phonophotography," which he put to the test in *Phonophotography in Folk Music: American Negro Songs in New Notation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1928). Metfessel hoped that phonophotography could help the folk music analyst and/or collector "to arrive at a solution without personal bias" (169–70) that "lifts folk music out of the subjective and intangible into an objective, measurable physical reality" (178).

[132] Bartók, "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music?," 10.

[133] Bartók, "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music?," 14.

certain fine details (cursory gliding tones, *glissandi*, subtle value relationships) cannot be notated. [... E]ven if a collector endowed with some superhuman talent succeeded in notating the melodies with all their fine nuances, there would still be some aspects left that are incapable of notation: intonation and tone colour, for which we have no symbolic system. It is possible to describe these aspects, but such information would not be helpful in providing one with a concept of tone colour. Hence the importance of collecting by phonograph!"[134]

Recording technologies, then, were more effective at capturing techniques of the body than mere notation was: the nuances of embodied performance were lost in notation. Bartók's mentions of "intonation," "tone colour," "cursory gliding tones," "*glissandi*," and "subtle value relationships" are connected to Rosselli's interests in specific frequencies and intervallic relationships, alongside timbre. These all represent embodied aspects of musical performance, not easily notated on the staff. This investment in embodied aspects of musical performance is one to which Rosselli was also exposed in her work alongside Ernesto De Martino and Diego Carpitella, who found sound and visual recordings paramount in their examinations of the Italian South. These examinations focused on how techniques of the body were employed in Southern musical practices like the Lucanian lament, and De Martino was one of the first Italian anthropologists to truly understand these practices *as* techniques.

It was in this context that Rosselli began to develop her unfinished system of notation; it is not mentioned in "La serie degli armonici" beyond gestures toward the idea that a new notational system would need to be developed to notate music based on the harmonic series. Yet, around the time that Rosselli was carrying out research for "La serie degli armonici" at the Musée de l'Homme in 1951–1952, she had already come up with ideas for a notational system,

[134] Bartók, "Why and How Do We Collect Folk Music?," 14.

according to a letter to John from 9 November 1952: "got an offer to experiment the new system of notation which I had worked out while in Paris; 150 folk-songs from Lucania, recorded, but not transcribed [...]."[135] Sketches of the notational system from the early 1950s do not survive, but notes that Rosselli took on it in 1959, for a presentation in pianist and composer David Tudor's course at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse, are preserved in Rosselli's archives in Pavia. These sketches are incomplete, and difficult to interpret, but the element that is interesting and closely connected to "La serie degli armonici" is the choice of parameters that Rosselli was trying to capture in notation. In the essay, she describes the desire for a musical "schema che riproduca quattro dimensioni in una continuità spazio-temporale; nel quale intensità, altezza, ritmo e timbro verrebbero derivati dalla serie degli armonici, determinandosi e producendosi a vicenda"[136] [schema that can reproduce four dimensions in a spatial-temporal continuity; in which intensity, pitch, rhythm, and timbre would be derived from the harmonic series, determining and producing each other]. The parameters that Rosselli was attempting to notate in her notational sketches were, similarly, frequency, duration, amplitude, timbre, and intensity, in order to create a notation that was more like a recording, capturing sense-data that cannot be transcribed in a Western notational system.

In some respects, Rosselli's desire for a notational system that captured what she had been able to hear in recordings was one shared by comparative musicologists that preceded her and were contemporaneous to her, in other contexts. One was acoustician D.C. Miller's phonodeik, for instance, which converted sound waves into visual images, from the early 1900s. Rosselli listed Miller's 1916 book on acoustics, *The Science of Musical Sounds*, as one of the

[135] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 9 November 1952.

[136] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 51.

textbooks on acoustics that she had read to develop the theories in "La serie degli armonici" in a bibliography from the 1980s; a whole chapter of Miller's book is dedicated to "Methods of recording and photographing sound waves."[137] In 1949, UNESCO held a Conference of the International Folk Music Council,[138] the Conference of Experts in the Notation of Folk and Primitive Music, in which ethnomusicologist Giorgio Nataletti (the ethnomusicologist who started the national discotheque of folk music in Italy) proposed using electronic instruments from Rai, the national broadcasting service, to provide more precise measurements of pitch and duration for field recordings.[139] Nataletti's proposal inspired American composer, musicologist, and folklorist Charles Seeger to send in a proposal for his melographs, which were meant to track pitch, specifically in the context of comparative musicology research. The melograph would not only record, but act as "a reader that would re-create the recording," an "instantaneous notator."[140] The idea was that the melograph "can give us an objective record as much better than the hand-transcription of a sound-recording as that sound-recording is better than the hand-notation at dictation in the field."[141] Additionally, Seeger hoped that this technology could "serve

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[137] D.C. Miller, *The Science of Musical Sounds* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1916), 70–91.

[138] As with many UNESCO councils, the council had numerous, contorted institutional affiliations: for a list of how the council came to be, see Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo, "UNESCO Activities Related to Folklore," in *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall 1961), https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/ffma/article/download/25546/31350.

[139] As referenced in Charles Seeger, "An Instantaneous Music Notator," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 3 (1951), 103. There is a discrepancy in the location of the conference that I have been unable to resolve: Corrêa de Azevedo lists it as having occurred in Venice, but Seeger lists it as having occurred in Geneva. In Seeger's proposal, he summarizes the results of the meeting: "It was recommended that where intonation differs from the norms symbolised by the staff, indication of exact physical measurements should be made. On succeeding pages, it is stated that M. Giorgio Nataletti offered to investigate the possibility of precise mensurations of both pitch and time with the help of electrical instruments of the Italian Broadcasting Company."

[140] Seeger, "An Instantaneous Music Notator," 103, 106.

[141] Seeger, "An Instantaneous Music Notator," 106.

as a check upon the bias each and every one of us trained in the European fine art of music must inevitably carry with us when we write or read the notation of that art."[142]

These proposed notational systems, by depicting images of sound waves, recorded frequency, duration of sounds, and amplitude. What Rosselli was interested in capturing notationally was much more complex, since she recognized the importance of notating, in addition to frequency, duration, and amplitude, timbre (the character or quality of the musical sound) and intensity (the power per unit area carried by the sound wave). She is interested in a broader array of sense-data: she wants to know the volume of the sound, the quality of the sound, aspects of sound connected to its embodied production, by the musician,[143] and the embodied perception, by the listener. Alongside the increased anthropological interest in the techniques of the body that produced various sounds (embodied production), another field that fascinated

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[142] Seeger, "An Instantaneous Music Notator," 106.

[143] Timbre in particular is often one of the elements of sound, and particularly voiced sound, is one of the elements of the voice considered to be an excess, or incommunicable, beyond semantic meaning. As Adriana Cavarero explains regarding how the voice has been received in the metaphysical tradition (Adriana Cavarero, *A più voci: filosofia dell'espressione vocale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003); English translations from Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005)): "[i]l ruolo di vocalizzare il concetto esaurisce, per così dire, il senso della voce e riduce quel che resta a un resto insignificante, a un'eccedenza inquietante in quanto vicino all'animalità" (44) [[t]he sense of the voice is entirely bound up with the role of vocalizing concepts, so that whatever is left over is an insignificant remain, an excess that is disturbingly close to animality] (34). As a result: "[l]a voce diventa così il limite della parola, la sua imperfezione, la sua zavorra" (53) [[t]he voice thus becomes the limit of speech—its imperfection, its dead weight"] (42). Jean-Luc Nancy, in *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandel (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), connects the voice's "limit of speech" to timbre: it is often described as incommunicable, in the sense that it does not carry semantic meaning (40–1). Timbre, for Nancy, destabilizes desires to create a unitary subject: it is "that thing by which a subject makes an echo—of self, of the other, it's all one—it's all one in the plural" (41). In other words, Nancy sees timbre as the onset of resonance, of a reverberation, "a setting in motion and start of an echo: the means by which a 'subject' arrives—and leaves itself, absents itself from its own arrival" (42). Electronic musicians with whom Rosselli had contact, at the WDR (Westdeutscher Rundfunk) and the Studio di Fonologia musicale di Milano, were particularly fascinated by timbre, as Jenniver Iverson has noted in *Electronic Inspirations: Technologies of the Cold War Musical Avant-Garde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019): "The younger generation of composers [...] immediately began focusing their compositional attention on timbre, which describes a sound's quality or color. [...] Timbre is a complex phenomenon; it is less discrete than musical parameters like melody, duration, and register. Midcentury composers found timbre compelling, yet elusive and enigmatic. They wanted better tools than traditional notation and instruments, so they could better manipulate and integrate timbre into their music" (76).

Rosselli was engaging with questions of how humans perceived sound (embodied perception): the field of experimental electronic music. In the following section, I turn to the composers and institutions in the field of electronic music with which Rosselli was engaging. Through this analysis, the necessity felt by a number of composers to ensure that electronic music still remained within the parameters of human perception emerges. For some composers, like Luciano Berio, with whom Rosselli later worked in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this entailed first using new tools to uncover non-electronic conditions of music-making in other cultures, and then using these tools to create electronic music that was new and experimental, but still had some kind of recognizable link to more familiar human bodily techniques of music perception and production.

Cross-pollinations between ethnomusicological research and electronic music

By the time Rosselli was writing "La serie degli armonici," electronic music had begun to flourish, in large part thanks to technologies that had been used in the war and institutional support.[144] In the late 1940s, in Paris, Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète* emerged, and in Cologne *elektronische Musik* began its development. The Darmstadt Ferienkurse (International Summer School for New Music at Darmstadt) began in 1950 (Rosselli attended in 1959 and 1961). In the German context, in particular, interest arose in producing sound, generating tones and composing directly onto tape, largely thanks to the work of acoustician Werner Meyer-Eppler.[145] This practice appealed to Italian electronic composers like Bruno Maderna and Luciano Berio, who in 1955 began the Studio di Fonologia musicale, an electronic music studio

[144] Peter Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19.

[145] Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 40.

in Milan—or, as archivist Maddalena Novati puts it, "an electroacoustic music research center."[146]

As electronic composers began to generate new sounds with synthesizers, acousticians began to consider not only sounds but the sensations and impressions that these sounds would provoke.[147] In a 1956 article published in Italy and later cited by Rosselli in her 1987 bibliography to "La serie degli armonici," Meyer-Eppler was careful to distinguish between physical and psychological parameters of sound. As Meyer-Eppler stated in the article, "[l]'introduzione di generatori elettrici dei suoni nei processi di produzione musicale obbliga il compositore a risolvere importanti problemi psico-acustici poco comuni. Le relazioni multiple fra suoni e sensazioni associate vengono espresse mediante una formula semplificata e descrittiva che tiene conto delle proprietà dell'orecchio umano e che permette di definire in precedenza con una certa precisione gli attesi effetti sonori"[148] [the introduction of electrical generators of sound in processes of musical production forces the composer to resolve important

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[146] Maddalena Novati, "The Archive of the 'Studio di Fonologia di Milano della Rai," in *Journal of New Music Research*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2001), 395. Rosselli visited the Studio di Fonologia in the early 1960s; recently, Joanna Helms has written about Rosselli's work at the Studio in her dissertation, "Electronic Music History Through the Everyday: The Rai Studio di Fonologia (1954–83)," Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2020), 146–154. Helms makes the point that Rosselli, though she was one of few women allowed into the Studio, was still excluded and marginalized by the powerful men who ran it: "Rosselli's story and those of other women in the SdF [Studio di Fonologia] point to ways in which the studio tended to accumulate masculine bodies and practices, in large part because of labor and hiring practices. They also demonstrate how women could request repeatedly, through a wide variety of means, and still not be able to travel a desired path—Rosselli offers a vivid example of this not only in her interaction with [the] studio but with her subsequent requests to have her article published" (154). She notes that Rosselli was even excluded from the Studio's archive, since a copy of the tape piece she said that she had made there was not kept in it (154).

[147] An acoustics textbook that Rosselli cited in her 1988 bibliography for "La serie degli armonici," Charles Culver's *Musical Acoustics* (New York; Toronto; Philadelphia: The Blakiston Company, 1951 [1941]), draws a distinction between sound and its physical effects: "Sound is any vibratory disturbance in a material medium which is capable of producing an auditory sensation in the normal ear. We are here dealing with the objective cause of a sensation, and not with the sensation itself" (2). Such distinctions were not made in earlier textbooks, as in D.C. Miller's 1916 *The Science of Musical Sounds*.

[148] Werner Meyer-Eppler, "Fondamenti acustico-matematici della composizione elettrica dei suoni," in *Elettronica*, Vol. 5 (1956), 123.

and rare psycho-acoustical problems. The multiple relationships between sounds and associated sensations are expressed through a simplified and descriptive formula that takes into account the properties of the human ear and that allows expected sonic effects to be defined in advance with a certain degree of accuracy]. The preoccupation with the "psycho-acoustical" effects of electronically generated sounds and the necessity of having to "tak[e] into account the properties of the human ear" reflect an underlying concern with delineating the human listener's physical, physiological, and psychological parameters—the limits of bodily techniques of perception—so as not to surpass them in the production of electronic music.[149]

The idea that electronic means of music production might entail alienation from bodily techniques of music-making was one that was emerging in the years that Rosselli was researching and writing the 1954 version of "La serie degli armonici." In the 1987 bibliography, she cites two articles in particular that, although they were published after "La serie degli armonici," were apparently in line with what Rosselli felt she was trying to communicate with her article. One is a 1955 article by American acoustical engineers Harry Olson and Herbert Belar titled "Electronic Music Synthesizer." Olson and Belar imagine new sounds that can be made by the synthesizer, and seem to view the prospect of transcending the limits of previous techniques of musical production and perception with excitement: "in the case of conventional

[149] As Iverson describes Meyer Eppler's research insights, in *Electronic Inspirations*, 114–5: "Human hearing occupies a band within a wider range of known frequencies—including the infrasonic and ultrasonic frequencies—that are imperceptible to humans. The same is true for the spectrum of visible light, which is contained within a larger range that includes infrared and ultraviolet spectra. To take this a step further, music has to fall within a certain range of values if the brain is to have any hope of making sense of it. If the frequencies are too high or too low, or the durations too long or too short, etc., the listener is unable to 'understand' the message. An electronic machine may be able to sense and record such ultra- and infra-dimensions of waves, but the human listener needs the signal to fall within the boundary of its own human receiving mechanism. These may be simple insights, but they were nevertheless transformative. Meyer-Eppler drew attention to the fact that the sense organs have certain rather constant limits that cannot be willfully transcended. One could address the intelligibility of messages, Meyer-Eppler theorized, by addressing the perceptual limits of the human listener. Although the idea of perceptual boundaries is only one facet of information theory, such psychoacoustic insights spurred revolutionary new directions for the WDR composers."

musical instruments the musician is limited to the use of ten fingers, two hands, two feet, and the lips, either separately or in various combinations, to perform the different operations. These limits do not exist in the synthesizer."[150] Although Olson and Belar seem excited by this prospect, other players in the world of electronic music were less enthusiastic about pushing beyond bodily limits. One of these other players was Luciano Berio, whose Studio di Fonologia musicale Rosselli would later visit in the early 1960s.

In the 1987 bibliography to "La serie degli armonici," Rosselli cites one of Berio's articles as influential to her: "Prospettive nella musica. Ricerche e attività dello Studio di Fonologia Musicale di Radio Milano" [Perspectives in music. Research and activities of Radio Milano's Studio of Musical Phonology], first published in the journal *Elettronica* in 1956. In this article, Berio, like Rosselli and ethnomusicologists like Béla Bartók, Diego Carpitella, or the American Alan Lomax, explained his view that new recording and sound synthesis techniques were essential to fully explore embodied music production in non-Western and folk musics. In fact, he asserted the importance of his own studio for ethnomusicological research on the relationship between musical perception and performance, and described what he called the "radicale rinnovamento"[151] [radical renewal] of ethnomusicology: "Grazie ai nuovi mezzi di registrazione del suono è oggi possibile condurre ricerche su basi essenzialmente comparative che permettono di constatare come alla base di ogni espressione musicale vi siano anche fatti di natura costituzionale, psicofisiologica, geografica ecc."[152] [Thanks to new means of recording

[150] Harry Olson and Herbert Belar, "Electronic Music Synthesizer," in *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1955), 611.

[151] Luciano Berio, "Prospettive nella musica. Ricerche e attività dello Studio di Fonologia Musicale di Radio Milano," in *Un ricordo al futuro, Lezioni americane. Scritti sulla musica* (Turin: Einaudi, 2013), 181.

[152] Berio, "Prospettive nella musica," 181–2. Ultimately, though, on certain points Berio differs from Rosselli. He eventually asserts that new recording technologies can reveal how every ethnic and racial group has its own mode of

sound, today it is possible to conduct research on essentially comparative bases that allows us to state definitively that, at the foundation of every musical expression, there are also facts of a constitutional, psychophysiological, geographical, etc. nature].

For Berio, recording technology's use to discover how humans of various cultural and/or racial backgrounds perceive and produce music is, in turn, meant to help electronic music by providing insight into how human bodies create and respond to musical sounds. Berio is invested in keeping electronic music within "le possibilità auditive dell'uomo" [man's auditory possibilities]. He states that "[q]uesta è la ragione del continuo riferimento alle condizioni naturali della percezione. Nella pratica normale della musica strumentale è l'esecutore con il suo strumento che garantisce una sicura e collaudata accessibilità umana al fatto sonoro. Invece i mezzi della 'musica elettronica', se non controllati, vanno assai oltre le possibilità auditive dell'uomo"[153] [This is why we continually reference natural conditions of perception. In the normal practice of instrumental music, the player, with his instrument, guarantees secure, tested human accessibility to the sonic event. Instead, the means of "electronic music," if they are not controlled, go far beyond man's auditory possibilities]. Berio's article therefore sketches out a relationship between the technologies of ethnomusicological research, the insights on human perception that they provide, and the musical possibilities for electronic music.[154]

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listening to and producing music: "la scelta di una determinata materia sonora e la scelta stessa dei mezzi strumentali può anche essere oggetto di studi a carattere fisiologico, non solo musicale: basti ricordare che ogni gruppo etnico e razziale è caratterizzabile da una media precipua di selettività auditiva" [the choice of a certain sonic material and even the choice of instrument can also be the object of physiological, not only musical, study: remember that each ethnic and racial group can be characterized by an overall average of auditory selectivity] (184).

[153] Berio, "Prospettive nella musica," 189–90.

[154] Joanna Helms mentions this connection in Berio's work, in relation to the Studio, and similarly relates his statements to Werner Meyer-Eppler's focus on music perception. Helms also draws a connection between Berio's understanding of his work at the Studio and the work being done at the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv. Helms, "Electronic Music History Through the Everyday," 35–38.

The dynamic that Berio articulates is very similar to my interpretation of what Rosselli communicates through the pairing of her ethnomusicological research and the creation of her instrument in "La serie degli armonici." She justifies the creation of her instrument (and its accompanying notational system) through her observation of music outside the Western classical tradition. At the end of the 1954 version of "La serie degli armonici," in the essay's final three paragraphs, she expresses her hope that, once her instrument is made according to her specifications, it will be used in compositional practice. She sketches out a brief explanation of how transposition might be able to occur on a future iteration of the instrument, and speculates on how, in that future iteration, a second keyboard might also be added to the instrument. As the final paragraph of the essay, she states:

> Al momento ho a mia disposizione unicamente uno strumento solo, col quale è forse possibile effettuare qualche tentativo di composizione, benché riproduca soltanto una sola serie armonica, senza la possibilità di spostare il fondamentale in alto o in basso. Uno strumento più piccolo, che comprenda unicamente 32 armonici potrebbe venire costruito facilmente e sarebbe portabile. Lo strumento grande che riproduce tutto il sistema è in fase di studio. Nel caso che venisse costruito con mezzi elettronici, i quali sono per ora i più adatti a una "spostabilità" totale dei suoni su di una unica tastiera, risulterebbe all'incrociarsi di due serie spostabili a fondamentali variabili una *totalità matematica* a nostra disposizione per ogni ulteriore tentativo d'organizzazione del suono.[155]
>
> [At the moment I have at my disposal only one instrument, with which is it perhaps possible to undertake some attempts at composition, even though it reproduces only one harmonic series, without the possibility to move the fundamental up or down. A smaller instrument with only 32 partials/harmonics could be easily constructed and would be portable. The large instrument that reproduces the whole system is still being developed. If it is made with electronic means, which are, for now, the most suitable for sounds' total "movability" on a single keyboard, the crossing of two keyboards with movable series and variable fundamentals would entail a *mathematical totality* at our disposal, for every subsequent attempt to organize sound.]

From this passage, Rosselli's hope for a kind of total, complete system—one that fuses all kinds of musics and allows for all possible sonorities—emerges, through harnessing the capacities of

[155] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 51.

electronic music. In the following section, I consider the way Rosselli seems to be interested in fusing electronic music with more traditional embodied techniques of music-making through the actual form of her instrument; that is, the various ways she describes it in "La serie degli armonici" and elsewhere, since no prototype is extant.

The instrument: combining the traditional and the experimental

"La serie degli armonici" does not actually contain many details about Rosselli's prototype: the information it includes is that the instrument is a "piccolo pianoforte"[156] [small piano]. In 1977, when she republished "La serie degli armonici" in *il verri*, she described the instrument as "[un] armonium ad ancie [sic] con unica tastiera a fondamentale fisso"[157] [a reed organ with one, fixed-fundamental keyboard]. Helms also considers the probable form of the instrument to be "an electronically-powered reed organ."[158] However, I am not convinced that the prototype that Rosselli was using (at least when she wrote her 1954 article) was actually electronically powered. In the 1954 version of "La serie degli armonici" she still presents the potential for the instrument to be electronically powered as a future hope, with a hypothetical statement, as cited above: "Nel caso che [lo strumento] venisse costruito con mezzi elettronici, i quali sono per ora i più adatti a una 'spostabilità' totale dei suoni su di una unica tastiera [...]" [If it is made with electronic means, which are, for now, the most suitable for sounds' total "movability" on a single keyboard [...]]. In a 1956 letter to John, she notes that the prototype she has is, similarly, not yet the electronic instrument she wants: "this first sample is a very partial

[156] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 45.

[157] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 56.

[158] Helms, "Electronic Music Through the Everyday," 147.

affair indeed: i've given [the engineer] the plans for a second instrument with two keyboard [sic], to be run 'elettronicamente' [electronically], whereas this one is run by air."[159] In a 1964 note that Rosselli added to "La serie degli armonici,"[160] the electronic construction of the instrument's sounds becomes a necessity, since, as she notes, each keyboard "produrrebbe suoni 'puri', o cioè *sinus*: ciò è ovviamente necessario se l'unità organizzativa è l'armonico, il quale, come sappiamo, crea timbri 'complessi' solo se fuso con uno o più diversi armonici"[161] [would produce "pure" sounds, that is, sine waves; this is obviously necessary if the organizational unit is the harmonic/overtone, which, as we know, creates "complex" timbres only when it sounds along with one or more different harmonics/overtones].

Overall, electronic or not, Rosselli was interested, above all, in the way the instrument would connect to the player's body. Her attention to the bodily techniques that players outside of the Western classical music tradition adhered to—their intonation, their timbre, elements captured by a recording that transcription on the staff could not communicate—she then applied to an instrument that could develop different bodily techniques for the Western player. As Rosselli noted in the 1964 note, the sounds of the instrument "possono essere ottenute in uno studio elettronico normale"[162] [can be obtained in a normal electronic studio]. Still, she reasserts her investment in connecting the instrument to bodily techniques of playing: she considers the importance of "la ripresa d'una concezione di lavoro manuale in vista d'ottenere altezze, timbri,

[159] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 23 December 1956.

[160] It seems she was hoping for a republication of the piece in another journal (likely *Nuovi argomenti*), but this did not come to pass until the 1980s.

[161] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 52.

[162] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 52.

intensità, e durate"[163] [restoring an understanding of manual labor in order to obtain frequencies, timbres, intensities, and durations]. Such a statement is reminiscent of Berio's desire to keep electronic music within the horizon of the human body, connecting the sound technician to the lutenist, the synthesizer to the orchestra, in order to maintain "una emozionante presenza e una continuità dell'uomo"[164] [an exciting presence and continuity of man] in the creation of music.

Rosselli experimented quite a bit with the form her instrument would take, as the letters demonstrate. In a letter to John from January 25, 1952 (right as she was beginning some of her first attempts at poetry),[165] she spoke of her various trials: "Am fairly busy; what with packing & unpacking, seeing people, all of them queer types, in order to get the instrument built. Might go well — meanwhile learning all about how to make strings out of cat's, mutton's, & goat's insides, insomma [more or less], studying the practical meccanical [sic] side of the theoretical questions — more or less resolved — that's my claim, with the new plan for the instrument!"[166] On March 18, 1952, she told John, "it seems I've found people, at last, who are capable & willing to have the thing done, on small scale, — the result would be a tavolozza [palette] cross ways between the fisarmonica [accordion] and the electric organ."[167] On May 6, 1953, she

[163] Rosselli, "La serie degli armonici," 52.

[164] Berio, "Prospettive nella musica," 190: "Che al banco di lavoro del liutaio si sia seduto anche l'ingegnere del suono, che oltre al pentagramma il musicista cominci a usare anche la carta millimetrata e lo spettrogramma, che al suono dell'orchestra moderna faccia l'eco l' 'electronic music synthesizer' costruito in America e le musiche degli Studi sperimentali d'Europa, non costituisce una sopraffazione: accerta, invece, come cerchiamo di dimostrare col nostro lavoro, una emozionante presenza e una continuità dell'uomo, constatabile tanto attraverso il capolavoro di ieri, destinato a questo o a quello strumento ora caduto in disuso o completamente trasformato, quanto attraverso il lavoro di oggi."

[165] In the letter, she talks to John about his critiques of what is generally agreed to be one of the first creative texts she ever wrote, the autobiographical "My Clothes to the Wind" (in English).

[166] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 25 January 1952.

[167] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 18 March 1952.

dreamed of adding some kind of recording system to the instrument, "the construction of this 'rullo' [reel] on which can be registered [recorded] the human voice."[168] At some point, the instrument may even have had some kind of motor attached to it: in an undated letter, most likely from between 1951 and 1956, she talked about trying her hand at "composition at what Bobi [Roberto "Bobi" Bazlen (1902–1965), Jewish Triestine writer who encouraged Rosselli's poetic production] calls my 'asthmatica' [sic] instrument because of the noisy motor."[169]

Rosselli's experimentation with the physical forms her instrument might take showcases her interest in the "practical" and "meccanical" (as she writes it) sides of musical production, the ways that instruments interact with bodies. She emphasizes the physicality of instruments, how to make them and how they work: animals' insides, "asthmatic" motors. Viviana Ponta has rightly observed that the form of the instrument, as Rosselli describes it, is not only like a reed organ, but also like an accordion, as Rosselli herself observes in the 1952 description of it being, ideally, "cross ways" between an accordion and an electric organ. The accordion was an instrument being explored by Farfisa, the Italian maker of electronic instruments with whom Rosselli was collaborating; the company's name itself is an acronym of FAbbriche Riunite di FISArmoniche, or United Factories of Accordions. At the same time, as Ponta notes, the accordion is also a common folk instrument, especially in the Southern Italian context to which Rosselli had been exposed in fieldwork. Additionally, Rosselli's instrument was intended for a kind of improvisation that, able to stay only within a single harmonic series, "ci riporta ad un orizzonte tonale e popolare" [brings us back to a tonal, folk horizon] nearing a "dimensione

[168] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 6 May 1953.

[169] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, uncertain date (estimated between 1951 and 1956). She also mentions motors in a letter to John from 23 December 1956, regarding the engineers' mistakes in making a prototype of the instrument: "they made many mistakes before finishing the instrument; tried out three motors!"

folklorica" [folkloric dimension] far from serialist compositions where all elements were "rigorosamente preordinat[i]" [rigorously pre-ordained].[170]

To my mind, Rosselli saw the potential of her instrument to shape bodily techniques of music production for composers of Western classical music; hence her insistence on the fact that the instrument should take a physical form in the 1964 note (rather than existing as sine waves in the laboratory). In "La serie degli armonici," she does not spend much time discussing what she expects the instrument to do for the bodily techniques of Western classical musicians; she simply focuses on its compositional possibilities. But in the letters to John she reveals other ways of considering what the instrument can do. In a letter from March 25, 1953, she complains of physical and mental pain, and hopes that playing her instrument will help cure her: "i [sic] hope that playing these new scales (which means not having to force oneself with musical systems contro natura [against nature], as up to now) may help to get the head raddrizzata [straightened out]."[171] As early as June 9, 1952, when she had started undergoing psychoanalysis with Jung's former student Ernst Bernhard, Rosselli thought he might be able to help her with a therapeutic side of her instrument: "as he knows quite a bit about music, his help may be precious: I've been thinking lately to connect my ideas on 16 tone music to the Jungian theories, ecc.; ecc. Nothing will come of it except a saggio [essay], and perhaps some sort of musical therapy [...]."[172] These

[170] Ponta, "e risuona come idea nella mente," 94: "possiamo persino immaginare lo strumento progettato da Amelia come un piccolo organetto con cui accompagnare un canto istintivo (serializzandone le durate sulla base degli armonici). Quasi una fisarmonica (produzione a cui si dedicava la Farfisa); insomma, uno strumento popolare. Anche il fatto che il tipo di melodia abbozzata debba toccare ripetutamente determinati suoni ci riporta ad un orizzonte tonale e popolare. Così come si avvicina alla dimensione folklorica, il metodo compositivo si distanzia fortemente rispetto alle sperimentazioni compositive che fanno capo al post-webernismo, in cui tutto è rigorosamente preordinato." It should be noted, however, that it seems Rosselli was ultimately interested in having her instrument reproduce any and all tones, and experimenting with dissonance by having the two different keyboard play two different harmonic series, and seeing how they intersect.

[171] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 25 March 1953.

[172] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 9 June 1952.

moments from the letter gesture toward a recognition, on Rosselli's part, of what musicologists Emily Dolan and John Tresch outline in their thoughts on a new organology: that our instruments actually act upon our bodies, modifying our bodily techniques.[173]

Conclusions

In analyzing "La serie degli armonici" and the references to Rosselli's ethnomusicological and compositional formation in her letters and interviews, I have traced the genealogy of Rosselli's desire to uncover unifying elements of culture, rooted in human bodies' physiological and psychological commonalities, across cultural and/or racial differences. Her interest in non-Western and/or folk musical techniques and technologies pair with her investment in using new tools to record, measure, and uncover basic, shared parameters of music-making, which she identifies in the harmonic series and the way that she claims it structures duration, intensity, and timbre in musics outside of the Western classical tradition. Overall, Rosselli's claims are unique, but they are so because they are an idiosyncratic composite of transnational intellectual work in which she was engaged: her interest in shared human physiology and psychology can be traced to work being done at UNESCO and the Musée de l'Homme in the early 1950s; her emphasis on the centrality of the harmonic series comes from Alain Daniélou's research on Asian musics; her fusion of Asian, African, and European folk music emerges from Gramscian political investments in making connections between oppressed Europeans and racialized peoples of the Third World; her focus on bodily techniques of music-making is

[173] Emily Dolan and John Tresch, "Toward a New Organology: Instruments of Music and Science," in *Osiris*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (January 2013): "We need to expand out view beyond the standard notion of the tool as utilitarian and passive" (283); they ask, "How much does the instrument control the user, and vice versa?" (289). Jonathan De Souza, too, in his article "Voice and Instrument at the Origins of Music," in *Current Musicology* 97 (Spring 2014): 21–36, similarly calls into question the idea that musical instruments merely serve as prostheses, serving to extend what we already know how to do.

connected to Béla Bartók's stance on folk music, along with the work being carried out at the Musée de l'Homme and in the burgeoning new anthropology of Ernesto De Martino in Italy. Her interest in creating new musical compositions that still connected to universal bodily techniques of perceiving and producing music was shared by figures like Luciano Berio and the work of his Studio di Fonologia musicale. Through an analysis of Rosselli's various descriptions of her instrument, I have demonstrated how it was a priority for players to physically interact with her instrument, so that it could shape their bodily techniques, in a prioritization of the "manual labor" of making music (in Rosselli's words)—rather than manipulating sine waves in a laboratory setting, a technique of the body more distant to non-electronic modes of music-making.

In the following chapter, I turn to the way Rosselli considered musical techniques of the body that she saw captured in the fieldwork in which she participated: the Lucanian funeral lament studied by Ernesto De Martino. I examine Rosselli's engagement with De Martino's work on the lament, alongside her relationships with other aesthetic endeavors closely related to De Martino's anthropological findings, like Carlo Levi's memoir *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* and Rocco Scotellaro's poetry. In my view, Rosselli's poetic sequence *Cantilena* (1953) constitutes an attempt to try engaging with a Southern Italian bodily technique (the lament) in written form.

Chapter 2: Negotiating biology and culture through techniques of the body.

Cantilena as response to De Martino's new conceptualizations of the lament form and Southern Italian subjectivities

Introduction

In the early 1950s, around the same time that Rosselli was working on "La serie degli armonici," based on her research at the Musée de l'Homme, she became increasingly involved in ethnographic research on the Italian South, particularly the research conducted by anthropologist Ernesto De Martino and ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella. As discussed in Chapter 1, this thread of ethnography in Italy's postwar was closely connected to burgeoning interests in Gramsci's idea of the subaltern and how emancipating economically and socially marginalized Italians might be connected to anti-colonial movements elsewhere. Alongside this political interest, De Martino and the ethnographers who worked with him were increasingly fascinated by the potential for audiovisual recording technologies to provide insight into the bodily techniques of Southern Italian subjects.

In this chapter, I examine formulations of the subject in Rosselli's early poetry on the Italian South, in particular viewing her 1953–4 poetic sequence *Cantilena* as a literary interpretation of a Southern Italian technique of the body. I argue that her focus on Southern women's musical and gestural techniques of mourning reflect a focus on formations and dissolutions of subjectivity, and how subjects negotiate their coherence and destruction in the face of their potential annihilation—topics front of mind for De Martino and others in his circle

at the time. Rosselli's artistic production related and indebted to the Italian South reflects yet another connection in her work between cultural alterity and various ways of conceiving of and utilizing technology. *Cantilena* explores the idea of lament as a technology to contain and mitigate the otherwise subject-destroying pain that follows the loss of a loved one, particularly for subjects in an economically precarious position as women in the South were.

Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* had been published posthumously in 1948, and since then, Italian intellectuals had been influenced by the way he formulated the "questione meridionale," the Southern Question. They sought to understand how dominant culture in Italy had historically interacted with one of its internal others, i.e. marginalized rural *contadini* (peasants), and how the masses of *contadini* could be economically, politically, and socially liberated in the present day. Culture and aesthetics were essential in this process of liberation: indeed, all humanistic enterprises needed to shift to include the "entrance into history" of the subaltern, as De Martino put it in his 1949 call to action "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno."[174] Writers, composers, directors, and visual artists in Italy began paying attention to the cultural phenomena that De Martino studied in the Southern Italian population—magic rituals, trance states, and laments in particular—and incorporating them into their artistic practices.

Rosselli's interest in the Italian South has been well-documented. She referred to it often in interviews throughout her life and in the paratexts to her poetry. Some scholars have connected Rosselli's interest in the Italian South and, more broadly, anthropology to the new portrayals of how subjects relate to one another in her poetic output. For these scholars, Rosselli

[174] Ernesto De Martino, "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno," *Società*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1949): 411–435.

outlines a fluid subjectivity in her poetry, an "I" that is constantly reaching the limits of the other and then merging with it, which, according to some, this fluid subjectivity constitutes an attempt to identify with the anonymous, fluid composition of oral production, focused on a collective memory rather than a personal one.[175] Some scholars, like Florinda Fusco, have described how Rosselli's poetry focuses on and thematizes the presence of the Other within the self.[176]

This way of describing the relationship with difference in Rosselli's work is strikingly similar to Ernesto De Martino's hope for a new humanism that includes the history of the subaltern: "L'umanesimo circoscritto della cultura tradizionale ha lasciato fuori della considerazione umana e storica non soltanto il mondo popolare subalterno, ma anche ciò che di 'popolare' o di 'subalterno' vive in ciascuno di noi, onde la luce fatta sul mondo storico primitivo illumina noi stessi, è incremento della nostra stessa umanità"[177] [The circumscribed humanism of traditional culture has left out of human and historical consideration not only the folk subaltern world, but also the "folk" or "subaltern" elements that live in each of us. Therefore, when we shed light on the historical primitive world, we illuminate ourselves; it is an increase of our own humanity]. Shedding light on the other sheds light on the self; the two are inextricably linked. I argue that Rosselli's exploration of the Southern other within the self is conducted in tandem with an interest in how technique and technology act upon the subject,

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[175] This interpretation comes to the fore in the work of Chiara Carpita and Emmanuela Tandello: Chiara Carpita, "*Spazi metrici* tra post-webernismo, etnomusicologia, Gestalttheorie e astrattismo: su alcune fonti extra-letterarie del 'nuovo geometrismo' di Amelia Rosselli," in *Moderna*, No. 2 (2013), 61–105; Emmanuela Tandello, *Amelia Rosselli: la fanciulla e l'infinito* (Rome, Donzelli, 2007).

[176] I cited this quote in the introduction, as well. Florinda Fusco, in *Amelia Rosselli* (Palermo: Palumbo, 2007), describes how, in Rosselli's poetic production, the Other is both outside and inside the self: "l'io è un io plurale e in guerra con se stesso. Non vi è una soggettività unica e intera che esprima una singola posizione. La Rosselli sembra porre al centro dell'opera il rapporto con la differenza, o *alteritas*, sia all'esterno che all'interno del sé" [the I is plural and at war with itself. There is no single and whole subjectivity that can express a unified position. Rosselli puts at the center of her work the relationship with difference, or alteritas, both inside and outside the self] (41).

[177] De Martino, "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno," 423.

shaping the subject's modes of defining itself. In *Cantilena*, the speaker uses the technology of Southern lament to explore the interplay between the risk of the subject's disintegration—due to the economic and psychological precarity brought to the fore through the destructive force of grief—and the subject's coherence, able to be salvaged thanks to the cultural forms and structures put in place by the lament. In fact, the lament was beginning to be conceived of as a technology at that point in time thanks precisely to De Martino's work: new technologies used for field recordings captured the lament's melodic structures and gestural conventions, contributing to a new way of analyzing the lament as a codified set of "techniques of the body."

Southern Italian subjects in the early 1950s: De Martino's new ethnology

In this section, I outline the various elements that converged to form an interest in the cultural forms of rural Southern Italian subjects in the 1950s. I also trace a brief history of how some of these cultural forms—namely, the lament—began to be conceived as techniques of the body by social scientists and artists (like Rosselli) who followed the thoughts of Ernesto De Martino.

In addition to Gramsci's formulation of the Southern Question, for thinkers interested in rethinking the cultural practices of rural Southern Italian subjects, Carlo Levi's memoir *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* [Christ stopped at Eboli] was a foundational text. The memoir was published in 1945, written between 1943 and 1944, and focuses on Levi's time in internal exile (*confino*) due to his antifascist activities: he spent 1935 and 1936 in Lucania, a poor, rural, isolated region. (Although officially the region's name is Basilicata, I refer to it by its other, historical name, Lucania, following the preferred formulation of De Martino and other Southern intellectuals working on or hailing from the region; the adjective for this region is derived from this other

name (*lucano*/Lucanian).) Levi's memoir focuses on his relationship with and observations of the *contadini* in the small communities in which he lives. The work declared a moral and ethical imperative to liberate these oppressed subjects through artistic and political initiations;[178] it also sparked a fascination with the mysterious rituals practiced by these *contadini*, which Levi describes at length.

Rosselli was very close to Levi; he had been a friend of her father's, and as an adult Rosselli even entered into a relationship with Levi. Levi and Rocco Scotellaro, the young Lucanian poet and socialist politician who was Rosselli's best friend from 1950 until his death in 1953, were the people who introduced Rosselli into Ernesto De Martino's orbit. De Martino was inspired by Levi's work, and cited him in his call for a new humanism that could include previously marginalized subjects. De Martino had already been interested in this topic, starting from his first book, *Naturalismo e storicismo nell'etnologia* [Naturalism and historicism in ethnology] (1941). In this book, he argued for a historical perspective on rituals employed by "primitive" societies outside of Europe, rejecting anthropological currents of positivism, evolutionism, and functionalism.[179] In his 1949 article "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno" [Regarding a history of the folk subaltern world], he added Southern Italy to this argument through a reference to Levi's memoir:

> il problema pratico dell'*ordine* serba un posto preminente [nell'etnologia naturalistica], le forme culturali di quel mondo [subalterno] si sono configurate essenzialmente come materiale da praticamente *ordinare* in una scienza naturale dell'uomo, come un complesso di problemi tecnici per filologi addestrati. Il circoscritto umanesimo della "civiltà occidentale" inerisce dunque alla struttura stessa della società borghese: appunto perché è carattere di tale società che Cristo non vada "oltre Eboli", il mondo che vive

[178] Giovanna Faleschini Lerner, "Carlo Levi's New Humanism," in *Annali d'Italianistica*, Vol. 26 (2008), 289.

[179] Ernesto De Martino, *Naturalismo e storicismo nell'etnologia* (Bari: Laterza, 1941); Dorothy L. Zinn, "An introduction to Ernesto de Martino's Relevance for the Study of Folklore," in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 128, No. 507 (2015): 3–17.

> oltre Eboli è apparso alla etnologia e al folklore borghesi come astorico, ovvero come storia possibile ma che attualmente non si affaccia alla memoria dello storiografo.[180]
>
> [the practical problem of *order* takes pride of place [in naturalistic ethnology]; the cultural forms of that world [the subaltern world] are essentially configured as a material to be *ordered* in a natural science of man, like a set of technical problems for trained philologists. The circumscribed humanism of "Western civilization" is strictly aligned with the structure of bourgeois society: precisely because that society has determined that Christ cannot go "beyond Eboli," the world that lives beyond Eboli has appeared to bourgeois ethnology and folklore as ahistorical, that is as a possible history but one that cannot currently be accessed in the historiographer's memory.]

Naturalist currents of ethnology, according to De Martino, were invested in treating cultural forms as *material* to be ordered; historicist ethnology, instead, recognizes that these cultural forms already represent an order, and it is ethnology's task to analyze that order. In other words, naturalist ethnology presupposes a lack of history in the subaltern world, which has purposely been constructed by hegemonic narratives of history. Instead, historicist ethnology's attention to the cultural forms present in the subaltern world prove that the subaltern world is not ahistorical—it has a history that must be studied and incorporated into a broader understanding of history.

Naturalismo e storicismo nell'etnologia and De Martino's second book, *Il mondo magico* [The magical world] (1948), theorize the magical techniques of cultures in Australia, Tierra del Fuego, and Siberia, primarily using information from ethnographers' fieldwork that he accessed in books during wartime. In October 1952, De Martino decided that his theoretical research needed a fieldwork component, and he selected Lucania for this experience. He writes that the initiative was funded in part by the Centro etnologico italiano [Italian ethnologic center], a short-lived organization of which Rosselli was a part. Chiara Carpita, in an interview with De Martino's wife and research partner, the social worker Vittoria De Palma, established that

[180] De Martino, "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno," 412.

Rosselli was also present for at least parts of the 1952 expedition.[181] In 1953, De Martino published an initial account of the experience of fieldwork in an article titled "Note di viaggio," published in *Nuovi argomenti*, the journal founded and edited by Alberto Moravia and Alberto Carocci (Moravia was Rosselli's cousin; Carocci was the Rosselli family lawyer and helped Rosselli manage an American trust that had been set up in her name). Here, De Martino began to develop in earnest the idea of the "le *formazioni culturali* nate dall'esperienza di una radicale precarietà esistenziale e maturate nella lotta contro l'angoscia di mantenersi come persone davanti all'insorgere dei momenti critici dell'esistenza storica"[182] [the *cultural formation* born out of the experience of radical existential precarity and developed in the battle against the anguish of maintaining oneself as a person in the face of critical moments of historical existence (my emphasis)]—in other words, the concept of the crisis of presence. The crisis of presence is the risk of the subject dissolving, of cultural forms being non-existent. This risk is most frequently faced, in De Martino's formulation, by the most economically vulnerable members of society, those who have been "forgotten by history."

Defining the lament as a technique

The precarity of the Lucanian subject as subject or even as human is noted in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, as well: Levi says that the *contadini* he meets "vivono immersi in un mondo che si continua senza determinazioni, dove l'uomo non si distingue dal suo sole, dalla sua bestia, dalla sua malaria"[183] [They live immersed in a continuous world without determinacy, where

[181] Carpita, "*Spazi metrici*," 98, n. 1.

[182] Ernesto De Martino, "Note di viaggio," in *Nuovi argomenti*, No. 2 (May–June 1953), 47.

[183] Carlo Levi, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Turin: Einaudi, 2014), 69.

man is not distinguished from his sun, his beast, his malaria]. Rocco Scotellaro similarly writes a number of poems that imply a continuity between the Lucanian subject and the natural world. De Martino is interested in providing a historical explanation of how the Lucanian subject's precarious grasp on his or her own subjectivity came to be. He glosses a story an informant told him about a *contadino* who, without realizing it, envied the breast milk of a young mother, and found himself suddenly with breasts full of milk, whereas the mother's milk dried up. This story is, for De Martino, "connessa con la labilità della presenza"[184] [connected to the ephemeral nature of presence] for these subjects. He makes a similar argument about the aesthetics of folk literature in Lucania:

> La letteratura popolare tende alla anonimia e alla fluidità appunto per questa "miseria psicologica", per questa labile appropriazione di sé. La ragione per cui un canto popolare vaga, per così dire, di cantore in cantore, conducendo una esistenza plastica e come sognante, che comprende sviluppi, accorciamenti, trasposizioni, contaminazioni, sdoppiamenti, trasformazioni metriche etc., è fondamentalmente in connessione col fatto che la presenza di questi oppressi è anch'essa storicamente disposta a una certa rischiosa plasticità.[185]
>
> [Folk literature tends to be anonymous and fluid precisely because of this "psychological misery," because of this ephemeral ownership of oneself. The reason that a folksong wanders, so to speak, from singer to singer, leading a plastic and almost dreaming existence that includes developments, shortenings, transpositions, contaminations, doublings, metrical transformations, etc., is fundamentally connected to the fact that, historically, the presence of these oppressed people has also been subjected to a kind of risky plasticity.]

Ultimately, De Martino is interested precisely in how the Lucanian subject *does* actually work to distinguish himself—or, just as often in De Martino's work, *her*self—as human, and as a subject who is distinct from other subjects. As a result, the lament becomes an important cultural element to analyze, and eventually it is the focal point of De Martino's first full book on the

[184] De Martino, "Note di viaggio," 51.

[185] De Martino, "Note di viaggio," 61.

Italian South, *Morte e pianto rituale. Dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria* [Death and ritual lament. From the ancient funeral lament to Mary's lament] (1958).

Already in the 1953 "Note di viaggio," De Martino begins to develop notes on the lament that he will echo in his 1958 book. Rosselli had certainly read De Martino's "Note di viaggio," based on the 1952 expedition, and it was one of the texts she saved throughout her various moves (her copy is now housed with the rest of what remained of her library at the time of her death, at the Università della Tuscia in Viterbo).[186] In the "Note," De Martino describes the oscillation of the lament between ritual control and explosions of anguish: "Il lamento funebre si dibatte in questa [polarità]: la tendenza a risolvere il fatto umanissimo del pianto in un semplice automatismo [...], e l'opposta tendenza a riguadagnare il pianto umano, personale, storico. Solo così queste donne—Giulia, Prudente, Rosa, Maria…—possono piangere i loro morti, in una situazione esistenziale in cui pianto libero, spontaneo, senza rito, schianterebbe l'anima"[187] [The funeral lament oscillates between these poles: the tendency to break down the very human event of weeping into a simple automatism, and the opposite tendency to regain a lament that is human, personal, historical. Only in this way can these women—Giulia, Prudente, Rosa, Maria…—lament their dead, in an existential situation in which free, spontaneous weeping, without a ritual, would destroy the soul]. De Martino elaborates on his concept of the lament in the 1955 article "Considerazioni storiche sul lamento funebre lucano" [Historical considerations on the Lucanian funeral lament], also published in *Nuovi argomenti*. De Martino would develop much of what he wrote and include it in his later book, in which he truly defines the lament as a technique that is part of a specific cultural order:

[186] Carpita, "*Spazi metrici*," 98.

[187] De Martino, "Note di viaggio," 78.

> La tecnica del lamento comporta, innanzitutto, la destorificazione dell'evento luttuoso: la lamentatrice in azione tende a risolvere la storicità della situazione—l'evento luttuoso come tale e l'espressione del dolore—nella ripetizione dei gesti, sequenze verbali, melopee fissati dalla tradizione impersonale del "si piange così". Attraverso questa tecnica spersonalizzante, e quindi attenuatrice della storicità, la lamentatrice diventa quasi un'altra, anonima e come sognante: ma un'altra controllata e controllabile, non già completamente irrelativa, come accade invece nel rischio di alienazione totale, nella miseria psicologica senza compenso. La crisi di impulsi distruttivi viene così regolata nelle forme relativamente moderate dei gesti autolesionistici tradizionali, come il graffiarsi le guance, il battersi il capo o le anche, lo strapparsi i capelli o semplicemente lo spettinarsi sciogliendosi le chiome. In altri termini, la fedeltà culturale a un modo di gesticolazione tradizionale controlla e modera gli impulsi distruttivi.[188]
>
> [The technique of the lament entails, above all, the de-historification of the reason for mourning: the lamenter, in her actions, tends to dissolve the historicity of the situation—the reason for mourning and the expression of her pain—in the repetition of gestures, verbal sequences, melopoeias fixed by the impersonal tradition of "one mourns in this way." Through this technique that is depersonalized, and therefore that attenuates historicity, the lamenter becomes an other, anonymous and almost dreaming: but an other who is controlled and controllable, not completely unrelated [to the lamenter], as would occur instead in situations that threaten total alienation, unbalanced psychological misery. In this way, the crisis of destructive impulses is regulated in the relatively moderate forms of traditional self-harming actions, like scratching one's cheeks, hitting one's head or hips, tearing out one's hair or simply taking one's hair down. In other words, cultural fidelity to a traditional mode of gesticulation controls and moderates destructive gestures.]

The lament is therefore a depersonalized and depersonalizing technique, or, as De Martino puts it elsewhere in the article, "una tecnica psichica o vitale per restaurare, sia pure in modo rudimentale o 'miserabile', la storicità umana del comportamento"[189] [a psychic or vital technique to restore, even in a rudimentary or 'wretched' manner, the behavior's human historicity].

In *Morte e pianto rituale*, De Martino explains that these techniques serve as humans' method of finding some way of controlling nature—techniques that members of industrialized

[188] Ernesto De Martino, "Considerazioni storiche sul lamento funebre lucano," in *Nuovi argomenti*, No. 12 (January–February 1955), 15–16.

[189] De Martino, "Considerazioni storiche," 15.

societies no longer need. Industrialization for De Martino entails a detachment from and rationalized control over natural conditions,[190] but instead, "[n]elle civiltà primitive e nel mondo antico una parte considerevole della coerenza tecnica dell'uomo non è impiegata nel dominio tecnico della natura [...], ma nella creazione di forme istituzionali atte a proteggere la presenza dal rischio di non esserci nel mondo"[191] [in primitive societies and in the ancient world a considerable part of man's technical coherence is not used in the technical dominance of nature [...], but instead in the creation of institutional forms suitable for protecting presence from the risk of not existing in the world].

The Lucanian subject's use of the lament is therefore a demonstration of her technical coherence—in De Martino's words in "Note di viaggio," of the "dam" she raises against a "tempestuous ocean of anguish."[192] However, it is also revelatory of the very process of constructing that dam and the reasons it is necessary: to protect the subject from dissolution, to keep the subject human. Indeed, in the introduction to *Morte e pianto rituale*, De Martino considers the relationship between the matter or material of life—which he calls vitality—and the cultural forms through which it is channeled. These cultural forms allow humans to distinguish themselves as such, rather than as another life form: "La mera vitalità che sta 'cruda e verde' nell'animale e nella piante deve essere nell'uomo trascesa nell'opera, e questa energia di trascendimento che oggettiva il vitale secondo forme di coerenza culturale è appunto la

[190] Ernesto De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale: dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000 [1958]), 36: "nel complesso il nostro incommensurabilmente più alto distacco dalle condizioni naturali e l'ampiezza delle realizzazioni civili in tutti i domini, e gli abiti morali e le persuasioni razionali che ne abbiamo acquisito, ci fanno molto più preparati a superare i momenti critici dell'esistenza."

[191] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 37.

[192] De Martino, "Note di viaggio," 76.

presenza"[193] [Mere vitality, which is 'raw and green' in plants and animals, needs to be transcended in man through work. Presence is precisely this energy of transcendence that manifests the vital according to culturally coherent forms]. Vitality is an immediacy that must always be mediated in order for the human to be human, i.e. to have technical coherence: "Rispetto all'uomo e alla sua storia la vitalità appare sempre come una immediatezza bisognosa di mediazione formale"[194] [In relation to man and his history, vitality always appears as an immediacy requiring formal mediation]. In turn, this formal mediation creates human community structures: "[la mediazione formale della vitalità] segna il distacco inaugurale che l'umano compie dal meramente vitale, dischiudendo con ciò l'ordine della vita civile"[195] [the formal mediation of vitality marks the human's inaugural separation from the merely vital, thereby opening the order of civil life]. The isolated Lucanian villages of De Martino's ethnographic expeditions were therefore places where vitality, a biological order of existence, was continually coming into contact with the forces that shape it into the human subject: *techniques* to ward off the crisis of presence.

De Martino had already been interested in the lament as early as 1952, but his interest had been additionally piqued after the death of Rocco Scotellaro in December 1953, when he observed the lament of Rocco's mother, Francesca Armento. This lament was a source of inspiration for Carlo Levi, as well: he made a painting of it in 1954, titled "Lamento per Rocco Scotellaro," and would include a similar scene in his 1961 "Telero Lucania," the piece he

[193] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 17.

[194] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 18.

[195] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 18.

presented in Turin for the centenary celebration of Unification.[196] (De Martino draws on Levi's first depiction of Francesca Armento's lament to open his first article exclusively dedicated to the lament, in the January 1955 issue of *Nuovi argomenti*.) In the 1954 painting, Levi paints himself into the group of lamenting women. In my reading, Rosselli was similarly inspired to incorporate herself into a lament for Rocco, and *Cantilena* depicts this process. In it, the speaker shows how the lament is used as a technique in order to regulate moments of the crisis of presence (in De Martino's terms); she inscribes herself into the subjectivity of a Lucanian mourner by using traditional forms of the lament. *Cantilena*'s engagement with the lament thematizes its newly conceived status as a cultural technique, and meditates on how it allows the subject to oscillate between coherence and disaggregation.

An introduction to *Cantilena*: its form and its title

Cantilena was written in 1953, immediately after Rocco Scotellaro's death. It was first published in 1964, in an issue of *Galleria*, edited by Leonardo Sciascia, Mario Petrucciani, and Jole Tognelli. The *Galleria* version of *Cantilena* reads like one single long poem, but when Rosselli republished it in 1980 as part of her *Primi scritti* she split it up into a sequence of twenty-eight poems, each from two to eight lines in length. In both cases, the work is dedicated to Rocco Scotellaro, and the addressee is named as "Rocco" twice throughout the text. It does contain certain elements that are reminiscent of aspects that will pepper Rosselli's subsequent style, from 1955–1964: proliferation of internal rhymes and assonance, phonemic play and variations, repetition of certain formulae, an insistent focus on an addressee, a "tu" that

[196] Franco Vitelli, "Carlo Levi e Rocco Scotellaro," in *Lares*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (1989), 277–278.

constantly shifts. The work self-consciously imitates formal aspects of the Lucanian lament: frequent repetition of the dead person's relationship to the lamenting woman,[197] intercalated expressions of pain ("ah," "ahi") that make appearances in the twenty-first and twenty-third poems of the 1980 subdivisions,[198] and the brief line lengths. The use of free verse with mostly short line lengths, seem to be a nod to the "discorso protetto del lamento lucano" [protected discourse of the Lucanian lament], which is always made up of brief verses without meter or rhyme, according to De Martino's investigation.[199] I argue that the brevity of the lines, and the moments where longer line lengths appear, which I discuss below, also serve as a commentary on the lament as a device that contains the otherwise uncontrolled vital material of anguish.

The critical attention to *Cantilena* has been virtually non-existent. Chiara Carpita, in the critical apparatus to Rosselli's complete works, connects the work stylistically to Ezra Pound's imagism and his ideas about the haiku: "trattamento diretto dell'oggetto, economia di parole, obbedienza al ritmo della frase musicale"[200] [direct treatment of the object, economy of words, obedience to the rhythm of the musical phrase]. She also attributes aspects of the poem's style of Rosselli's reading of Ungaretti's *L'allegria* in the early 1950s.[201] More importantly for the purposes of this chapter, Carpita connects *Cantilena* to Rocco Scotellaro's poetry in *Margherite e rosolacci* and *Frammenti ed epigrammi* (although, as I mention later in the chapter, I actually

[197] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 84.

[198] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 116–117.

[199] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 84.

[200] Chiara Carpita, "Notizia su *Primi scritti*," in *Amelia Rosselli. L'opera poetica*, ed. Stefano Giovannuzzi, Francesco Carbognin, Chiara Carpita, Silvia De March, Gabriella Palli Baroni, Emmanuela Tandello (Milan: Mondadori, 2012), 1400.

[201] Carpita, "Notizia su *Primi scritti*," 1400.

see the strongest connections to *È fatto giorno*). She sees stylistic continuity between these phases of Scotellaro's poetry and *Cantilena*, but Rosselli's poetry is much more scattered than Scotellaro's ever was: she loses sentences' threads in wordplay and assonance and refuses most punctuation.[202] (It should perhaps also be noted that Rosselli confessed that she preferred Scotellaro's prose and attempts to record the speech and linguistic formation of the illiterate and semi-literate to his poetry.)[203] Nevertheless, as Carpita notes, the association with Scotellaro's poetry is primarily derived from a kind of animism, the presence of spirits, and the broader magical, ritualistic atmosphere that *Cantilena* invokes.[204]

Rosselli identified this series of poems as her initiation into writing poetry in Italian. This initiation, then, is also linked with the person—Rocco Scotellaro—who initiated Rosselli into her knowledge of the Italian South. Rosselli claimed to incorporate traces of the Italian South into her later collection, *Variazioni Belliche* [War Variations] (1959–1964). After her editor, Elio Vittorini, expressed some concern about her unusual Italian in that collection, Rosselli wrote him a "Glossarietto esplicativo" [Explicatory glossary] that explained how, in her mind, many of her linguistic choices were imitations or emulations of how illiterate or semi-literate Southern Italians spoke (I analyze this at greater length in the fourth chapter of this dissertation). In the later poems of *Variazioni Belliche*, however, it is difficult to pinpoint the speaker/s as Southern

[202] The 1964 version has more punctuation—mostly just periods which she removed in the 1980 version. But still, not all periods are present and most other kinds of punctuation do not occur.

[203] Giacinto Spagnoletti and Amelia Rosselli, "Fatti estremi" (1987), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 83. This is also something that Stefano Giovannuzzi brings up, in a brief exploration of how the opening of *Cantilena* relates to Christological imagery in *Variazioni Belliche*, in *Amelia Rosselli: Biografia e poesia* (Novara: Interlinea, 2016), 92–97.

[204] Carpita, "Notizia su *Primi scritti*," 1400.

Italian. Instead, in *Cantilena*, the speaker, through a variety of formulae, is clearly associated with the South and, in particular, with Southern womanhood.

The decision to title this text *Cantilena* invokes multiple meanings, all connected to Southern women's song. At the broadest level, "cantilena" may entail a popular composition that follows a certain formula; more specifically, it can denote a lament, a lullaby, or a chant. At various points in *Morte e pianto rituale*, De Martino uses the verb form of "cantilena," "cantilenare," to denote the traditional whining, sing-song intonation of lament delivery. The word comes up in De Martino's "Note di viaggio," as well, in a different context, as he describes helping a young, semi-literate woman read the newspaper in Tricarico, Rocco Scotellaro's hometown:

> Nella Camera del lavoro di Tricarico ho visto stasera una giovane contadina sillabare con grande pena un articolo di *Vie Nuove*. Il suo indice scorre lentamente i righi a stampa, fermandosi di tanto in tanto quando l'intoppo è più grosso: il suo amorfo cantilenare subisce allora una sosta, ed io vedo soltanto le sue labbra muoversi a vuoto, nel tentativo disperato di ritrovare la via del suono articolato e di prorompere nella parola. A un certo punto, in occasione di uno di questi intoppi, ha scosso la testa contrariata, e mi ha chiesto: "A vi-cen-da. Che è A vi-cen-da?" Ho cercato di spiegarglielo. Mi ha guardato non molto persuasa, ha sospirato, e ha ripreso la lettura, o meglio la sua lotta disperata per rintracciare le sillabe nel rigo e qualche incerta associazione nella memoria.[205]
>
> [In the Chamber of Labor in Tricarico this evening I saw a young *contadina* sound out, with great difficulty, a *Vie Nuove* article. Her index finger slowly scans the printed lines, stopping occasionally when she encounters a roadblock: her amorphous chanting undergoes a pause, and I see her lips moving in vain, in the desperate attempt to rediscover the path of articulation and to burst forth into words. At a certain point, during one of these roadblocks, she shook her head, irritated, and asked me: "Each o-ther. What is Each o-ther?" I tried to explain it to her. She looked at me skeptically, sighed, and went back to her reading, or rather back to her desperate fight to track down the syllables in the line and some uncertain association in her memory.]

This episode is emblematic of many of the political and interpersonal issues that were weighing on De Martino during his expeditions in the Italian South. First, the young woman is attempting

[205] De Martino, "Note di viaggio," 62–63.

to read *Vie Nuove*, a magazine launched and distributed by the PCI (Partito comunista italiano; the Italian communist party). Both De Martino and Rosselli were staunch supporters of the PCI, and involved in it in various ways.[206] However, as this episode shows, De Martino was acutely aware of the limits of the PCI's outreach to the isolated, semi-literate subjects of various rural segments in the Italian South. The very words that the woman stumbles over—"a vicenda," each other—are revelatory of the challenges of relating to one another across a cultural chasm. Her attempts to read, to develop one of the techniques necessary to access the technology of the written word, lead to a formless chant, an "amorfo cantilenare." The woman is not connected to the words; she chants them out, she cannot shape them for herself.

This is how the technique of the lament itself functions: it is the chance to inhabit an other, as De Martino stated, an anonymous other who can be controlled, regulated, and serve as a container for the self's otherwise uncontainable anguish. The speaker of *Cantilena* carries out the inverse of the young woman's reading of *Vie Nuove*: from her position as a literate subject of an industrialized society, she attempts to produce an oral-formulaic technique that will give her access to a mode of subjectivity, of being-in-the-world, that she cannot otherwise access. When Rosselli reflected publicly on *Cantilena* during a poetry reading shortly after the publication of *Primi scritti*, she saw, as the poems' strong points, "una grande innocenza, oltre che una certa cultura classica greco-latina, populista"[207] [a great innocence, along with a certain Greco-Latin classical, populist culture]. As Carpita has noted, this description in itself ties the work to

[206] Rosselli was a longtime member of a local chapter of the PCI, where she volunteered. For more on de Martino's engagement with the PCI, see Valerio Salvatore Severino, "Ernesto de Martino nel Pci degli anni Cinquanta tra religione e politica," in *Studi Storici*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (April–June 2003): 527–553.

[207] Marina Camboni and Amelia Rosselli, "È molto difficile essere semplici" (1981), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 46.

demartinian conceptions of the South, with its emphasis on tracing surviving rituals to ancient ones; the use of the word "populista" as a descriptor ties *Cantilena* to Rosselli's political commitments. During the same reading, Rosselli elaborates that the poems felt like they had been written by a different person: "le sento di un'altra persona"[208] [I feel like they are someone else's]. In a way, I argue that this is the point of this text: it is a formulation of a technique that involves becoming another. As De Martino put it, it is a "tecnica spersonalizzante" [depersonalizing technique], where the lamenter becomes "un'altra controllata e controllabile" [an other who is controlled and controllable].[209]

Images of Lucania and the Lucanian woman in *Cantilena*

The speaker of *Cantilena* lives between the North and the South, or perhaps is forced to inhabit the North but desires the South. The text depicts the North and South synecdochically through the cities of Bologna and Matera, respectively. They are first mentioned in the third poem of the 1980 version of the sequence: "Bologna perché t'ho in mente / cosa c'entri / città scadente / cattedrale che dubiti / Non c'è chiesa a Matera / monte roccione con la porticina"[210] [Bologna why are you on my mind / what do you have to do with anything / decaying city / doubting cathedral / There is no church in Matera / mountain rock with a little door]. Bologna is decaying, "scadente," stuffily Christian; Matera is a link to a pagan past ("non c'è chiesa a Matera"), an idea that came up frequently in De Martino's work. The decay that the speaker

[208] Camboni and Rosselli, "È molto difficile essere semplici," 46.

[209] De Martino, "Considerazioni storiche," 15–16.

[210] Amelia Rosselli, *Cantilena*, in *Amelia Rosselli. L'opera poetica*, ed. Stefano Giovannuzzi, Francesco Carbognin, Chiara Carpita, Silvia De March, Gabriella Palli Baroni, Emmanuela Tandello (Milan: Mondadori, 2012), 517.

associates with Bologna seems to be picked up again in the fifth poem: "Mondo pollame divenuto malaticcio / duna di morti"[211] [Poultry world turned sickly / dune of the dead]. The world beyond the South is sick and full of corpses unable to be properly mourned. It must come down off its pedestal ("Bologna città sciocca / scendetevi dai piedistalli"[212] [Bologna silly city / come down off your pedestals]) and recognize itself in crisis. Instead, "Si balla a Matera"[213] [In Matera we dance/one dances]. The speaker desires life in the South: "Voglio vivere a Matera"[214] [I want to live in Matera]. Rocco is the embodiment of a kind of vitality, even in death: the speaker cannot even imagine him lifeless ("Mi sforzo, sull'orlo della strada / a pensarti senza vita / Non è possibile, chi l'ha inventata questa bugia"[215] [On the edge of the road, I try / to think of you lifeless / It is not possible, who invented this lie]). Even as a shade, in death, Rocco continues to "music around" the speaker ("tu che mi musicavi attorno"[216] [you who were musicking around me]): "come un'ombra appena / il tuo volto affilato / un'arpa la tua voce / e le mani / suonano tamburelli"[217] [like barely a shade / your sharp face / your voice a harp / and your hands / play tambourines]. On a biographical level, Rocco's poetry also called music to Rosselli's mind, as she wrote in a letter to John from almost two years later: "Received Rocco's poems from Musacchio, together with Petrarca. Some of them are lovely, and had me humming

[211] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 518.
[212] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 523.

[213] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 523.

[214] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 520.

[215] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 518.

[216] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 519.

[217] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 519.

popular italian [sic] music all the day."[218] (Scotellaro often included citations from Lucanian folksong as epigraphs to his collections or his poems, and toward the end of his life he began transcribing the words to these folksongs.)

The speaker positions herself, at different points in the poem, as Rocco's mother and sexual partner.[219] In *Cantilena*, the speaker first positions herself as Rocco's mother, in brief verses laden with assonance and rhymes in quick succession:

> Dopo che la luna fu immediatamente calata
> ti presi fra le braccia, morto
>
> Un Cristo piccolino
> a cui m'inchino
> non crocefisso ma dolcemente abbandonato
> disincantato[220]
>
> [After the moon immediately set / I took you in my arms, dead // A little Christ / to whom I bow / not crucified but sweetly abandoned / disenchanted]

These poems obviously set up the image of the *pietà*: the speaker is positioned as the Virgin Mary, holding "[u]n Cristo piccolino" [a little Christ]. The lament of the Virgin Mary would later become a major element of De Martino's book on the lament: he asserted that Mary became a sort of transitional figure, one that in certain popular representations took on some aspects of the pagan ritual lament solely in order to resolve that kind of lament into a more stoic, collected, Christian—and therefore hegemonic—model of mourning.[221] The speaker's opening reference to

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[218] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 1 October 1955.

[219] This is a marked contrast to how Rosselli presents their relationship autobiographically, in her interviews, where she repeatedly emphasizes their status as friends, with a sibling relationship. The question of whether Rosselli and Scotellaro had a sexual relationship is an unanswered one.

[220] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 517.

[221] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 305: "Anzi proprio per assolvere la sua funzione pedagogica di *Mater Dolorosa* e di modello del nuovo *ethos* cristiano di fronte alla morte, la figura di Maria si adattò persino ad accogliere gli aspetti più arcaici del cordoglio antico, come il cadere inanimata ed il percuotersi il petto e il graffiarsi le guance ed il lamentarsi, secondo che narrano gli *Acta Pilati*: ma la sua figura di madre in lutto resta

the Virgin Mary moves in the opposite direction: from an image of mourning legible to readers unfamiliar with the Lucanian lament, as the text unfolds the speaker's role as mother becomes established through formulae specific to Lucanian mothers' laments.

One such trope emerges when the speaker compares the dead man to a walking stick: "Avanti io seppi che t'eri spezzato / come un bastone d'oro / la costante prudenza / m'aveva fatta cieca / quasi ignara"[222] [Before I knew that you had split / like a golden walking stick / constant prudence / had made me blind / almost unsuspecting]. This passage resonates with the lament of Rocco's mother, Francesca Armento, given at Rocco's deathbed—the lament that inspired Levi's painting and De Martino's opening analysis of the lament in the 1955 "Considerazioni storiche sul lamento funebre lucano." After Rocco's funeral, Francesca Armento put her lament into writing, and in it she described Rocco as her walking stick, her "bastone." As De Martino would later explain, the comparison of the dead man to the "bastone" was one that was specifically employed by mothers lamenting their dead sons. The image of the "bastone" described the mother's dependence on her dead son, just as a wife would describe her dead husband as a fallen master beam of the house ("trave maestro della casa").[223] Additionally, the trope of the dead person being immersed in a too-deep sleep was one that the mother traditionally employed for her lament: as De Martino notes in describing a mother's lament in the village of Càlvera, the formula entailed lamenting the dead son with "il tema del sonno troppo lungo in cui il morto è

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sostanzialmente legata ad un'altra immagine pedagogicamente egemonica, al suo *stare* raccolto, immobile e muto del Vangelo giovanneo, o al contemplare velato di lacrime della sequenza dello *Stabat*."

[222] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 519.

[223] The gender switch of "trave" from feminine to masculine could be to correspond the gender of the "trave" with the gender of the husband, or it could be merely a regional shift.

immerso, e da cui era invitato a svegliarsi"[224] [the theme of a too-long slumber in which the dead man is immersed, and from which he is invited to awaken]. The gestures that accompanied this kind of lament were meant to attempt to awaken the dead son: "la madre andava battendo a tempo le palme e danzava intorno al letto, interrompendosi di tanto in tanto per somministrare, ora sui piedi ora sulle guance del cadavere, dei rapidi buffetti come per risvegliare il figlio dal suo sonno maligno"[225] [the mother clapped her hands rhythmically and danced around the bed, stopping every so often to administer rapid slaps on the corpse's feet and cheeks, as if to awaken her son from his malignant slumber]. In De Martino's quotation of Francesca Armento's lament for Rocco, she asks: "Figlio mio, che sogno lungo ti fai, perché non mi rispondi, perché mi hai abbandonata?"[226] [My son, what a long dream you're having, why aren't you answering me, why have you abandoned me?] In *Cantilena*, poems six and ten in the 1980 subdivisions describe the dead Rocco as asleep, and imagine first that he is thinking about rising from his slumber, and then that he does so.

The implied sexualization of the speaker's relationship with Rocco is intercalated between the formulae of the mother's lament. In the fourth poem, closely following the establishing image of the *pietà* in the first and second poems, the speaker imagines a clashing scene of war and angelic presences, followed by the first instance of linguistic play, fusion, or slippage in this text: "Sventolo la bandiera e grido / Quanti puttini / sui gironi / e tu puttanone"[227] [I wave the flag and shout / So many *puttini* (little angels) / on the *gironi* (circles of Hell, in the

[224] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 90.

[225] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 90.

[226] De Martino, "Considerazioni storiche," 2.

[227] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 518.

Dantean formulation) / and you *puttanone* (huge whore, masculine)]. The religious imagery of "puttini" and "gironi" fuse into "puttanone," in an implied sexualization of Rocco. A similar sexualization of the relationship with Rocco continues in the thirteenth poem, in a mystical key: "Sposo nel cielo / ho tutto circondato / ma sei tu che comandi / e sono tua sposa d'infanzia / sposa trasparente"[228] [Bridegroom in the sky / I have surrounded you completely / but you are in command / and I am your childhood bride / transparent bride]. The speaker, as bride, "sposa," surrounds Rocco—encircles him, contains him—while also submitting to him ("sei tu che comandi," you are in command). The mystical sexual encounter is apparently contrasted by an ambiguous description of the speaker as "donna a cavallo di galli e di maiali"[229] [woman straddling/mounting chickens and pigs]. The speaker shifts from a transparent bride at the center of the sequence to a woman straddling or mounting farm animals toward the end. The line could also be taken to mean, more metaphorically, that the woman is astride or in between the human and non-human sphere. The risk of falling into a formless, non-human existence, an existence that does not adhere to cultural forms, is constantly lurking in the lament of *Cantilena*, just as in the traditional Lucanian lament.

The potential proximity of Lucanian subjects to animals or animality is thematized in Scotellaro's poetry, as well, especially in the poems of the posthumously published collection *È fatto giorno* (1940–1949): the laments of dogs are placed alongside the pained chants ("nenie afflitte") of men;[230] a pregnant woman rests alongside a bitch ("cagna") in the street;[231] both the

[228] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 520.

[229] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 524.

[230] Rocco Scotellaro, "Le nenie," in *È fatto giorno* (1954), in *Tutte le poesie, 1940–1953*, ed. Maurizio Cucchi (Milan: Mondadori, 2004), 12.

[231] Scotellaro, "Mia sorella sposata," 35–36.

speaker's mother and a donkey sleep under the stairs;[232] men alternately see themselves as sheep, wolves, and mice.[233] This kind of closeness to animality was pointed out by De Martino, as well, in a 1950 article about the Ràbata neighborhood of Tricarico, Scotellaro's hometown. Scotellaro was De Martino's host and helped him navigate the various communities present in the town. De Martino noted that, in the Ràbata, "la forzata coabitazione di uomini e bestie suggerisce l'immagine di una specie umana ancora in lotta per distinguersi dalle specie animali"[234] [the forced cohabitation of men and beasts suggests the image of a human species still fighting to distinguish itself from animal species]. Instead, De Martino argues that the inhabitants of the Ràbata have "umanità" and "'civiltà'"[235] [humanity and "civilization" or culture (the quotation marks are in the original)]. He says that their humanity and their cultural forms have developed due to the fact that they must "continuamente difendersi per salvare la propria umanità"[236] [continually defend themselves to save their own humanity]. This is an early formulation of De Martino's conceptualization of the interplay between biology or vitality (as he terms it) and cultural techniques that shape it into humanity. This kind of interplay seems to be dramatized both in Scotellaro's poetry and in *Cantilena*, and I see it play out in *Cantilena* through rhetoric around containment and spillage, between the lament as cultural technique and anguish as an almost biological force that has the potential to overwhelm the mourner's humanity.

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[232] Scotellaro, "La luna piena," 40.

[233] The sheep come up in Scotellaro, "Noi che facciamo?," 48–49; the wolves in "I santi contadini di Matera," 51; the mice in "Topi e condannati," 56.

[234] Ernesto De Martino, "Note lucane" (1950), in *Furore Simbolo Valore*, ed. Marcello Massenzio (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2002), 119. Originally, this article had been printed in *Società*.

[235] De Martino, "Note lucane," 121.

[236] De Martino, "Note lucane," 122.

Containment and spillage

Words about what it means to contain versus what it means to break out are everywhere in *Cantilena*. Broadly speaking, and in terms of the text's narrative, the sequence describes Rocco breaking out of parameters of containment. His body is broken open: "Tu con la testa spaccata"[237] [You with your head broken open]; "Avanti io seppi t'eri spezzato"[238] [Before I knew you had split open]. He leaves behind various earthly containers—not only his body, but also his city: when the dead Rocco awakens, "pass[a] via sereno / fuori dalle mura della [s]ua cittadella"[239] [he passes away serenely / outside of the walls of his citadel]; with his breaking out, Matera is "rotta spaziata gigantesca"[240] [broken spaced out gigantic]. On the one hand, his death opens horizons for the speaker: "Si aprono gli orizzonti / ch'io veda"[241] [Horizons open / so I can see].

There are moments of focus on the ways that Rocco is still contained, how he can be contained, how the speaker is contained, and how Rocco contains the speaker. Rocco leaves the walls, "fuori dalle mura della [s]ua cittadella," but those same walls contain the speaker and prevent their meeting: "È dovuto ad una varietà di ragioni / che tu ed io non ci si possa incontrare / fra altro le muraglie / i cieli gli spiriti"[242] [It is due to a variety of reasons / that you and I cannot

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[237] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 518.

[238] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 519.

[239] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 519.

[240] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 520.

[241] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 522.

[242] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 523. I see an unconfirmed potential citation of Federico García Lorca's poem "Encuentro": "Ni tú ni yo estamos / en disposición / de encontrarnos." Rosselli was a great admirer of Lorca's, and she owned a

meet / among which the city walls / the skies the spirits]. The line break between the city walls, "le muraglie," and the skies, "i cieli," showcase the split between the speaker, still within the walls, and Rocco, in the sky with the other spirits. This separation between the speaker and Rocco by the walls emulates the kind of separation of living and dead described by Scotellaro in his poetry, where he speaks of going to visit his dead "oltre la murata"[243] [beyond the wall]: city walls contain the living and keep out the dead.

The speaker further demonstrates concern as to how Rocco's corpse is contained: "terra straniera, l'avete avvolto male"[244] [foreign land, you have wrapped him badly], before describing how she instead is surrounding and containing him in the sky. Before mentioning how Rocco, in death, opens horizons, the speaker casts her mind to where he will be buried: "Ah buca della morte / ah fossa / che lo attendi"[245] [Ah hole of death / ah ditch / who await him]. The question also arises as to whether Rocco himself can be a container: when he breaks out and leaves his body and his city, the speaker gives him the order "Comprendimi."[246] This order is ambiguous, with the double meaning "understand/hear me" and "contain me." In this text, every gesture of spilling out is connected to a gesture of containment, and vice versa.

The interplay between containment and spillage manifests formally as well. As described above, most of the poems in *Cantilena* are short, only a stanza long, with two to eight generally metrically short free verses; in the 1964 version, the text is not broken up into individual poems,

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1949 volume of his poems, translated by Oreste Macrí: *Canti gitani e prime poesie: dal Romancero gitano e dal poema del cante jondo, Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, da Poemas e Canciones* (Parma: Guanda, 1949).

[243] Scotellaro, "Per il camposanto," 33.

[244] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 520.

[245] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 522.

[246] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 519.

but rather stanzas. Two of these even contain only one image, a very unusual feature for Rosselli's poetry ("La luna / balla / e sospira / per i campi"[247] [The moon / dances / and sighs / through the fields]; "Erba lunga / spianata / per adombrare / terreno marcio"[248] [Long grass / clearing / to cast a shadow over / rotten earth]).[249] The overall brief, contained nature of the verses leads to a general formal monotony, reminiscent of the monotonous, poetically and musically formulaic Southern lament. Some of the poems contain longer lines that gesture toward a spillage beyond the short verses, something that is even more visually apparent in the 1964 layout in *Galleria*, which may also be due to the spacing of the typeface, an aspect of her publications to which Rosselli was very sensitive.

The 1980 version adds in the longest line of the poem, in a striking moment where metrical monotony is undeniably broken.[250] It occurs in a poem placed as the sixth in the sequence, the first time when there is a brief respite from mourning and anguish, only to turn immediately back to it all the more intensely:

> S'è chiarita
> l'angoscia è svanita
> Tu con la testa spaccata morto morto morto per terra tu con la testa spaccata
> Un lungo tempo
> mediti
> di sollevarti[251]

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[247] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 520.

[248] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 522.

[249] Carpita, in "Notizia su *Primi scritti*," connects this to a Poundian imagist phrase, 1400.

[250] Since I don't have access to information about the different layers of the text at the moment (I need to return to the archives in Pavia), I cannot say whether the parts in the 1980 version of *Cantilena* that do not appear in the 1964 version were cut from what Rosselli had written in 1953, or added in the 1980 version. The notes to the critical edition similarly do not contain any information on this aspect of the text's history.

[251] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 518.

> [It has cleared / anguish has disappeared / You with your head broken open dead dead dead on the ground you with your head broken open / A long time / you consider / rising]

The swift rhymes between the first two lines connect back to the assonance and especially the rhymes in the first three poems of the sequence, lulling the poem into a rhythm as the speaker describes the disappearance of anguish. Immediately afterwards, anguish forcefully erupts back into the poem with the extraordinarily long line "Tu con la testa spaccata morto morto morto per terra tu con la testa spaccata." The form mirrors the content: just as Rocco's head is broken open, the metrical scheme breaks open—the dam of the technique of the lament is overcome for a moment, to return to De Martino's analogy. Just as the dead Rocco has been broken open through death, his subjectivity dispersed, the mourner similarly risks being metaphorically broken open, undergoing a loss of subjectivity through the risk of being completely overcome by her loss.

In De Martino's paradigm of the lament, with which Rosselli was familiar and which was being developed in these very years, the entire role of the lament is to hold these moments of apparent excess and formlessness *within* a cultural form: they are part of the technique to contain anguish. If, as De Martino puts it in *Morte e pianto rituale*, "[l]'angoscia segnala l'attentato alle radici stesse della presenza, denunzia l'alienazione di sé a sé, il precipitare della vita culturale nella vitalità senza orizzonte formale"[252] [anguish marks an attack on the very roots of presence, denounces, to the self, the self's alienation, the descent of cultural life into vitality without a formal horizon], the lament is a technique that allows the subject to continue accessing cultural life in a moment of extreme anguish where the risk of losing oneself is great.

[252] De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale*, 31.

De Martino's stance could be compared to a Kristevan conception of the semiotic in language: he speaks of "impulses" or "vitality" breaking into the lament at unexpected moments, like drives breaking into language, through the semiotic. However, as Kristeva points out, for literature/the text to exist at all, the symbolic can never be relinquished entirely, and the semiotic ultimately amounts to a "second" return of instinctual functioning within the symbolic.[253] *Cantilena* invokes the technique of the lament to explore the cultural containment of powerful anguish, dangerous to the subject, as expressed in what became the sixteenth poem of the sequence as it was published in 1980:

> Poi si gonfierà
> il sacco delle lacrime
> ma non si spillerà
> lo metterò in un vasetto
> greco-latino
> me lo porterò a casa
> trionfante
> elefante di pena![254]
>
> [Then the sack of tears / will inflate [or will be inflated] / but will not spill/fasten [or will not be spilled/fastened] / I'll put it in a little / Greco-Latin vase / I'll bring it home with me / triumphant / elephant of pain!]

The poem contains the only obvious instance of linguistic mixing, word invention, or multilingualism in the sequence. Interference from various languages is something with which Rosselli would later experiment to greater and lesser degrees: to a greater degree in texts like *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue* (1954–6, analyzed in the following chapter) and to a lesser one in *Variazioni Belliche* (1959–1962, analyzed in the fourth chapter of this dissertation). Pasolini described these moments in Rosselli's poetry as "lapsus," a kind of Freudian slip, but

[253] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 55.

[254] Rosselli, *Cantilena*, 521.

Rosselli was generally insistent that most of these moments were intentional. In the case of *Cantilena*, this mixing occurs in the form of the enigmatic verb "spillerà," or, if it is reflexive, "si spillerà." "Spillare" as a verb in Italian already has multiple meanings: to fasten together or to create a hole in a cask (both actions can be accomplished by a pin, a *spillo*). In Italian, then, the verb "spillare" already contains, in its multiple meanings, both the concept of "holding together" and the concept of "spilling out." In fact, in its second meaning, "spillare" can sometimes be used in the way "to spill" is in English, but much less commonly than in English. In *Cantilena*, the semantic field surrounding the verb ("sacco delle lacrime," "vasetto") implies dynamics of spillage and containment, pointing to a contamination with English and making "spillare" an italianized version of "to spill." Compounding this ambiguity is the use of the "si" in "si spillerà" and, in the first line cited above, "si gonfierà": is "si" functioning as a reflexive pronoun (the sac(k) of tears/tear duct will expand itself but will not fasten itself/spill itself) or as impersonal passive constructions (*si passivante*: the sac(k) of tears/tear duct will be expanded but will not be fastened/spilled)?

In each case, the different meanings of "spillare/spillarsi" and the ambiguity of the syntactical construction point to the questions that the poem is most interested in exploring: namely, how grief is contained or let loose in the lament, and how closely this relates to the containment or dissolution of the subject in moments of crisis. These dynamics seem indebted to De Martino's budding formulations of the disenfranchised Southern subject's crisis of presence, and, similarly to De Martino's studies, *Cantilena* is asking about how subjects are made through the forces of cultural techniques, which contain and shape vitality and mere biological understandings of existence. Biology is circuitously invoked in the passage I have been analyzing, through the strange term "sacco delle lacrime," which is presumably either the subject

or the agent of "si gonfierà" and "si spillerà." "Sacco delle lacrime" is closely related to the term "sacco lacrimale," but the modification of that term to "sacco delle lacrime" moves beyond the purely and obviously anatomical or biological while still invoking that sphere.

In the poem, the "sacco delle lacrime" is then put into a "vasetto / greco-latino" (little / Greco-Latin vase), like a matryoshka. The reference to "greco latino" is reminiscent of the statement that Rosselli made to Marina Camboni about *Cantilena* in 1981 (which I also cited previously), that the poem displayed "una certa cultura classica greco-latina, populista"[255] [a certain Greco-Latin classical, populist culture]. The lament itself, the *Cantilena*, can be read metapoetically as the "vasetto greco-latino," the cultural container of a more biological "sacco delle lacrime." But whether or not it can actually contain the speaker's grief is left unanswered, as in the ambiguous, contradictory meanings of *spillare* or *spillarsi*. The question of an unexpected eruption of "vitality," in De Martino's terms, into the structure or cultural institution of the lament remains unresolved in the poem. In this sense, we can see how Rosselli, like De Martino, is investigating the interplay between vitality and cultural techniques when thinking about the Italian South. The two are "spillati" in this context: bound together and spilling over into one another.

In *Cantilena*, the speaker attempts to mitigate her grief by turning to a Lucanian cultural technique, the lament. The turn to the techniques of cultural or racial "others" in order to provide new aesthetic avenues for Western subjects is one that I examined in the first chapter of this dissertation, in my analysis of Rosselli's articulation of her instrument and her broader musical system system. *Cantilena* amounts to an attempt to turn to the technique of a cultural "other" (the

[255] Marina Camboni and Amelia Rosselli, "È molto difficile essere semplici" (1996), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 46.

"other" within Italy) as a solution for maintaining one's subjectivity in the face of a potentially subject-annihilating force like grief. The sequence constitutes the first instance where Rosselli takes the "crisis of presence" out of the specific cultural, social, and economic context in which De Martino originally conceived of it, applying it to her own aesthetic and intellectual interests. The interplay of biology/vitality and culture/technique in the crisis of presence is represented first in *Cantilena*, and allows Rosselli to examine the fragile construction of the subject, along with its ability to be shaped or destroyed by various "natural" and "cultural" forces.

In *Cantilena*, the technique of the lament is invoked textually, but the idea of the lament as an embodied technique was essential in De Martino's ethnographic work. I argue that Rosselli's use of the lament form highlights her interest in corporeality and embodied performance. In fact, the lament form was constantly depicted as an embodied technique via audiovisual means in the work of Ernesto De Martino and artists inspired by his work.

The lament as a technique of the body, through its audiovisual depictions

The embodied musical and gestural techniques of the lament that are implied in the text of *Cantilena* were increasingly captivating to Italian ethnographers in the postwar. De Martino, in going beyond the question of the "authenticity" of the lamenter's display of emotion—which, prior to his work, had long dominated anthropological studies of the lament—began to allow a view of the lament as more akin to a Maussian technique of the body, a demonstration of a social, collective set of practices rather than one that springs solely from an individual's psyche. Thus, the lamenting body took on the form of both a technical object and a technical means,

following Mauss' conclusions.[256] While Rosselli, in *Cantilena*, focuses on imitating the semantic formulae of the lament to meditate on how the subject, in a moment of crisis, oscillates between cohesion and dispersal, in the poems the body is only implicitly invoked. However, Rosselli also had extensive experience with considering the way Southern musical practices, including the lament, were embodied, through the recorded audiovisual material on the South with which she interacted.

De Martino's appreciation of gesture and movement in his research is well-documented, in particular when it comes to the lament. The embodied elements of the Southern Italian lament are what he believed connected them to a broader history, to other times and places: Romania,[257] both modern and ancient Greece, the South American indigenous group of the Yamana or Yahgan, ancient Egypt. He had an ambitious project for an "Atlante figurato del pianto" [Illustrated atlas of the lament], which he began in the final pages of *Morte e pianto rituale*: he wanted to collect photographs from present-day laments all over the world, and images from historic depictions of laments, to compare the gestures of mourners. A focus on embodied techniques is what allowed De Martino to fit the cultural practice of the lament into a context that involved the rest of the world.[258]

Not only is it probable that Rosselli actually witnessed laments as they were being performed (both for ethnographic purposes and in actual mourning, for the death of Scotellaro),

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[256] Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," in *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, ed. Nathan Schlanger (Oxford; New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 75: "we are dealing with *techniques of the body*. The body is man's first and most natural instrument. Or more accurately, not to speak of instruments, man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body."

[257] De Martino had a long-running professional relationship with the Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade, and with the Romanian ethnomusicologist Constantin Brăiloiu.

[258] Carpitella also makes this point in "De Martino e le nuove discipline," 70.

she also had experience with audiovisual recordings of the lament. On November 9, 1952, she wrote to John about experimenting with her new system of notation by examining "150 folk-songs from Lucania, recorded, but not transcribed."[259] She goes on to notice how her understanding of the importance of recording folk music, rather than transcribing it using Western notation, is shared by other Italians as well: "finally, to my surprise, I must say, other musicians seem to realize it is rovinoso [ruinous] for the understanding of popular music to transcribe it with normal notation on the basis of classical musical systems and scales."[260] In April 1953, she described her role as a consultant for De Martino's short-lived Centro etnologico italiano: "the Italian Ethnological Society [...] has asked me to set up a vast discoteca [discotheque, i.e. collection of recorded material] together with a musicologist, including all italian folkmusic [sic], which for its beauty and originality is something apart; and also a discoteca of folkmusic from all over the world."[261] In the early 1950s, when Rosselli was writing those letters, the "150 folk-songs" she was describing were most likely the 142 recordings that De Martino and Carpitella had carried out in 1952, four of which were explicitly labeled as funeral laments.[262]

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[259] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 9 November 1952.

[260] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 9 November 1952.

[261] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 27 April 1953.

[262] The collection is 018 in what are now the Archivi di etnomusicologia, housed at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (previously a part of the archives at the Centro Nazionale Studi di Musica Popolare (CNSMP: the National Center for Folk Music Studies), founded in 1948 by Giorgio Nataletti). The laments are numbered as follows: 032, Lamento funebre "Beni di la sora" sung by Grazia Prudente and Carmina Di Giulio, about 40 years old, from Pisticci (Matera) on October 10, 1952; 038, Lamento funebre "O Ciccille mie, o bell'" sung by Rosa Pallotta, from Ferrandina (Matera) on October 11, 1952; 042, Lamento funebre, recording of a crowd of women from Colobraro (Matera) following a coffin on October 13, 1952; 136, Lamento funebre, "Oi tatta meja tatta meja tatta meja" sung by Paolina Lotita, from the S. Boccanegra neighborhood of Tricarico (Matera) on October 28, 1952.

But the laments loomed large in the audiovisual material presented to the Italian public more broadly. In 1953, director Michele Gandin filmed a lament in Pisticci, in Lucania, a recording that is not extant. In 1954, De Martino wrote a radio broadcast on the lament that included the 1952 lament recordings, and one of them was used, paired to a recreated version of the lament, in Luigi Di Gianni's 1958 ethnographic documentary "Magia Lucana," since synchronous sound recording was not typical for documentaries at this time.[263] In April 1954, a radio broadcast that Ernesto De Martino had written for Rai, titled "I lamenti funebri e l'esperienza arcaica della morte" [Funeral laments and the archaic experience of death], aired. In it, he highlighted the four funeral laments he had recorded in 1952.[264] Audiovisual representations of the Lucanian lament therefore loomed large, and in 1959/1960, the director Cecilia Mangini decided to make an ethnographic documentary short about the lament in Puglia, the voiceover of which was written by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Mangini filmed professional lamenters (*prefiche*) in Martano (province of Lecce) performing a lament. Capturing their voices as well as their gestures was so important to Mangini that, after editing the footage, she returned

[263] As Diego Carpitella pointed out in "Pratica e teoria nel film etnografico italiano: prime osservazioni," in *La Ricerca folklorica*, No. 3 (April 1981), 8, this was because of Italy's general delay in recording sound in the field as well as the shoestring budget for ethnographic documentaries. For more information and contextualization of this delay, see Diego Carpitella, "Ethnomusicology in Italy," in *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 11, No. 1/2 (June–August 1974), 84–87, and Pietro Sassu, "Dall'etnofonia all'etnomusicologia: un secolo di studi sulla musica popolare italiana," in *Archivio di etnografia: rivista del dipartimento di scienze storiche, linguistiche e antropologiche*, Vol. 6, No. 1/2 (2011), 51–52; 55; 57. Often, the studios did not even provide a budget for shooting in the field, and the director had to pay for all site-specific filming out of pocket, and it was not until the 1970s that a sound technician would be included as a regular part of a documentary team (Carpitella, 8).

[264] The transcription of the radio broadcast is in Ernesto De Martino, "I lamenti funebri e l'esperienza arcaica della morte," in *Panorami e spedizioni. Le trasmissioni radiofoniche del 1953–54*, ed. Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani and Letizia Bindi (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002), 68–75. To hear a recording of the broadcast, see Rai Teche, "Panorami etnologici e folcloristici: I lamenti funebri e l'esperienza arcaica della morte," https://www.teche.rai.it/1954/04/panorami-etnologici-e-folcloristici-i-lamenti-funebri-e-lesperienza-arcaica-della-morte/.

to the town where she had filmed with a composer and a sound engineer and had the women dub themselves.[265]

Rosselli recorded music for at least two or three ethnographic documentary shorts about the Italian South: one she worked on in 1959, one in 1964, and another one prior to 1959—more specific information on this front is not present in the letters to her brother John. Once in the letters, she writes about planning to go on an expedition, with a film crew, to record music for their documentary in Sicily, though it is improbable that Rosselli actually went, due to her money and health issues.[266] None of Rosselli's soundtracks are extant, unfortunately; all we can say, from her participation in the ethnographic documentaries, is that she, like many of her contemporaries and artists in her social circle, was most likely involved and invested in audiovisual representations and documentations of Southern Italian techniques of the body, among which the lament loomed large.

Conclusions

Through this focus on Rosselli's engagement with ethnographic research on the Italian South, and, in particular, techniques of the body related to music, like the lament, that play an important role in shaping conceptions of the subjectivities of cultural others, I point to another facet of Rosselli's interest in understanding how bodies and culture interact. In Chapter 1, I

[265] 2005 interview of Cecilia Mangini by Gianluca Sciannameo, *Nelle Indie di quaggiù. Ernesto De Martino e il cinema etnografico* (Bari: Palomar, 2006), 152: "A montaggio terminato [di *Stendalì*], Egisto [Macchi] e io siamo scesi giù a Martano con il fonico, abbiamo affittato un cinema parrocchiale (a Maglie, se ricordo bene), radunato le donne del pianto, proiettato il documentario, suscitando una grandissima emozione. Dirette da Macchi, le donne di *Stendalì* hanno doppiato loro stesse, credo di poterlo dire, meglio delle professioniste."

[266] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 8 July 1954: "in September will probably be going down to Sicily with film-troup, doing their music and sound—recording for them, with my little machine and registratore [recorder]." Rosselli wrote this just before going to a psychological treatment center in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland.

focused on how Rosselli, in "La serie degli armonici" and her research at the Musée de l'Homme, focused on a shared human physiology and psychology, studying musical forms as the locus of this commonality. In this chapter, I have noted how I see Rosselli's early poetic text, *Cantilena*, connecting textual forms to embodied techniques of cultural others. I have argued that the text also takes seriously the idea propagated in Ernesto De Martino's ethnography, that the lament constitutes a way of constructing the self, shaping biology through cultural techniques.

The question of how to communicate an embodied experience through a textual medium is one that I see as a common thread throughout Rosselli's early poetry. In my view, Rosselli frequently combines discussions of bodies, media (textual, audiovisual), techniques and/or technologies with meditations on cultural and sometimes racial differences. In the texts I examine in Chapter 3, *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue* (both 1954–1956), I argue that Rosselli once again uses cultural differences as the catalyst for exploring how subjects, bodies, and technologies interact. In the case of the Italian South, Rosselli examined subjects, bodies, techniques, and media that she knew existed, that she had seen and/or experienced herself, and she focused on interactions between these elements that she had most likely witnessed in the context of fieldwork. Instead, when Rosselli speaks of China, she speaks of a place with which she was not personally familiar, and which was still quite foreign to much of Italy in 1954, when Rosselli began invoking it. Rosselli's engagement with Chinese technology and media is centered on Chinese writing—a tradition with long European roots. In *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue*, Rosselli builds on the ideas of Chinese writing to which she had been exposed to imagine a fantastical textual medium able to communicate one subject's embodied experience to another.

Chapter 3: Dreaming of a "'body' type of expression."

Le Chinois à Rome, Diario in tre lingue, fantasies of Chinese writing and the issue of recording corporeality in the textual medium

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine two texts that Rosselli wrote between 1954 and 1956:[267] *Le Chinois à Rome* [Chinese in Rome] and *Diario in tre lingue* [Diary in three languages]. Though these texts differ in their form (*Le Chinois à Rome* is shorter and more prose-based, whereas *Diario in tre lingue* is a set of primarily poem-like notes), they have many similarities: their dates of composition, their primary thematic focuses, their use of more obvious multilingualism than most other texts in Rosselli's oeuvre, and, most notably, their invocation of Chinese. As in each of the other chapters of the dissertation, I trace probable influences on Rosselli's thought regarding cultural and/or racial difference—in this case, what "Chineseness" signified, and how Rosselli's use of this signifier fit into the broader intellectual landscape (Italian and beyond) in which Rosselli participated. Rosselli was an eclectic and avid reader in three different languages (French, English, and Italian), and, although her multilingualism and her biographical connections to places outside of Italy made her a somewhat anomalous figure in the Italian intellectual community of the 1950s, she was not isolated; rather, she was a participant within many networks.

[267] Although Rosselli dated these texts as having been written in 1955–1956 in *Primi scritti* (1980), in other contexts she sometimes dated them 1954–1955. Therefore, I speak of 1954–1956 in this chapter.

Across this dissertation, I argue that in Rosselli's work, and in her networks, a connection was drawn between conceptions of cultural or racial alterity and understandings of techniques, technologies, and media. I maintain that Rosselli's exploration of subjects and bodies is determined by her understanding of how the self relates to the other, and the technologies she learned about and engaged with as a musician, composer, and amateur ethnomusicologist were essential in reimagining various forms of subjectivity and corporeality. In Chapter 1, I analyzed both how recording technologies gave new access to musical forms that, in Rosselli's mind, could be shaped into a musical system that was universally intelligible because of its purported roots in acoustics and physiological research. In Chapter 2, I focused on Rosselli's employment of the technique of the Lucanian lament, and, more broadly, techniques of the body in Southern Italy, to which Rosselli was exposed in the early 1950s, in part through audiovisual recordings. In this chapter, I focus on Rosselli's fantasy of a medium that could function as a precise communication of the self's subjective, sensory experience of a time and space to an other. Rosselli conceives of this as a form of writing capable of recording one's interiority and sensorial experiences of being in a space. The two texts examined in this chapter, *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue*, are not examples of this kind of writing; instead, they articulate the barrier between writing and a subject's material, corporeal experience, and they gesture toward the desire for a textual medium that could transcend this barrier. Rosselli calls on Chinese, a language of which she knew almost nothing, as the emblem of this imagined medium that could record physical, subjective experiences of a particular time and place.

Fantasies of new media alongside invocations of Chinese: issues of communicating the body

Le Chinois à Rome and *Diario in tre lingue* contrast in their form, but converge in the timing of their composition, their intense focus on time, space, and subjectivity, and their multilingualism. In terms of content, *Le Chinois à Rome* is an abstract description of a walk through Rome that becomes increasingly disorienting as it unfolds. The titular "Chinois" could be a Chinese man or could be the Chinese language itself; it is not specified and the role or identity of the Chinese language or man is left ambiguous. It is a short, mostly prose composition, and it is also written primarily in French, which is unusual for Rosselli, given that it is the language in which she wrote least consistently (I return to this point later in the chapter, when I discuss multilingualism in these texts). *Diario in tre lingue*, as its title states, is written in a mix of French, English, and Italian.[268] In terms of content and what is happening in the text, it is even more abstract than *Le Chinois à Rome*. It contains a large amount of code switching between languages, many multilingual word games and puns, and meditates, in a fragmented way, on the limitations of preceding twentieth-century literary traditions (Anglo American modernism and French surrealism, primarily, although French symbolism and Italian hermeticism also crop up occasionally). The speaker of the *Diario* articulates these limitations as the impossibility of accessing a shared, universal reality through complex linguistic experiments—all while she herself is carrying out similar experimental language.

In interviews, Rosselli related the *Diario* to the disorienting walk through Rome of *Le Chinois* by describing her composition of the *Diario*: she framed it as being composed of a

[268] Tatiana Bisanti has counted the switches in the *Diario*: 301 in all, most of which are between Italian and English. Bisanti includes a number of more tables analyzing Rosselli's code-switching in the *Diario*. Tatiana Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli. Un "distorto, inesperto, espertissimo linguaggio"* (Pisa: ETS, 2007), 91–93.

number of notebooks she had written in as she walked around her neighborhood in Rome, Trastevere. Rosselli's description of this process of writing and walking in a 1987 interview sets up what I see as an association between recorded media (tape, film) and writing:

> Amelia Rosselli: Eh, questo era sempre a Trastevere, cioè io camminavo per il quartiere lungo il fiume, prendendo appunti a mano su quadernetti a righe o… come si dice… a quadretti, naturalmente; e cercando di sentire lo spazio della camminata: il famoso problema di Olson, il campo se vuoi magnetico, in un certo senso. E ho messo su, non so, venti o trenta quadernetti; qualche volta li trascrivevo a macchina o li lasciavo in forma di quaderno. Poi, proprio ho sentito che stavo perdendo tempo perché… È chiamato *Diario in tre lingue* in *Primi Scritti*. Allora ho preso una *tranche de vie*, come si dice; ho preso otto quaderni, ne ho trattenuti, trascritti com'erano a macchina da scrivere, e buttati gli altri perché mi stavo arenando anche lì. E *Diario in tre lingue* è interessante per alcuni perché ancora junghiano, ancora poundiano, ancora montaliano, ma c'è questo problema del campo magnetico. E fu scritto, mi pare, tra i ventiquattro o i venticinque o ventisei anni. Ma ho dovuto buttar molti, se no proprio era un eccesso inutile. Ma era interessante questo uscir di casa e osservare quello che ti capitava e scrivere allo stesso tempo, non proprio ciecamente.
> Orazio Converso: Quasi una scrittura automatica.
> Amelia Rosselli: No, la tua partecipazione con l'ambiente, tutt'altro che automatica, diretta, mentre vivi, cerchi di trascrivere le tue impressioni dell'ambiente, cosa ci fai dentro, insomma.[269]

> [Amelia Rosselli: This was still in Trastevere, I mean I would walk around the neighborhood along the river, taking notes by hand on little lined notebooks or… how do you say it… graph paper, naturally; and trying to feel the space of the walk: Olson's famous problem, the magnetic field, if you will, in a certain sense. And I filled maybe twenty or thirty little notebooks; sometimes I transcribed them on the typewriter or I left them in notebook form. Then, I really felt like I was wasting time because… It's called *Diario in tre lingue* in *Primi Scritti*. So I took a slice of life, as they say; I took eight notebooks and kept them and transcribed them as they were on the typewriter, and I threw the others out because I was running aground with them. And *Diario in tre lingue* interests some people because it's still Jungian, still Poundian, still Montalian, but there's this problem of the magnetic field. And I think I wrote it between when I was twenty-four and twenty-five or twenty-six years old. But I had to throw out many of them, otherwise it would have been uselessly excessive. But it was interesting to leave the house and observe what was happening to you and write at the same time, not exactly blindly.
> Orazio Converso: Almost like automatic writing.

[269] Guido Galeno, Orazio Converso, and Amelia Rosselli, "Non è la mia ambizione essere eccentrica" (1987), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 205.

> Amelia Rosselli: No, you're participating in the environment in a direct way, not an automatic one: as you're living, you try to transcribe your impressions of the environment, what you're doing in it, more or less.]

Rosselli is careful not to define what she was doing as "automatic writing," but more as a transcription—not of her perceptions of the environment, but her *participation in* the environment. In fact, the writer of the *Diario* distances herself from surrealism throughout the text. On the first page, she associates surrealism with a "scarafaggio," a cockroach representing "le petit, l'infiniment petit caché sous les plusieurs couche du conscient"[270] [the small, the infinitely small hidden under the many layers of the conscious]. In the final section, she rejects surrealism, saying "lo scarafaggio non è per me! punte / basta"[271] [the cockroach is not for me! period].

In the 1987 interview cited above, Rosselli connects herself to American experimentalism post-Pound via a reference to Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" (1950). Rosselli owned a copy of *The Maximus Poems* (1960) in English and its translation in Italian from 1972, as well as a copy of Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry: 1945–1960* (1960), which included Olson's essay.[272] Rosselli's engagement with Olson in the 1960s and beyond has been well-documented, primarily by Jennifer Scappettone, but whether Rosselli had read "Projective Verse" by the time she wrote *Le Chinois à Rome* and the *Diario in tre lingue* is unclear.[273] Here I am interested in

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[270] Amelia Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, in *Amelia Rosselli. L'opera poetica*, ed. Stefano Giovannuzzi, Francesco Carbognin, Chiara Carpita, Silvia De March, Gabriella Palli Baroni, Emmanuela Tandello (Milan: Mondadori, 2012), 599–600.

[271] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 646.

[272] She may have also read Aldo Tagliaferri's Italian translation of "Projective Verse," published in *il verri* in 1960.

[273] Jennifer Scappettone, "'Cantonidisintegratidella / miavita': Closure and Implosion of the Canto(n) in Amelia Rosselli, and the Dream (or Nightmare) of a Transnational Language," in *Moderna. Semestrale di teoria e critica della letteratura*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2013), 131–154: Scappettone has analyzed how Rosselli, in the 1960s and 1970s, related her idea of the cube-form (discussed later in this chapter) to Olson's projective verse, focusing on the peculiar way Rosselli modifies Olson's open field into a system that is meant to constrain the ego.

how Rosselli misremembers Olson's terminology: in describing the relationship between the *Diario*'s aesthetic project and Olson's "Projective Verse," she describes her attempts to "feel the space of the walk" as "Olson's famous problem, the magnetic field." Olson does speak extensively about the concept of a "field" in "Projective Verse." In it, he imagines a kind of poetry that moved beyond free verse and historic poetic forms and meters, to move with the rhythm of the breath, creating what he called open verse through a process that he called composition by field.[274] However, he never mentions a *magnetic* field: this is Rosselli's interpolation. He also does not describe the goal of projective verse as a communication of the *feeling* of moving through space; instead, he describes attempts to communicate the energy of objects.

Rosselli's designation of Olson's field as "magnetic" is revelatory of how, at the time that she was writing the *Diario* and *Le Chinois*, she navigated the relationship between her poetic practice and her recording practice, which was largely related to her exposure to electronic music composition and to ethnographic fieldwork. At this point in time, given Rosselli's associations with avant-garde music composition and new ethnomusicological movements, references to a "magnetic field" call to mind magnetic tape, or "nastro magnetico." Olson does not look to the tape recorder when discussing his ideal of poetry that moves with the rhythm of the breath; rather, he looks to the typewriter. As David Nowell Smith observes, in Olson the typewriter "comes to resemble an auditory technology as much as a technology of script."[275] Smith

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[274] Charles Olson, "Projective Verse," in *Collected Prose,* ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1997), 239–249.

[275] David Nowell Smith, "Verse Scored Free: Scansion, Recording, Notation," in *Revue française d'études américaines*, Vol. 153, No. 4 (January 2017), 35.

connects Olson to Gerard Manley Hopkins' attempts to notate performance of his sprung rhythm (notably, Hopkins was a favorite of Rosselli's). Smith notes that the poetics of both Olson and Hopkins reveal a "non-coincidence" between different bodies: the body/vocality of the potential performer, and "the body of the mark that notates."[276] At the same time, they reveal "the desire for correspondence, or homology, between these two kinds of body, voice and visual mark."[277] Nowell Smith connects this same issue of material correspondence between notator, notated, and performer to questions that the musical score also raises.

Rosselli was acutely aware of how the musical score fails to bring together signs, sound, notating body and performing body, as I have discussed in chapter one. Her unfinished sketches of a notational system show her attempts to capture not only physical elements of sound (frequency, duration, amplitude, intensity), but also psychological elements contingent on perception (timbre, time).[278] In the *Diario*, these are included as potential parameters for a kind of poetry, as well, as I explain more thoroughly later in this chapter. Rosselli's emphasis on magnetism as a way to capture the writer's experience of a particular time and space shifts the technological focus from Olson's typewriter to her tape recorder, as she discusses what it entails to "transcribe your impressions of the environment."

Rosselli may have also had film technologies in mind when imagining how to capture the experience of a certain time and place. Both Florinda Fusco and Chiara Carpita have noted filmic analogies in Rosselli's attempts to record the reality around her, namely in her poetic manifesto

[276] Nowell Smith, "Verse Scored Free," 35–6.

[277] Nowell Smith, "Verse Scored Free," 35–6.

[278] Another connection between Rosselli's notational system for music and what she was trying to do with the *Diario in tre lingue* is the use of graph paper: in both, she describes using a notebook "a quadretti."

"Spazi metrici," which I analyze in Chapter 4.[279] In 1992, in a piece where Rosselli recalled her experiences in Rome in the 1950s, she stated that, when she had first moved to her neighborhood, Trastevere, the location of the walks that she had notated in the notebooks that would become *Diario in tre lingue*, she had rented a video camera, a "cinepresa":

> Il Trastevere misero del '54 aveva un'aria di paese [...] Il Trastevere offriva molto con le sue case per me allora bellissime: affittai una cinepresa, fissando il limite aereopoetico [sic] del visuale. Mi interessavano i problemi di spazio legati ai problemi di scrittura: l'inquadratura non fotografica ma mentale, spaziale, dinamica; una visione architettonico-geometrica. Poi ho abbandonato la cinepresa e anche la fotografia e ho continuato con la poesia, e i problemi di architettura dinamica sono divenuti i problemi di *Spazi metrici* [...] Trattavo un problema di spazio-energia, non un concentrarsi, ma un inglobare le cose attorno, ispirandomi a una specie di postcubismo.[280]
>
> [In 1954, the poor neighborhood of Trastevere felt like a small town [...] Trastevere offered a lot with its houses, which, at the time, were very beautiful to me: I rented a video camera, fixing the aeropoetic limit of the visual. I was interested in problems of space tied to problems of writing: not photographic framing but mental, spatial, dynamic framing; an architectural-geometric vision. Then I abandoned the video camera and photography too and I continued with poetry, and the problems of dynamic architecture became the problems of *Metrical Spaces* [...] I was dealing with a problem of space-energy, not a concentration of, but an enveloping of the things around me, inspired by a sort of post-cubism.]

To my knowledge, this is the only time that Rosselli refers to actually using a video recorder. The terminology in this anecdote echoes that of the 1979 interview: space and energy envelope the things around her and communicate her experience of this particular time and space.[281]

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[279] Chiara Carpita, "*Spazi metrici* tra post-webernismo, etnomusicologia, Gestalttheorie e astrattismo: su alcune fonti extra-letterarie del 'nuovo geometrismo' di Amelia Rosselli," in *Moderna. Semestrale di teoria e critica della letteratura*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2013), 78; Florinda Fusco, *Amelia Rosselli* (Palermo: Palumbo, 2007), 65.

[280] Milo De Angelis, Isabella Vicentini, and Amelia Rosselli, "Cosa era Roma per me" (1992), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 148–9.

[281] Giorgia Console has provided an analysis of these moments from interviews of Rosselli in a recent contribution, and her analysis converges with mine in many ways. To sum up her observations, she also sees a close tie to bodies, audiovisuality, and poetry in Rosselli: "la viscerale matrice esperienziale della poetica rosselliana, che coinvolge a pieno il corpo il movimento nello spazio e nel tempo e, in particolare, il senso della vista, l'osservazione. [...] La sua poetica riverbera così le immagini di un linguaggio audiovisivo 'mentale' e irriducibilmente *embodied*. Un cinema che 'fa corpo' con la poesia [...]." Giorgia Console, "'Fissando il limite aeropoetico del visuale': il linguaggio

Rosselli states that she was using a "cinepresa," most likely a film camera without a synced-up audio recorder. The question of film's relationship to sound was being actively negotiated in the 1950s, especially with regards to the choice between stereo magnetic sound and mono optical sound for film soundtracks. As John Belton has explained, "[m]agnetic sound provided an unprecedented fidelity, a dramatically expanded frequency range, a significantly improved signal-to-noise ratio, and a larger dynamic volume range."[282] Perhaps most significantly, magnetic sound entailed a three-dimensional, stereo experience of sound that mono optical tracks did not provide. Coupled with new widescreen formats, audiences felt more of a sense of physical immersion in a film than they had ever before. When Rosselli talks about her attempts to transcribe her experience of a given time and place, it is as if she were trying to transfer a new cinematic experience into the written word—or perhaps trying to provide a three-dimensional mediatic experience to the reader. This experience would provide a communicable bodily record of how the writer had participated in the environment in a given time and place.

Rosselli describes her desire to engage the body in writing in a letter to her brother John in 1952, once again writing against surrealism:

> Am now writing an essay in English, very carefully, after having read a lot of Breton, and others of the surrealist school — As about what comes next after language has been thoroughly hatched up! — about our incapacity of translating visions, dreams, sensations, emotional behaviour, sensations [sic] into language in any manner other than interpretative, indirect. Looking around for 'body' types of expression! We'll see — may be a flop —[283]

audiovisivo della poetica di Amelia Rosselli," in *Arabeschi. Rivista internazionale di studi su letteratura e visualità*, Vol. 18 (2021), http://www.arabeschi.it/giorgiaconsolefissandoil-limite-aeropoetico-del-visuale-il-linguaggio-audiovisivo-dellapoetica-di-amelia-rosselli/.

[282] John Belton, "1950s Magnetic Sound: The Frozen Revolution," in *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, ed. Rick Altman (New York: Routledge, 1992), 155. It is important to note, as Belton does, that by the 1960s stereo magnetic sound declined.

[283] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 16 January 1952.

If Rosselli did write this essay, it is not extant. Parts of the *Diario* and *Le Chinois* engage with visions and dreams, but they do not do so by enacting any "'body' types of expression." Instead, in my reading of these texts, they mainly provide a commentary on the distance Rosselli felt between the languages being used and bodily experience. They gesture toward the frustration and difficulty of recording and communicating subjective sensory experiences in a way that is not "interpretative" or "indirect." As Rosselli put it in a 1987 interview: "*Le Chinois à Rome* è, però, anche se montaliano e joyciano nel suo virtuosismo, punto di rifiuto dell'esercizio, ed anche estetica"[284] [Even though *Le Chinois à Rome* is Montale-like and Joycean in its virtuosity, it is a rejection of this exercise, and of this aesthetic]. In the following section of the chapter, I turn to the texts themselves to examine moments where they highlight the ways in which the modernist "exercise," in Rosselli's words, falls short of her ideals: *Le Chinois à Rome* and the *Diario in tre lingue* enact the disconnect between language and body, between a speaker and a listener, and between the fantasy of Chinese and the realities of the three languages that make up the texts.

Le Chinois à Rome: multilingualism and the problem of representing the physical world in a textual medium

Multilingualism takes on a very prominent role in these texts, and the prominence of French within that multilingualism is unusual for Rosselli. Rosselli was born in Paris, and spoke French during her young life. She lived in France until she was seven (1937), when her father and uncle were assassinated and she fled to the United States with her mother, brothers, grandmother, aunt, and cousins. It is unclear how much French she regularly spoke or wrote as

[284] Giacinto Spagnoletti and Amelia Rosselli, "Fatti estremi" (1987), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 88.

an adult, though she read in French extensively, as is attested to by what remains of her library. In her personal communications with her family from late adolescence onward, she wrote primarily in English and Italian. The exception to this lack of linguistic and literary production in French is the period from 1954 to 1956, during and immediately following Rosselli's stay in the Swiss sanatorium of Bellevue, in Kreuzlingen. The only other texts, besides most of *Le Chinois à Rome* and portions of *Diario in tre lingue*, that Rosselli wrote in French were also from this period: the brief, ten-page prose text *Sanatorio 1954* (1954) and the nine short poems of *Adolescence* (1954–1961), which Rosselli identified as "exercises poétiques."

In a letter to John in 1954, Rosselli connected her resurgence of French to her attempts to create a universal system of musical tuning: "Have been extremely busy lately working on problems of 'prosodia' [prosody] and language, fitting these to naturalistic scheme very similar to that excogitated for music, Reading madly, writing madly—: my French has returned in a burst, and with it the capacity for timing—: Italian too, with its greek latin rhythmic background. Sense of form coming out too, very severe — that was not the case generally before."[285] The return of her French is associated with multilingualism: with her Italian, and its "Greek Latin" background.[286] The idea that language could be fit into a "naturalistic scheme very similar to that excogitated for music" refers to Rosselli's dream, laid out in in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, of a musical instrument tuned according to the overtone series (based on a given fundamental, going up to the 64th partial) and a system of notation that captured not only physical but also psychological parameters of sound. In other words, Rosselli's "naturalistic scheme" for music

[285] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 19 June 1954.

[286] Rosselli probably only had rudimentary knowledge of Latin and perhaps Greek, if any. There are some Latin passages in *Diario in tre lingue*, but no Greek.

entailed a form of music-making that she maintained could be universal, according to physical parameters (acoustics) and physiological parameters (understandings of human perception of sound). In creating a similar "naturalistic scheme" for language and prosody, Rosselli immediately calls on multilingualism: as she writes to John in English, she brings up French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. Rosselli's mention of her ideal musical system means that Chinese lurks in the background here, as well. One of her earliest influences in the invention of her musical system was the musicologist Alain Daniélou, with whom she studied in Paris in the early 1950s. In Daniélou's 1943 *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*, republished in almost identical form in 1954 as *Traité de musicologie comparée*, he saw Chinese musical systems as particularly connected to the material world and the physical order of the universe, akin to Rosselli's designation of the desirable "naturalistic scheme" of music.[287]

Le Chinois à Rome is eight pages long, and consists of three sections of roughly equal length: *La Pensée (esthétique Jeune)* [Thought (Young aesthetic)], *Le Chinois à Rome* [Chinese in Rome], and *Promenade* [Walk]. The unidentified speaker walks through a cityscape: the first section combines observations of trees, lights, people at cafés, motorcycles, taxis, and flower shops with meditations on the relationship between reality, often conceived as the material world, and creative production. The first paragraph presents some surreal images: a knife bitten by a dog that carves images, perhaps into the trees that the speaker goes on to describe. An invocation of the trees' roots leads to further associations of roots—houses' roots, the roots of hair, and men's roots: "Les hommes portent de longues racines forme chaîne traînant à leur

[287] Alain Daniélou, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales* (London: The India Society, 1943), 55–94. Daniélou was primarily a scholar of Indian musics, and he believed there was a connection between Chinese and Indian musics, believing both to have a special connection to the material world and physical order of the universe.

pieds"[288] [Men carry long chain-shaped roots trailing from their feet]. The text itself is rooted in French and in prose in its first two sections; the decision to write primarily in French for these sequences of surreal images may have arisen from an association of French with surrealism.[289] In the final multilingual section, the text becomes unrooted from linguistic and prose constraints, filling up with passages that appear to be verse. But even before the final section, the narrator explores the concept of rootedness and unrootedness, or constraint and freedom, in creative expression starting from the end of the first paragraph:

> La lumière s'épanouit spreads itself si spande (s'évanouit). Le procès créatif est une fusion de plusieurs éléments mal distingués mal séparables: ne laisse pas ta fantaisie s'égarer! Elle tient les brides de ton cheval chinois.
> Et voilà que la réalité s'est évadée, sur son cheval touffu (chinois) rosé par la peur. Les hommes sont muets (se font des signes).[290]
>
> [The light s'épanouit spreads itself si spande (it vanishes). The creative process is a fusion of multiple elements, difficult to distinguish, difficult to separate: do not let your imagination digress! She holds the reins of your Chinese horse.
> And here reality is evaded, on your dense (Chinese) horse rosy from fear. The men are mutes (they make signs to each other).]

The multilingualism of "s'épanouit spreads itself si spande" quickly vanishes, though it is invoked in the idea of the creative process, made up of many elements that cannot be distinguished. At the same time, this creative process must be reined in, and here the first image associated with China appears in the text: the interplay between restraint and freedom, imagination and reality is represented by the reined-in Chinese horse. The image of the Chinese

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[288] Amelia Rosselli, *Le Chinois à Rome*, in *Amelia Rosselli. L'opera poetica*, ed. Stefano Giovannuzzi, Francesco Carbognin, Chiara Carpita, Silvia De March, Gabriella Palli Baroni, Emmanuela Tandello (Milan: Mondadori, 2012), 559.

[289] This connection is reiterated over and over in *Diario in tre lingue*: "surrealismo (french)" (605); "dal francese si passa al surrealismo" (605); "why is French (not Engl Germ Ital.) tied to surrealisme" (628).

[290] Rosselli, *Le Chinois à Rome*, 559.

horse additionally recalls the descriptions of the first two trigrams of the *Yijing*, as they appear in the edition Rosselli had and in Daniélou's *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*: Heaven, representing the Creative, and Earth, representing the Receptive, described as horse and mare respectively.[291] Creation and receiving, according to the *Yijing*, need to be in balance; similarly, in *Le Chinois à Rome*, it seems that the creation of the text must be balanced with the reception of the sensory experiences the world itself is providing.

The rest of the first part, the articulation of the "Young aesthetic," contains dense descriptions of the sky and of trees, seemingly electrified and neon. These descriptions are interspersed with the appearances of allegorical female figures like "la femme du peuple" [the woman of the people], "Madame La Patience" [Madame Patience], and "l'Esilaration" [Exhilaration; the one linguistic fusion with Italian in this part], who awaits at the door of a taxi. As Chiara Carpita has noted in one of the only analyses of this text, this initial level of narration is paired with addresses to the reader that comment on the incommunicability of reality in artistic expression. The narrator says, "Il en résulte quelle prose? [...] Constatez la lourdeur de ma strophe, mais nous voulons (cher lecteur), miroiter la réalité"[292] [What prose results from this? Note the heaviness of my strophe, but we want (dear reader), to make reality shine]. Carpita sees

[291] Daniélou quotes Confucius through Matgioi, *La voie métaphysique* (Paris: Les Editions traditionnelles, 1936 [1905]), 168: "Khyên (Heaven) is: activity, the horse, the head, the father, all that is round, the sun, the prince, gold, cold, ice, red, the swift horse, the white horse, the dry tree, what is straight, the dress, speech. Khwèn (Earth) is: passivity, the mare, the womb, the mother, the cloth, the axe, economy, equality, the mother of the bull, the cart, appearance, the crowd, the handle, black, what is square, the bag, the pipe, the fly" (60). Richard Wilhelm, in his edition of the *I Ching, Or, Book of Changes*, trans. Cary F. Baynes and with a preface by C.G. Jung (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983 [1950]), notes that there are variants: the Creative is sometimes associated with a dragon instead of a horse, and the Receptive is sometimes associated with a cow instead of a mare (387). Carpita has noted a connection between Rosselli's "cheval chinois" here and Chi'en, the Creative, but she did not connect it to K'un, the Receptive ("Notizia su *Primi scritti*," in *Amelia Rosselli. L'opera poetica*, ed. Stefano Giovannuzzi, Francesco Carbognin, Chiara Carpita, Silvia De March, Gabriella Palli Baroni, Emmanuela Tandello (Milan: Mondadori, 2012), 1405).

[292] Rosselli, *Le Chinois à Rome*, 560.

this as a commentary on how, in the era after the fall of the Benjaminian aura, it is no longer possible to believe in the possibility of representing reality. She connects this impossibility to the final moment of the first part, where artificial flowers are bought at a flower shop—what she sees as a parodic reference to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*.

The other moment in the first part where the speaker addresses the reader similarly questions the possibility of capturing reality in recording or notation: "Ne point presser (souligner) l'aspect évidemment absurde (tu as beaucoup lu, ô moderne) du petit cadre (quadrant)"[293] [Do not push/press (underline) the evidently absurd aspect (you have read so much, o modern) of the little frame (quadrant)]. The idea of something that can be captured in the "cadre," the frame—like a film frame—or the "quadrant"—reminiscent of the grids Rosselli made for her ideal notational system for music, and the graph paper she used to transcribe her experiences walking around Rome—is defined as "absurd" here. The order, containment, enclosure of reality in any form of recording (writing, film) is marked as a fantasy.

The second part of the text, *Le Chinois à Rome*, signals a shift in the cityscape: in addition to the houses and trees of the first part, there is now a bridge, water, gardens, domes, façades, a tram, a restaurant. The surreal images continue, and linguistic fusions between French and Italian increase from one to four. There are fewer meta-commentaries on poetics, but one appears toward the end: "Tes technologismes! Les béons qui se rient de toi!... On se moque. Ta poésie ta poésie faut-il conserver (comme le piment dans sa bouteille hermétique) ou est-elle une avide illusion, un trop fine couche de peau, trop haut placée (poteau) (piquet) (pieux) (échelon)"[294] [Your technologisms! The drunks who laugh at you!... One makes fun. Your poetry

[293] Rosselli, *Le Chinois à Rome*, 559–60.

[294] Rosselli, *Le Chinois à Rome*, 563.

your poetry must it preserve (like spice in its hermetic bottle) or is it a greedy illusion, a too-thin layer of skin, too highly placed (post) (pole) (pious) (level)]. Here, the question emerges: will constraint, the hermetically sealed bottle, allow the poem to *preserve* what it is representing, or does it merely provide the illusion of such a possibility—perhaps even the illusion of concreteness, fleshliness, or materiality, in the reference to the too-thin layer of skin?

The illusory connection between language and bodies reappears in the final section, *Promenade*, which is the most fragmentary, the least cohesive formally and linguistically. Multilingualism increases as the text draws to its conclusion—primarily French and Italian—as do made-up words that sound real, as mixtures of prefixes and suffixes. Formally, the text contains moments where it tends toward verse, and fragmented meditations on time, space, and literary style. It also includes references to proper names of people and places, which do not appear at other points of the text. The speaker references Rome explicitly for the first time—a pizzeria on the corner of Viale Trastevere—and a fragment of a letter the speaker is writing appears: "Cara Silv. / (casa ecc.)" [Dear Silv. / (home etc.)]. Snatches of Rosselli's own life appear with these references: her neighborhood, Trastevere; the "Silv." whose name is not even given fully may be a reference to her cousin Silvia Rosselli; and yet another name, a "Magda" who brings the right advice in the wrong moment, may refer to a woman whom Rosselli knew personally. Magda may have guided Rosselli through practicing divination via the ancient Chinese text of the *Yijing*: in Rosselli's letters of the 1950s and early 1960s, she refers to "Madame Magda, with her Chinese cards," who reassures her about money and Rosselli's inventions of her instrument and new notational system, telling her that these will make her "very very rich!"[295]

[295] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 9 November 1952. It seems that Rosselli kept frequenting Magda throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s: Amelia to John, 1 June 1961—actually, this comes up when she is

References to China appear obliquely here, and are not identified as such. The main one introduces the final paragraph of the work—it is a quotation from the *Yijing* in Italian, as identified by Rosselli in a note:

> vi sono delle situazioni d'eccezione nelle quali il rapporto tra guidatore e guida muta. Très peu d'anglais. Des ombres (feuilles tremblantes). S'acharnant, encore et toujours, au coin de la rue vue (vie). sboccati, sbouchée sur la grande digue (c'est le grand pavement, c'est le long d'un fleuve inconnu). Les arbres, blocs de la maison. (On entre.) voici: voici la clef de tous mes souvenirs.[296]
>
> [there are exceptional situations in which the relationship between driver and guide change. Tiny bit of English. Some shadows (trembling leaves). They hurl themselves, again and always, at the corner of the street view (life). opened/open yourself, opened on the large embankment (it is the large ground, it is the long of an unknown river). The trees, blocks of the house. (We/One enter(s).) here: here is the key to all my memories.]

The paragraph is opaque, as is the quotation from the *Yijing* (hexagram 17, "Sui / Following"), and the multilingualism used here: the quotation in Italian, the reference to a "tiny bit of English" in French. And yet, despite the opacity of this passage, I see in it a desire for a new potential for writing. Rosselli includes a multilingual moment with "sboccati, sbouchée," which she glosses with one of her sparse notes. She defines "sbouchée" as coming from the Italian "sboccata," which would be "débouchée" in French, meaning coarse, uncouth, inappropriate. In Italian, "sboccato" is often used in relation to language: inappropriate language, or someone who is not careful of how they speak or what they say. However, the "sboccati" used by the speaker here is ambiguous: it could be the plural of "sboccato," or it could be an unusual reflexive command for the verb "sboccare," to flow, to open out. Read in this way, "sboccati, sbouchée sur la grande

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telling John about her ambiguous relationship with David Tudor: "I don't believe Tudor ever went to your private school or colleges—he stopped high school at 16, to specialize at the piano and organ. Got an enourmous [sic] culture on his own later on on his own [sic], I think. Not of a rich family. Anyways don't run to conclusions about me and Tudor. Its [sic] just a nice story for the moment, and a useful friendship! Magda said three 2 [sic] years ago that he was a 'grande anima' [great soul] (apart from a decent portafoglio [wallet]) but not 'l'uomo del destino' [the man of destiny] which I'm supposed to meet around this time!!!!!!!!..... Anyways she often makes a muddle."

[296] Rosselli, *Le Chinois à Rome*, 566.

digue" would mean something along the lines of "open out, uncouth, on the large embankment." The quotation from the *Yijing*, then, becomes the catalyst for an opening up of the self. This, in turn, leads to the key of all the speaker's memories. The "voici: voici" that introduces this key makes it seem as if it is being presented to the reader, in a fantastic idea of being able to grant full access to one's memories to another person.

At the same time, the issue of how language can communicate bodies immediately precedes the declaration of the fantasy, in one of the least comprehensible passages of the text. Although the speaker may desire a direct, unmediated "body type of expression," as Rosselli put it in the letter to John, this passage reveals the disconnect between language and bodies, and wonders how, given this fact, expression could be possible:

> Les ombres tachent de sang le pavement. Les ombres font des signes de sang sur le pavement. Les ombres font des signes (d'encre en forme d'animal) sur le selciato (d'encre lanterne magique) (d'encre taches magiques) sur le plafond (pavement) terrain rugueux.
> Ne peut-on s'excrimer (exprimer) avec coïncision
> circumsision
> circumflexe
> circonfusion
> circonspection (circubalation) en une (résumant) en une douce phrase définitive?[297]
>
> [The shadows stain the cobblestones with blood. The shadows make signs of blood on the cobblestones. The shadows make signs (of ink in the form of an animal) on the selciato [pavement] (of ink magic lantern) (of ink magic spots) on the ceiling (cobblestones) rough soil.
> One cannot excress (express) oneself with coincision
> circumsision
> circumflex
> circumfusion
> circonspection (circubalation) in a (summarizing) in a sweet definitive phrase?]

The connection to the body is always somewhat missed: the signs are made of blood, but they are made by shadows rather than bodies. Then, these signs made out of blood become signs made of

[297] Rosselli, *Le Chinois à Rome*, 565.

ink, merely in the *form* of an animal. The link to the body ends up unsynchronized. The use of "s'excrimer" in place of "s'exprimer" invokes a different kind of connection to the body, but one that associates expression with excrement. The speaker wonders how she can "excress" herself with a series of made-up almost-words. Each of these words riffs on either the prefix "co-" or "circum-": "co-," as in together, jointly, and "circum-," as in encompassing. The ideal "douce phrase définitive" would encompass and join language and body, word and thing, speaker and listener.

Diario in tre lingue: seeking solutions to malfunctions of meaning and of senses

Like *Le Chinois à Rome*, *Diario in tre lingue* expresses fantasies of complete communication of an experience of reality with a reader. But, like *Le Chinois à Rome*, it does so through formal techniques that seem willfully opaque: namely, through the proliferation of multilingual linguistic games, puns, and nonsense. At about fifty-five pages, it is the longest work included in Rosselli's 1980 *Primi scritti* anthology, and it is composed of eleven parts of varying lengths, each of which is made up primarily of notes and sentences with random enjambment, so they appear to be in verse. Brief two or three sentence paragraphs punctuate these verses. Formally, the *Diario* reads as an expansion of the last part of *Le Chinois à Rome*: a mix of prose and verse-like lines, peppered with multilingual word associations. The parts are not given titles, and they read as a series of personal notes, including fragments of everyday conversations, more or less intelligible abbreviations, and strange layouts on the page—large gaps, spaces, underlining. The notes are mostly about aesthetics: a negotiation of the legacy of surrealism and modernism in Italian, English, and French poetry, in particular, and questions about what a different kind of literary aesthetic would entail.

The first reference to aesthetics in the *Diario* calls back to *Le Chinois à Rome*, in particular to the title of the first part, which is *La Pensée (esthétique Jeune)*:

> l'Esthétique Jaune dans son lit de Mort
> l'Esthétique Jeune dans son Lit Subtil
>
> ou bien
> (nous sommes en communication)
>
> (Promenade Chinoise) ou bien
> Dérèglement de tous les Sens[298]
>
> [the Yellow Aesthetic on its deathbed / the Young Aesthetic on its skilled bed / or / (we are in communication) / (Chinese Walk) or / Malfunction of all Senses/Meanings]

What exactly this young aesthetic entails is not programmatically defined, but the descriptions surrounding it focus on the same key concepts as in *Le Chinois à Rome*: a "Promenade Chinoise," what it means to be in communication, and how sensory experiences fit into this. Again, a contradiction emerges between what seems to be a thematic quest for a different kind of communication between the writing subject and the reading subject, and a formal choice to use highly idiosyncratic word associations. Even the references to the "esthétique jeune" or the "promenade chinoise" make no sense, except in relation to another of Rosselli's texts. Being "in communication" here constantly hits against the "Dérèglement de tous les Sens": a malfunction of meaning, alongside a malfunction of the senses (seeing, hearing, touching, etc.).

Despite the idiosyncratic and opaque nature of most of the *Diario*, this text marks the first time that Rosselli uses the concept of "la forma cubo," a concept often invoked in studies of Rosselli, and one that Rosselli focuses on in "Spazi metrici," a 1962 exploration of her poetics that I analyze in depth in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. The cube-form is eventually the name that Rosselli gave her own poetics post-1958: she would lay out the first line of a poem, and that

[298] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 600.

line dictated the length of the lines of the rest of the poem, which were meant to take up the same amount of space on the page and the same amount of time to read (mentally or aloud). Rosselli conceived of this as thinking in cubic forms, and capturing the three-dimensionality of the spaces she encountered. The prosody of the *Diario* is not an example of the cube-form: instead, the cube-form is more often associated with the blocks of text that Rosselli wrote in the second part of *Variazioni belliche*, since Rosselli identifies them as such in her description of her poetics, "Spazi metrici." Instead, the *Diario* simply yearns for the cube, as in the last section: "you want the Cube / it is not necessary to live / (diretto e unico rapporto con Dio)" [direct and unique relationship with God].[299]

The images of a square, a grid, and eventually a cube appear throughout the *Diario*. The latter part of the *Diario*, in particular, invokes the cube as a kind of concrete world that the poem creates: "gli accenti sono le travi costruttorie del / cubo: — lo provocano. piazzamento accenti / provoca variazioni dinamiche (volume, ritmo, / piazzamento verso) nell'interno del cubo"[300] [accents are the constructing beams of the cube: they create it. the placement of accents creates dynamic variations (volume, rhythm, verse placement) within the cube]. Then, the dimension of time is added to the cube: "il tempo nella poesia diventa volume del cubo; cioè profondità tramite le attesa-spazio tra verso e verso"[301] [time in poetry becomes the volume of the cube; that is, depth through the waiting-spaces between one verse and another]. In this text, Rosselli sketches out the ideal of the cube-form as a way of creating a poetic universe, or a universal poetry that creates an experience of the world that is perfectly communicated from writer to

[299] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 644.

[300] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 635.

[301] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 634.

reader. As Chiara Carpita has put it, the cube form "ambisce a rappresentare l'universale che si oppone alla descrizione del particolare veicolata invece dal verso libero [...] La scelta di una forma chiusa nasce dall'esigenza di creare un discorso non soggettivo che possa raccontare anche gli altri. È il desiderio dell'ordine, la nostalgia dell'Uno che la spinge ad abbandonare la dimensione del verso libero"[302] [strives to represent the universal that opposes the description of the particular, which is instead conveyed by free verse. The choice of a closed form is born out of the necessity to create non-subjective discourse that can also narrate others. It is the desire for order, the nostalgia for the One that pushes her to abandon free verse]. Jennifer Scappettone has similarly seen a desire for oneness and communicability in Rosselli's cube-form, and has glossed Rosselli's definition of the cube-form as "the matrix of 'an absolute time-space' containing the associative logic of all languages."[303]

Scappettone's point is supported in a passage in Italian from the seventh part of the *Diario*, where the speaker expresses the fantasy of a universal language:

> Ed io che mi dimetto ogni giorno dal consiglio municipale, "mi domando se non sia possibile, in un assurdo sforzo, dimenticare quanto è intorno a me per rinchiudermi nelle alchimie di un linguaggio buono a ogni latitudine…"[304]
>
> [And I who resign every day from the city council, "ask myself if it wouldn't be possible, in an absurd effort, to forget what is around me to enclose myself in the alchemies of a language good at every latitude…"]

Scappettone has pointed to this passage as one that shows Rosselli's desire for the "liberation of the isolated subject/idiom into a matrix of collective meaning."[305] This idea of a linguistic

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[302] Carpita, "*Spazi metrici*," 78–9.

[303] Scappettone, "'Cantonidisintegratidella / miavita," 149.

[304] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 625.

[305] Scappettone, "Cantonidisintegratidella / miavita," 146.

collectivity is repeated a few lines after the passage cited above: "non son mai stata così collettiva (però nella lingua)"[306] [I've never been this collective (but in language)]. Scappettone interprets this desire of Rosselli's as "the desire to be discharged from the authority of the state and the desire for alchemical enclosure in a more capacious language of citizenship,"[307] in keeping with her broader point that Rosselli's linguistic experiments distinguish her xenoglossia from that of other members of the Italian avant-garde at this time, due to her firsthand experience of political trauma and her childhood as a (in Rosselli's own words) refugee.[308] I want to point out, though, the way that the *Diario* deflects communicability and universality in its language: the "associative logic of all languages" is not legible in its multilingualism.

Similarly, when the speaker of the *Diario* speaks out against surrealism in particular, in the last section of the *Diario*, she seems to criticize precisely what she is doing:

Surrealism is (si sa) rebellion to the Gods

they think <u>they</u> can construct the universe
destruct

miss point of perfect harmony

we do not make the universe

it was there

↑ are infinite directions, cannot be wholly followed

↓ followed holily

do not <u>play</u>

do not play with words

[306] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 626.

[307] Scappettone, "Cantonidisintegratidella / miavita," 146.

[308] Scappettone, "Cantonidisintegratidella / miavita," 137–8.

see what you mean
do not care what is given or taken
lv. with holiness[309]

Presumably, the ideal universal language sought (but not carried out) in the *Diario* is not just the play of the avant-garde, the destabilization of linguistic categories. You don't *say* what you mean, you *see* what you mean, in a holy access to the universe, of things as they really are, through language: "each thing has its name, simple, not to be substituted by secondary subjects (word-mirroring)."[310] In other words, she dreams of a language that truly derives from the things it speaks of: "il contenuto propone le sue forme. // e il contenuto è sempre Uno // dunque la forma Una"[311] [Content proposes its forms. // and content is always One // therefore form is One]. And yet, the speaker's caution against playing with words rings as tongue-in-cheek or humorous: this is precisely what she has been doing for the forty-five pages that precede this statement.

Still, if this speaker is playing with language, the reader is rarely in on the joke. This is, perhaps, what distinguishes Rosselli's multilingualism from Eliot's or Pound's. She cites the two modernist poets a good deal in the *Diario*, and it is clear that she is contending with the legacy of modernism as much as she is with that of surrealism. Marjorie Perloff explains that multilingual citations in Eliot are merely modes of embedding the foreign, exoticizing literary allusion inside of an English poem.[312] Instead, in the multilingual texts of Pound's *Cantos*, "language layers"

[309] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 644–5.

[310] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 650.

[311] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 649.

[312] Marjorie Perloff, "Language in Migration: Multilingualism and Exophonic Writing in the New Poetics," *Textual Practice*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (October 2010), 726–8.

are meant to "intersect so as to create the meaning of a given passage."[313] Nevertheless, as Perloff notes, "there is never any doubt but that the voice that orchestrates these ingenious variations is a well-versed and expert English speaker" writing for an English-speaking audience.[314] Instead, the voice of the *Diario* does not seem firmly rooted in any of the three languages she writes in, and her multilingual word games seem largely idiosyncratic.

In this sense, the voice of the *Diario* is Joycean, with the puns and highly specific, personal references she makes. About seven years after Rosselli wrote the notebooks that would later come to make up the *Diario*, Umberto Eco would turn to Joyce in his seminal theorization of the open work, *Opera aperta*: he saw Joyce's work as the prime example of the open work, a work that contains the "possibilità di essere interpretata in mille modi diversi senza che la sua irriproducibile singolarità ne risulti alterata. Ogni fruizione è così una *interpretazione* ed una *esecuzione*, poiché in ogni fruizione l'opera rivive in una prospettiva originale"[315] [possibility of being interpreted in a thousand different ways without its irreproducible singularity being altered. Every access to the work is therefore an *interpretation* and an *execution*, because in each access the work lives again in an original perspective]. In turning to Joyce, Eco notes how the meaning of the text is meant to be rich, open to various interpretations, and puns are essential to this: "Lo strumento principe di questa integrale ambiguità è il *pun*, il *calembour*: dove due, tre, dieci radici diverse si combinano in modo che una sola parola diventi un nodo di significati, ciascuno dei quali può incontrarsi e correlarsi ad altri centri di allusione, aperti ancora a nuove

[313] Perloff, "Language in Migration," 728.
[314] Perloff, "Language in Migration," 730.

[315] Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta. Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* (Milan: Bompiani, 1967), 26.

costellazioni e a nuove probabilità di lettura"[316] [The chief instrument of this structural ambiguity is the pun, the *calembour*: where two, three, ten different roots interlock so that one single word becomes a knot of meanings, each of which can meet and connect to other centers of allusions, each of them further open to new constellations and new probable readings]. For Eco, open works—like Joyce's, but even more so what he terms the "opere in movimento" of Eco's contemporaries, works that are open in their very conceptions—are epistemological metaphors, connected to new understandings of logical and scientific knowledge: he sees in them the notion of field, from physics, which implicates a new vision of cause and effect, opting instead for a complex interaction of forces. As the indeterminate becomes a reasonable outcome for the pursuit of scientific knowledge, the artwork reflects that. The emerging prominence of psychology and phenomenology similarly point to "ambiguità percettive" [perceptual ambiguities] in the gathering and interpretation of knowledge.[317]

Perhaps Eco would have viewed the *Diario* as an open work; it has many Joycean qualities, including the featuring of puns—in particular, multilingual puns. Joyce is even listed as an influence in a list in the first part of the *Diario*, one that also includes Montale, Proust, and Eliot's religious poetry (Pound is conspicuously absent); in this list, Joyce is associated with "frantumazione," or shattering.[318] However, although the *Diario enacts* openness, freedom of interpretation, a kind of fragmentation, it *declares* a quest for order and wholeness—for the cube-form. At a certain point, the voice even declares "Ulisse non è soluzione"[319] [Ulysses is not

[316] Eco, *Opera aperta*, 35–36.

[317] Eco, *Opera aperta*, 45.

[318] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 605.

[319] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 647.

a solution], in a reference to Joyce's modernist novel *Ulysses*. If the open work reflects the rise of the indeterminate as a legitimate answer in much of scientific knowledge, the desired cube-form is a fantasy of resolving the "perceptual ambiguities" that Eco cites. The inclusion of psychological elements, contingent on perception, in statements of what the cube-form would capture bear witness to this fantasy: timbre and time, in particular, are centered in the notes for the elements of the cube-form.[320]

Thus, the opaque multilingual word games and idiosyncratic references and abbreviations of the *Diario* play out a disorder that only has its antidote in a fantasy: the cube-form, a universally communicable construction of a world through the written word. This fantasy is associated with fantasies of Chinese as a language and ancient Chinese texts like the *Tao* and the *Yijing*. "Le Chinois" as a term appears somewhat frequently in the first three sections of the *Diario*, appearing and disappearing between meditations on prosody and a desire for order. It is also invoked in the two lists of languages, styles, and poets that appear in the first part of the *Diario*: "midi italien / Anglais-Américain / France littéraire / Italie Classique-Moderne / Le Chinois / smattering of German / Latin / Greek";[321] "Montale-Proust / italian stornello popolare / greek-latin prose / Joyce, frantumazione / surrealismo (french) / classici / slangs / Chinois / strutture lingue straniere / eliot-religious."[322] Chinese in these lists invokes a non-specific, non-Western order (as in "strutture lingue straniere," structures of foreign languages) that may entail the kind of universal communicability of the cube-form.

[320] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 627; 633–4; 635

[321] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 602–3.

[322] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 605.

Chinese as representative of a universal order

The *Diario* plays on the ambiguity of the term "le Chinois," which could mean Chinese as a language or a Chinese man. In the first and second part of the *Diario*, Le Chinois becomes a man, a solitary one who sleeps: "Le Chinois // (qui se force solitaire d'aller / au lit) // il n'a pas d'amis"[323] [The Chinese man // (who forces himself, alone, to go / to bed) // he has no friends/lovers]. At the same time, Le Chinois is described as Christ-like, resurrectable, both a man with a body and more than a man: "(Le Chinois qui s'évanouit) / (On a trouvé ses restes au cimetière) / On n'a trouvé ses restes"[324] [(The Chinese man who fainted/vanished) / (We found his remains at the cemetery) / We did not find his remains]. Le Chinois' association with Christ is further enforced in the second part of the *Diario*, where Le Chinois is associated with a pelican, a traditionally Christological symbol.[325] Le Chinois encapsulates the mystical union of material and spiritual, of physical, "objective" reality and subjectivity. The writer of the *Diario* wishes to inhabit a similar space, as she declares in the tenth part of the *Diario*, after an explanation of what the cube-form would do: "Il punto di visione— / il punto di sintesi tra mondo estrov. e / mondo introv. sono io, il fluire"[326] [The point of vision— / the point of synthesis between external world and / internal world is I, the flowing].

Throughout the *Diario*, it is implied that the key to accessing such a state is found in the *Tao* and/or the *Yijing*. Rosselli's interest in these texts came before the West's boom of fascination with the *Yijing*, in particular, which became particularly widespread in the 1960s and

[323] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 602.

[324] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 601–2.

[325] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 606.

[326] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 646.

1970s.[327] In 1955–1956, when Rosselli was writing *Le Chinois* and the *Diario*, the *Yijing* had only very recently become a point of interest in most of the United States and Europe: in 1950, Cary Baynes had published a translation into English of Richard Wilhelm's 1924 German translation of the *Yijing*, with a new foreword by Carl Jung. The English translation was then translated into a number of other languages, including Italian: an edition published by Astrolabio in 1950 is one of the books that remains of Rosselli's library at the Università della Tuscia. Rosselli was probably aware that John Cage had also started to use the *Yijing* in the early 1950s as part of the chance operations he was applying to his compositional process. However, Rosselli's more formative understandings of the *Yijing* had come from psychoanalysis with Ernst Bernhard, one of Jung's students, beginning in 1952,[328] and from reading Daniélou's *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales* (1943). In this work, Daniélou emphasizes the *Yijing* as the book that contains all Chinese knowledge of "metaphysical reality."[329] Much of his study of Chinese music is meant to show how the principles of the *Yijing* are translated into music, and how they reflect physical laws of acoustics. At certain points, Daniélou also cites information from the *Tao* as indicative of a correspondence between Chinese ancient texts and the laws of physics.[330]

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[327] Richard J. Smith, *The I Ching: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 112–113.

[328] Chiara Carpita analyzes the pieces of writing that Rosselli wrote for Bernhard during her time in psychoanalysis with him (1952–1953), and notes the influence of the *Yijing* in these pieces, in "Amelia Rosselli e il processo di individuazione. Alcuni inediti," in *Allegoria*, No. 55 (2007), 146–179.

[329] Daniélou, *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*, 57.

[330] Daniélou, in *Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales*, uses it to justify the spiral of fifths as what produces all other sounds: "As we have already seen, the fifth is the third sound of the series of harmonics, the first being the fundamental and the second its octave. According to the formula of the Táo-te-kīng: 'One has produced two, two has produced three, three has produced all the numbers,' we can understand why the third sound, the fifth, must necessarily, by its revolutions, produce all the other sounds" (65).

In part three of the *Diario*, the speaker invokes the "nature of i King / moral / natural / subtle":[331] the definition of the *Yijing* as "subtle" recalls the description, in the first part, of the "Esthétique jeune" in its "Lit Subtil." The focus on the naturalness of the *Yijing* invoked here is reminiscent of the relationship between the universal and the natural that Rosselli had established in *La serie degli armonici*, discussed in Chapter 1, and of the kind of thinking about the *Yijing* that Rosselli would have been exposed to through studies like Daniélou's. The *Tao* and the *Yijing* are also referenced before the speaker states "you want the Cube":

> Tao not satisfactory
> (is a mechanism of living)
>
> i King mécanique ondulatoire
> meccanica ondulatoria
>
> you want the Cube
>
> it is not necessary to live
>
> (diretto e unico rapporto con Dio).[332]

This passage sets up the Cube as the literary counterpart of the Tao, which is a way of understanding the order of the world as one lives. Instead, the Cube allows for the literary creation of this universal order, as the speaker explains a few lines later: "non è il contenuto che deve fit in lo spazio / ma tu che devi plasmare lo spazio / cioè il tuo contenuto deve provocare lo spazio" [it's not that the content needs to fit in the space / rather, you need to mold the space / that is, your content needs to create the space].[333] The *Yijing* is related to "mécanique ondulatoire / meccanica ondulatoria," a phrase that, as Tatiana Bisanti has noted, recalls the vibrations and

[331] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 606.

[332] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 644.

[333] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 645.

oscillations of harmonics that Rosselli saw as necessary to understanding musical scales rooted in physical realities.[334] Both the *Tao* and the *Yijing* are associated with the order of the longed-for Cube, but this order is never actually reached or enacted in the *Diario*.

In fact, both *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue* show more of an interest in meditating on a fantasy of universal language and art that communicates a sense of reality beyond the subjective than they are in actually enacting it. The speaker of the *Diario*—and, to an extent, of *Le Chinois* as well—instead focuses on the inadequate communicative possibilities presented by the techniques and technologies available to her. In a passage from *Le Chinois* cited above, the speaker associates "technologismes" with a kind of hermetic poetry, a "trop fine couche de peau" [too-fine layer of skin] that does not truly capture a lived sensory reality.[335] In the first section of the *Diario*, the speaker calls up questions of technologies and machines through various scansions of lines of everyday conversation that interrupt the various fantastical images and language games: "non avete da mostrarmi un'altra macchina?", "ha una macchina ancora da mostrarmi?", "per dir la verità, non son contenta di nessuna di queste"[336] [don't you have another car/machine to show me? do you have another car/machine to show me? to tell the truth, I'm not happy with any of these]. These are the first examples of a few moments, throughout the *Diario*, that the speaker scans lines of everyday conversation ("(prosa metrica) / common prose valorized," as she puts it here).[337] The double valence of "macchina" as car and machine allows a second interpretation of these lines as a commentary on the insufficiency of

[334] Bisanti, *L'opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli*, 38–9.

[335] Rosselli, *Le Chinois à Rome*, 563.

[336] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 604–5.

[337] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 605.

machines and mechanisms of notating embodied experiences. The scansion of lines from everyday life is not enough to make a correspondence between sign and corporeal experience of speaking or listening—between "these two kinds of body, voice and visual mark," as David Nowell Smith puts it in his study of the breath in Olson's projective verse and Hopkins' attempts to notate his sprung rhythm.[338]

It seems that the speaker of the *Diario* is seeking some kind of instrument that allows for the creation of a space through a fusion of content and form. In the following section, I analyze why Rosselli selected Chinese in particular as the site of a fantasy of perfect, universal communication, and I argue for a connection between Rosselli's fantasies of Chinese and her fantasies of a kind of writing that functions as an as-yet-inexistent recording technology capable of recording a writer's subjective sensory experiences of time and space and transmitting them directly to a reader.

Contextualizing Western fantasies of the privileged relationship between words and things in the Chinese language

I take as a starting point for this section a couplet from the first part of *Diario in tre lingue*: "(Promenade Chinoise) ou bien / Dérèglement de tous les Sens" [(Chinese walk) or / Malfunction of all Senses/Meanings].[339] (The phrase "dérèglement de tous les sens" actually appears twice in the *Diario*, occurring again in part seven.) Both the *Diario* and *Le Chinois* focus on unstable correspondences between two types of *sens*: the sensory, auditory experiences

[338] Nowell Smith, "Verse Scored Free," 35–6.

[339] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 600.

of words and their meanings. In the beginning of *Le Chinois*, in a series of associations based on the *meanings* of words, the speaker moves, synecdochically, from trees to roots to the roots of hair—"chevelure," "cheveux." Then, the speaker makes an association based on the *sound* of the words: from "chevelure" to "cheval," horse. This alternation of word association based on meaning and on sound—or sometimes orthography—occurs throughout, as in the last part of *Le Chinois*, at its climax of linguistic confusion. In this same passage, words are grouped together due to their status as made-up words, but also based on their suffixes and prefixes, which are real ("-sion" and variations on "circum-"): "coincision," "circumsision," "circumflexe," "circonfusion," "circubalation."[340] At certain points in the *Diario*, the speaker plays spelling games, where each phrase is spelled differently, using words from different languages with different pronunciation rules, but ultimately all are meant to sound the same: "com plete nonsense / con pleat non sense / con pleat 9 cence."[341]

In these texts, then, associations between words are made based on various principles: synecdoche; phonetics; spelling; common suffixes or prefixes. In a few cases, associations are made based on meaning across various languages. In this oscillation between different reasons for various associations, the speaker in both texts is laying bare the randomness and, in some ways, uselessness of categories in language. These words are associated with one another based on the fact that they succeed one another temporally, i.e. through contiguity—the metonymic

[340] Rosselli spells it "circumbalation" in her notes to *Le Chinois à Rome*. This spelling makes it seem more obviously a variation of the Italian "circonvallazione" or the French "circumvallation," known in English as a ring road. There are many "circonvallazioni" in Rome. However, the spelling "circubalation" gives a sense of a cube within a circle, an image that is reminiscent of Rosselli's notational sketches and appears at certain points in the *Diario*.
The other potentially related term is "circumambulation", associated with Jung's understanding of the mandala as a "circumambulation of the Self." Rosselli made some mandalas during her time in analysis with Bernhard, as described by Carpita in "Amelia Rosselli e il processo di individuazione," 150–151.

[341] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 610. This kind of play occurs at many other points in the text as well.

pole of language, in linguist Roman Jakobson's terms.[342] In the linguistic universes of *Le Chinois* and the *Diario*, there is no inherent internal relation of similarity between things themselves that allow them to be grouped together; their associations are based on contiguity in sentences, expressions, phonemic patterns, spelling. The idea of stable categories in relation to language—that words designate things that have some element, in their thing-ness, that unites them—is not one that exists in these texts.

This is reminiscent of Foucault's description of aphasics' attempts to categorize skeins of wool, ten years after Jakobson's article was published, in the preface to *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (1966). Foucault maintains that the idea of a "coherent pattern" is destroyed for the aphasic, giving way to a proliferation of categories that could go on *ad infinitum*. He sees this as emblematic of "the profound distress of those whose language has been destroyed: loss of what is 'common' to place and name. Atopia, aphasia."[343] There is a breakdown in communication, an ideal version of which is described by Jakobson: "The participants in a dialogue often check whether they are using the same code. 'Do you follow me? Do you see what I mean?' the speaker asks, or the listener himself breaks in with 'What do you mean?' Then, by replacing the questionable sign with another sign from the same linguistic code or with a whole group of code signs, the sender of the message seeks to make it more accessible to the decoder."[344] When shared categories have been displaced or misplaced, how can a speaker substitute a sign or a group of code signs that could be comprehensible to the addressee? *Le*

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[342] Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" (1956), in *Linguistics and Poetics*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1987), 95–114.

[343] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), xviii–xix.

[344] Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," 103.

Chinois à Rome dramatizes this question: "Ne peut-on point s'excrimer (exprimer) avec coïncision / circumsision / circumflexe / circonfusion / circonspection (circubalation) en une (résumant) en une douce phrase définitive?" The summarizing, sweet, definitive phrase is left as a question, an unfulfilled potentiality after the reality: a series of made-up, almost-real-sounding words.

Foucault's reflections on destabilized categories of language and of place—aphasia and atopia—emerge from his thoughts on a famous passage from Jorge Luis Borges' essay "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins" (1942; 1952). In the essay, Borges considers the work of seventeenth-century natural philosopher John Wilkins' quest for a universal language, where the words are not meant to be "stupid arbitrary symbols; every letter is meaningful."[345] However, for Borges, an examination of Wilkins' language proves it to be as arbitrary as any other language. In the most celebrated passage from the essay, Borges compares the arbitrary categorizations present in Wilkins' invented language to those of a fictitious Chinese encyclopedia with fantastical categories for animals, like "those that have just broken a flower vase" and "those that resemble flies from a distance."[346] As Foucault explains, the appeal of the Chinese encyclopedia's supposed taxonomy is that ""[t]here would appear to be, then, at the other extremity of the earth we inhabit, a culture entirely devoted to the ordering of space, but one that does not distribute the multiplicity of existing things into any of the categories that make it possible for us to name, speak, and think."[347] The stark contrast of the Chinese categories—like

[345] Jorge Luis Borges, "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins," in *Other Inquisitions, 1937–1952*, trans. Ruth L.C. Simms (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 103.

[346] Borges, "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins," 103.

[347] Foucault, *The Order of Things,* xix.

the aphasic's categories—to linguistic categories with which the (supposedly European) reader is familiar proves the instability of the reader's linguistic categories. And yet, as Foucault also notes, China's "name alone constitutes for the West a vast reservoir of utopias."[348] Although Foucault does not explicitly note it, one such utopia is the idea of a signifier that is actually, non-arbitrarily connected to the signified; as Andrea Bachner has put it, the "dream of a motivated reference, of a correspondence between words and things, of a system of signification built on resemblance and presence," has, in much of the Western context, largely been projected onto China.[349]

Bachner reads "moments of pictographic myth" about Chinese script in the West "for their media politics, as symptoms of anxiety in moments of media changes or crises in representation. For much of Western philosophy, Chinese writing embodied the dream, or nightmare, of another system of representation as a necessary negative or positive foil for Western concepts of mediality."[350] Christopher Bush, in his study of Western modernist engagements with China, similarly analyzes the conception of "ideograph"—which, he points out, is the modern, invented Western conception of Chinese writing—as "a figure of *mediation* (and/or its limits)."[351] He connects the ideograph to media and to understandings of how writing

[348] Foucault, *The Order of Things,* xix.

[349] Andrea Bachner, *Beyond Sinology: Chinese Writing and the Scripts of Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 28.

[350] Bachner, *Beyond Sinology*, 57.

[351] Christopher Bush, *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xviii.

functioned in the context of new technological media like photography, phonography, and cinematography. For Bush, "Orientalism, the ideograph, and media theory grew up together."[352]

A number of the early-twentieth-century artists and thinkers that Bush and Bachner analyze—artists and thinkers whose engagement with Chinese writing was closely connected to new media and new concepts of mediality—are figures with whom Rosselli was familiar. One such figure was American art historian Ernest Fenollosa, whose "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" was edited and published by Ezra Pound in 1920 (it was written sometime before Fenollosa's death in 1908). Rosselli was very familiar with Pound's work by the early 1950s, and probably Fenollosa's essay, published in Pound's *Instigations* (1920). In any case, later in her life, she owned the first Italian translation of Fenollosa's essay, published in 1960, and it is one of the books preserved in the archival collection of what remains of her personal library. Fenollosa's characterization of the Chinese written character as a moving picture may have influenced Rosselli's understanding of Chinese. But, as Bachner states, Fenollosa's discussion of Chinese writing analyzes "an aesthetic advance within [his] own cultur[e…]"—i.e., the moving image—"through discussions of another cultural tradition."[353] Bush analyzes Fenollosa's and, consequently, Pound's ideas of Chinese writing—the ideas of Imagist poetry—alongside conceptions of Chinese writing held by post-Mallarméan poets writing in the tradition of French symbolism, in particular the ideas of Paul Claudel. In Bush's analysis of what the ideograph meant to both these strands of modernists in the early twentieth century, he describes how the "ideographic" and the photographic merge:

> The Image, the ideograph, and the photograph all figure forms of writing that respond to the problem of modern vision being at once more automatic and more subjective—and in

[352] Bush, *Ideographic Modernism*, 21.

[353] Bachner, *Beyond Sinology*, 68.

> doing so they often figure one another as well. In this sense, the photograph is as much an imagined object as the ideograph: each is a topos—truly a kind of placeholder—for a moment of temporal arrest corresponding to a particular kind of subjectivity. [...] The photographic gaze embodies neither objectivity in any conventional sense nor an absence of subjectivity, but rather a specific and very peculiar kind of subjectivity, one tied to and indeed synonymous with a specific location and moment. It is not merely a pun, then, to emphasize that Fenollosa is concerned with the value of the Chinese written character as a *medium* for poetry, that is, as a means for the registration of an impersonal subjectivity. Corresponding to such a form of subjectivity, the "ideographic" emerges at the intersection of the photographic and ethnographic dimensions of this writing. It is the pursuit of such a medium, a kind of writing that would be subject neither to the whims of individual psychology nor to the constraints of cultural convention, that constitutes the common ground of such otherwise divergent modernist poetics as those of the Imagist tradition and of post-Mallarméan poets as [Paul] Claudel.[354]

Chinese writing at the intersection of new media and the ethnographic imagination in Rosselli's work moves beyond connecting the "ideograph" to aesthetic and technological changes with which she was familiar: sound and video recording put together, new modes of recording and representing the body.[355] She invokes Chinese in the texts where she most engages with the quest for a "'body' type of expression": they meditate on the possibility of a kind of recording system that, like the photograph that modernists looked to in their ideas of Chinese writing, could capture, in Bush's words, "a specific and very peculiar kind of subjectivity, one tied to and indeed synonymous with a specific location and moment." The "dérèglement de tous les sens" referred to would, through this kind of writing, shift from being a malfunction of the senses to a kind of deregulation or liberation of the senses: a transparent communication of one subject's lived bodily experience to another.

The ideas and possibilities of Chinese as representative of a fantasy of new ways of communicating a full-body, sensory experience of subjectivity that I have traced in Rosselli's

[354] Bush, *Ideographic Modernism*, 59–60.

[355] I discuss these modes of recording the body, as they relate to ethnographic research with which Rosselli was familiar, more fully in Chapter 4.

writing from the 1950s appear in other forms in Italian literary and cultural production in the same decade. In the following section, I trace the perceptions of China emerging among Italian intellectuals and leftists in the 1950s. As I have done in other chapters of the dissertation, I aim to show how Rosselli's association of Chinese with a new medium that could communicate subjectivity in a new way did not emerge in a vacuum, nor was this association solely the fruit of Rosselli's engagement with modernist ideas of Chinese. In examining some of the cultural discourse around China in 1950s Italy, I aim to show how the ideas of Chinese that I have argued exist in *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue* relate to conceptions of subjectivity and relationality that other Italian writers, artists, and intellectuals were attempting to explain through their own fantasies of China.

Ideas of Chinese in the Italian 1950s

Ideas of China in 1950s Italy precede much of the aesthetic and political interest in Mao Zedong's China that would become prominent in the 1960s and 1970s.[356] Italian leftists' trips to China really only began in earnest in 1957, one or two years after Rosselli wrote the texts that I have analyzed in this chapter,[357] but small groups of Italian intellectuals visited before then, in

[356] Roberto Niccolai explains that the boom in Italian leftist political interest in China really materialized after 1960, when Soviet counselors left China and diplomatic relations between the two republics chilled. By 1964, some members of the Italian communist party (PCI) who were unhappy with PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti's embrace of Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization looked to China as an alternative political model. The reorientation away from the USSR and toward China began emerging a little earlier for dissenting members of the Italian socialist party (PSI), with the condemnation of the USSR's 1956 invasion of Hungary (Roberto Niccolai, *Quando la Cina era vicina: La rivoluzione culturale e la sinistra extraparlamentare italiana negli anni '60 e '70* (Pisa: BFS, 1998), 24–26). In any case, as Niccolai writes, China remained mostly unknown to Italian leftists until 1956 (27). Leftist political fantasies of China also flourished in France post-1956, for similar reasons; see Camille Robcis, "'China in Our Heads': Althusser, Maoism, and Structuralism," in *Social Text*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2012): 51–69.

[357] Niccolai, *Quando la Cina era vicina*, 28–9.

1954 and 1956, through the People's Republic of China's Techniques of Hospitality program.[358] One of the first of a number of accounts of Italians' trips to China, *La Cina è vicina*, was published in 1957 by journalist and novelist Enrico Emanuelli.[359] That same year, director Carlo Lizzani filmed in China for ten months for his 1958 documentary, *La muraglia cinese* (literally, *The Wall of China*, but translated into English at the time as *Behind the Great Wall*).[360] From the late 1950s on, depictions and invocations of China became more and more commonplace in the Italian cultural context.

Although Italians were not writing as much about China in the early 1950s as they would later, Rosselli came into contact with writings about China through her work with her psychoanalyst at the time, Ernst Bernhard.[361] Bernhard published works on China and Eastern thought as director of the Roman press Astrolabio's series "Psiche e coscienza" [Psyche and consciousness].[362] Apparently Bernhard would sometimes have his patients read some of the texts he had edited for the Astrolabio series and, more broadly, he often had them read Eastern religious and mystical texts.[363] One of the books that Bernhard published in the Astrolabio series was Swiss journalist Lily Abegg's 1952 book *Ostasien Denkt Anders* [East Asia thinks differently], translated into English as *The Mind of East Asia* and into Italian as *In Asia si pensa*

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[358] Carlo Cassola, Piero Calamandrei, and some others visited China in 1954; Curzio Malaparte visited in 1956 (Mary Ann McDonald Carolan, *Orienting Italy: China Through the Lens of Italian Filmmakers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2022), 35).

[359] Enrico Emanuelli, *La Cina è vicina* (Milan: Mondadori, 1957).

[360] Carolan, *Orienting Italy*, 15.

[361] Carpita, "Amelia Rosselli e il processo di individuazione," 159.

[362] Chiara Carpita learned from Silvia Rosselli (Amelia's cousin) that Amelia Rosselli went into analysis with Bernhard in 1952. Carpita, "Amelia Rosselli e il processo di individuazione," 152.

[363] Carpita, "Amelia Rosselli e in processo di individuazione," 158, 170.

diversamente [In Asia they think differently]. Abegg's book purported to be a social scientific investigation of East Asian thought, focusing primarily on China and Japan. Chiara Carpita has analyzed the influence of Abegg's text on Rosselli; Rosselli's copy of Abegg's book, preserved at the Università della Tuscia in Viterbo, is heavily annotated. Carpita focuses on the passages of Abegg's book that describe East Asian thought as "una *unione di spazio-tempo*"[364] [a union of space and time] and connects this description to Rosselli's desires for the Cube-form.

Abegg's investigations into East Asia also focus on the question of relationality in the "East Asian mind," asserting that Subject and Object coincide in East Asian thinking, and the "East Asian" experiences "the unity which is at the basis of all things, and also the relationship of all things to each other."[365] Abegg maintains that this concept is strengthened by "modern science," and supports this view by quoting Aldous Huxley: "Scientific investigation reveals [...] that concrete reality consists of the interdependent parts of a totality and that independent existents are merely abstractions from that reality."[366] Ultimately, Abegg ends her meditation on Subject and Object in East Asian thought with the idea of an "identity feeling which binds the East Asian with all existing things, both organic and inorganic."[367] Thus, Abegg's way of understanding the "East Asian mind" to have a different conception of the relationship between subjects and objects, between inner and outer worlds, between perception and reality, aligns with the longed-for ideal that *Le Chinois* and the *Diario* dance around: the desire for a medium that communicates a "concrete reality" shared by writer and reader.

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[364] Cited in Carpita, "*Spazi metrici*," 97.

[365] Lily Abegg, *The Mind of East Asia*, trans. A.J. Crick and E.E. Thomas (London; New York: Thames and Hudson, 1952), 143.

[366] Abegg, *The Mind of East Asia,* 144.

[367] Abegg, *The Mind of East Asia*, 145.

This idea of a special Chinese concept of relationality—between humans, and between humans and non-human components of the world—comes up even in more scholarly works from Italy that Rosselli probably encountered as she was writing *Le Chinois à Rome* and the *Diario in tre lingue*: for instance, an 80-page article titled "L'Occidente e l'ideologia rivoluzionaria cinese" [The West and Chinese revolutionary ideology], written by a young Italian historian of East Asia, Enrica Pischel (later, after marrying, known as Enrica Collotti Pischel). Although I have not uncovered any concrete evidence that Pischel and Rosselli ever actually met, they were connected through their fathers: Giuliano Pischel had been a part of the antifascist resistance movement founded by Carlo Rosselli, Giustizia e libertà. Additionally, the article was published in a 1955 issue of *Nuovi argomenti*, which was, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the Roman journal co-founded by Rosselli's cousin, Alberto Moravia, and Alberto Carocci, the Rosselli family lawyer who helped manage an American trust fund that had been set up for the Rosselli siblings.[368] The bulk of Pischel's article focuses on how Western philosophical concepts became a part of Chinese revolutionary thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but she opens it through an observation of the purported emphasis on relationality in Chinese thought. In this thought, according to Pischel, the world revolves around equilibrium between man and nature, and between man and man: "[l]'uomo infatti non è uomo se è solo: la sua umanità nasce dai rapporti con gli altri uomini. L'uomo isolato dalla società, la società isolata dalla natura, nulla hanno di umano e ricadono nel mondo della barbarie senza coesione"[369] [man is, in fact, not man

[368] Rosselli was on good terms with Moravia in the early 1950s. The trust had been set up by Max Ascoli, who was in the United States, and so Carocci dealt with day-to-day operations for Amelia Rosselli, since they were both in Rome.

[369] Enrica Pischel, "L'Occidente e l'ideologia rivoluzionaria cinese," in *Nuovi argomenti*, No. 15–16 (July–October 1955): 1–2.

if he is alone: his humanity is born from relationships with other men. Man, isolated from society, and society, isolated from nature, have nothing human about them and fall into the world of barbarism, without cohesion]. Pischel goes on to assert that Chinese thought has no inclination toward abstraction, having an "immanent" stance toward reality that means that "il regno della natura ed il regno dell'uomo vi si confondono"[370] [the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of men mix together within it, i.e. reality].

Part of the supposed special relationship that Chinese thought has with a "concrete reality" has to do, in some cases, with the sensory, a privileged attachment to the body. This emerges as a concept in Abegg's book: she expounds upon the purported lack of separation between mind and body in East Asian thought at various points.[371] This idea is not unique to Abegg; as Andrea Bachner has observed, Western fantasies of Chinese writing have seen it as "a medium that allows for the specter of materiality to haunt meaning,"[372] a conveyor of a "vitality" that communicates something beyond "'pure' meaning."[373] The idea that Chinese writing breaks down the dualisms of the West emerges in Eugenio Montale's preface to a 1943 set of *Liriche cinesi* [Chinese lyric] translated by Giorgia Valensin, based off of Arthur Waley's early-twentieth-century translations of Chinese poems into English.[374] Rosselli owned a 1947 edition of Waley's *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (originally published in 1918), and it is probable that she also encountered Valensin's translations: 31 editions of *Liriche cinesi* were

[370] Pischel, "L'Occidente e l'ideologia rivoluzionaria cinese," 1–2.

[371] Abegg, *The Mind of East Asia*, 33–34; 79.

[372] Bachner, *Beyond Sinology*, 33.

[373] Bachner, *Beyond Sinology*, 33.

[374] I would like to thank my colleague Giulia Ricca for alerting me to the existence of Montale's preface.

published between 1943 and 1998, all with Eugenio Montale's preface. Montale was much-studied by Rosselli, and she cited him as a major influence in the *Diario in tre lingue*. Montale's preface begins by noting the division between "suono e significato" [sound and meaning] and "forma e sostanza" [form and substance] in Western linguistic expression.[375] For Montale, these Chinese poems eschew such dualisms: "Si consideri la relativa traducibilità di coteste perle cinesi, certo più accessibili, portate in altro linguaggio, di moltissimi frammenti greci. In esse la contraddizione tra fondo e forma, tra significato e stile, che noi riteniamo costitutiva di ogni poesia, non ha toccato certo il suo vertice"[376] [Consider the relative translatability of these Chinese pearls, which are certainly more accessible in another language than many Greek fragments are. In them, the contradiction between base and form, between meaning and style, which we believe to be constitutive of all poetry, has not reached its peak]. Chinese poems' easy translatability, for Montale, has to do with the fact that they unify man, art, and nature ("qui [...] l'uomo e l'arte tendevano alla natura, *erano* natura" [here, man and art bent toward nature, *they were* nature]).[377] Such a statement is not far from Fenollosa's assertion that "Chinese notation [...] is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature," and therefore offers a "natural connection between thing and sign."[378] The idea of a connection between thing and sign in Chinese writing is what pushes Montale to see it as so easily translatable—adjacent to the

[375] Eugenio Montale, "Prefazione," *Liriche cinesi (1753 a.C. – 1278 d.C.)*, translated by Giorgia Valensin (Milan: Mondadori, 1966 [1943]), 9.

[376] Montale, "Prefazione," 16.

[377] Montale, "Prefazione," 16.

[378] Ernest Fenollosa, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry," in Ezra Pound, *The Instigations of Ezra Pound, Together with an Essay on the Chinese Written Character* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), 362–3.

fantasy of Chinese as a "universal" language that cropped up in many Western fantasies of Chinese from the 1600s onward.[379]

The connection between thing and sign outlined by Montale is reflected in other Italian thinkers of the time, who began associating the Chinese language with a privileged connection between language and body. Margherita Guidacci, for instance, published a translation of some poems by eighth-century Tang dynasty poet Tu Fu (sometimes transliterated as Du Fu) in 1957, and considered how, in her mind, Tu Fu's poetry represented an antidote to a poetics that was "'[d]isincarnato', 'rarefatto', 'aereo'"[380] [disembodied/unfleshed, rarefied, aerial]. Instead, Tu Fu's poetry represented what poetry needed to be in the postwar: "Sappiamo ormai che la poesia si salva soltanto mediante una nuova 'incarnazione'"[381] [We know by now that poetry can only be saved through a new 'embodiment' / 'enfleshment']. This association of Chinese writing with fleshliness is one that art and literary critic Renato Barilli also noted in a 1958 review of an Italian-French art exhibition. Barilli described how Chinese-French artist Zao Wou-Ki incorporated Chinese writing into his art: "Zao Wou Ki fa uso personalissimo dei segni orientali, li contrae in piccoli, duri nuclei cigliati, li conficca nel tessuto di fondo del quadro, percorso dal

[379] I am thinking of the English architect and scholar John Webb, who in 1669 wrote "An historical essay endeavoring a probability that the language of the Empire of China is the primitive language." In it, he hypothesized that Chinese was the only language that was not affected by the linguistic fall—i.e., the "Confusion of Tongues" of the Tower of Babel—and therefore the Chinese have "retained the PRIMITIVE Tongue, as having received it from Noah" (cited in Daniel Albright, "Western Fantasies of Chinese: Webb, Fenollosa, Pound" (2014), 149–50). Much of Webb's conception of China and Chinese came from the reports of Jesuit missionaries, which also greatly interested mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz just a decade or two after Webb's work. Leibniz was an important figure for Rosselli; Antonio Loreto has outlined connections between his thought and Rosselli's (Antonio Loreto, *I santi padri di Amelia Rosselli.* Variazioni belliche *e l'avanguardia*, 2014, in particular 26–32). Leibniz was invested in conceiving of Chinese as a potential universal language. According to a letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli from 13 August 1955, by that date she had read Leibniz's 1714 work *Monadologia*.

[380] Margherita Guidacci, "Variazioni su un vecchio tema," *il verri*, primavera 1957 (n. 3), 149–50.

[381] Guidacci, "Variazioni su un vecchio tema," 149–50.

canto suo da una lieve pulsazione sanguigna"[382] [Zao Wou Ki makes a very personal use of Eastern signs: he contracts them into small, hard, edged nuclei, he sticks them in the fabric at the base of the painting, which in its turn is traversed by a light circulatory throbbing]. For Barilli, Zao Wou Ki's use of Chinese writing in his painting participates in some kind of biological fleshliness: the Chinese writing is in little cells with nuclei and cilia ("piccoli, duri nuclei cigliati"). These cells allow the painting to become incarnate through a circulatory system, blood throbbing (the painting is traversed by "una lieve pulsazione sanguigna"). The choice to describe the painting's "pulsazione sanguigna" then reframes the "tessuto" in which the cell-like Chinese writing is stuck: "tessuto," in Italian, has the double meaning of "fabric" and "tissue."

References to China, Chinese literature, and Chinese writing, then, in 1950s Italian artistic circles, seemed to be used as shorthand for a language that could communicate a specific, corporeal sense of time and space to a reader—reminiscent of Rosselli's description of what she was trying to do with the works that describe her promenades through Rome: an attempt to transcribe "la tua partecipazione con l'ambiente, tutt'altro che automatica, diretta, mentre vivi, cerchi di trascrivere le tue impressioni dell'ambiente, cosa ci fai dentro, insomma" [participating in the environment in a direct way, not an automatic one: as you're living, you try to transcribe your impressions of the environment, what you're doing in it, more or less].[383] This concept was associated with the idea that Chinese literature and writing were an example of how to escape from a closed, hypersubjective perspective in lyric. Guidacci expresses how Tu Fu's poetry, for her, represented the way to "colmare la breccia che si è scavata fra il mondo della poesia e il

[382] Renato Barilli, "La mostra Italia-Francia," in *il verri*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1958), 147.

[383] Galeno, Converso, and Rosselli, "Non è la mia ambizione essere eccentrica," 205.

mondo che chiameremo, più genericamente, umano"[384] [bridge the breach that has been dug between the world of poetry and the world that we call, more generically, the human world]. Tu Fu's lyric "può certo avere un immenso valore di testimonianza e trasportarci nel cuore di una società"[385] [can certainly have immense value as testimony/bearing witness and transport us into the heart of a society].

Conclusions

Rosselli's fantasy of Chinese as a medium that could combine meaning with corporeality, as a language that could record subjective corporeal experiences and communicate them precisely to an addressee, is therefore connected to various other mediatic fantasies of Chinese present both in Anglo American and French modernist movements and in Italian postwar discourse. I have argued that, in *Le Chinois à Rome* and in the *Diario in tre lingue*, the multilingual play in which the speaker engages is a commentary on the distance of French, English, and Italian from the possibility of a language that records and communicates subjective sensory impressions of a specific place and time. These texts are both a staging and a "punto di rifiuto" [rejection] of a hypersubjective multilingual poetics, as Rosselli put it in the 1987 interview cited earlier in this chapter;[386] and, at the same time, they reveal a "ricerca," a quest, for a new medium, a new way of recording one's own interaction with the surrounding world.[387]

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[384] Guidacci, "Variazioni su un vecchio tema," 149–50.

[385] Guidacci, "Variazioni su un vecchio tema," 151.

[386] Spagnoletti and Rosselli, "Fatti estremi" (1987), 88.

[387] I use "ricerca"/quest as a reference to Rosselli's own way of describing her poetry as "poesia della ricerca".

This fantasy medium had political implications for Rosselli. As the speaker writes at one point in the *Diario*, "non son mai stata così collettiva (però nella lingua)"[388] [I've never been so collective (linguistically)], and the goal of a kind of language that could be a medium that communicates beyond one's own subjective sphere was paramount. The question of the relationship between self and other, the centrality of the social, was what Rosselli thought poetry should examine. As she put it in a 1980 interview with Aurelio Andreoli, "Sul piano sociale la poesia può servire se tocca la collettività, non tanto l'esperienza personale. È poesia secondo me riuscire a trasmettere questa esperienza del reale collettivo"[389] [On the social level, poetry can be useful if it touches the collective, not so much personal experience. Poetry, in my mind, is to be able to transmit this experience of collective reality].

This desire for collectivity relates to Rosselli's interest in finding universal forms through examinations of cultural difference. In the following chapter, I consider how Rosselli frames her poetics in her collection *Variazioni Belliche* [War Variations] (1964) as another quest for universal forms through her paratexts, primarily her essay "Spazi metrici." The paratexts inscribe Rosselli's poetics into investigations of cultural difference and attempts to understand common structures underlying all cultural production (structural linguistics, ethnography/ethnomusicology, electroacoustic research). New media and technologies come up as a way to dissect different cultural forms—primarily linguistic ones—and get at their commonalities. These dissections constitute another way of attempting to get at what Chinese represents in Rosselli's work: a medium that can convey, exactly and transparently, one person's

[388] Rosselli, *Diario in tre lingue*, 626.

[389] Aurelio Andreoli and Amelia Rosselli, "L'esperienza del reale collettivo" (1980), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 40.

corporeal and subjective experience to another. However, ultimately, as I explain in Chapter 4, the question of how difference and universality can coexist remains unanswered.

Chapter 4: Seeking balance between universals and particulars.

Relationships between self and other in *Variazioni Belliche* and its paratexts, in conversation with ethnography and phonetics

Introduction

Until this point in the dissertation, I have examined texts that Rosselli wrote before her debut as a poet on the Italian literary scene, when she still thought that her primary career would be in music. The only two texts she had published before 1963 were, in fact, focused on music: "Armonia di gravitazione" (1950) and "La serie degli armonici" (1954). Although in this dissertation I have examined poetic texts written before 1963, like *Cantilena* (1953), *Le Chinois à Rome*, and *Diario in tre lingue* (1954–1956), these were not published until later.[390] Rosselli's first published poetry collection, *Variazioni Belliche* [War Variations] (1964), was published after twenty-four of its poems were printed in an important Italian literary journal: "Ventiquattro poesie," in Elio Vittorini and Italo Calvino's *Il Menabò di letteratura*, in September 1963.[391] Rosselli was able to secure her position in such a prestigious publication thanks in part to the advocacy of Pier Paolo Pasolini, who wrote an accompanying "Notizia su Amelia Rosselli" [Note on Amelia Rosselli] that immediately followed Rosselli's poems. Pasolini guided Rosselli through much of the publication process of *Variazioni Belliche*, both its excerpts in *Il Menabò* and its final iteration in 1964, when it was published in full by Garzanti. Pasolini's readings of

[390] *Cantilena* was first published in 1965, in *Galleria*, and *Le Chinois à Rome* was published in *Paragone* in 1968. Both of these, along with the *Diario in tre lingue* and other early poetic works by Rosselli, would later be included in *Primi scritti*, published by Guanda in 1980.

[391] Amelia Rosselli, "Ventiquattro poesie," in *Il Menabò di letteratura*, Vol. 6 (September 1963): 42–65.

Rosselli's poetics have loomed large in subsequent interpretations, although Rosselli herself protested against his readings of her writing. Indeed, in order to correct what she perceived as his and others' misreadings, she wrote (at Pasolini's urging) glossaries for Vittorini and Pasolini during the *Il Menabò* publication process in 1962–1963 and a glossary for a later iteration of the text (which at the time she was calling *Variazioni 123*). She also wrote the most-discussed of her theoretical works: a dense, challenging explanation of her own poetics called "Spazi metrici" [Metrical spaces] (1962) that was published as a postface to *Variazioni Belliche* when it came out as a collection in 1964.

In this chapter, I examine the poetry of *Variazioni Belliche* and provide one possible set of relationships between the collection, the paratexts, and Rosselli's intellectual formation.[392] In my reading, the paratexts inscribe the poems' discussions of alterity into a nexus of cultural difference, technology, and bodies that resonates with Rosselli's early research in ethnomusicology and electroacoustics. On their own, without the paratexts, the poems focus on the relationship between a self and an other, often in an attempt to understand what constitutes difference and where the self ends and the other begins. Sometimes alterity is defined through references to cultural or racial differences between speaker and interlocutor, but alterity through this lens is understated in the poems. The paratexts (Rosselli's statement of poetics, "Spazi metrici," and the glossaries) amplify this aspect of Rosselli's poetics. They connect the poems to

[392] Stefano Giovannuzzi has described at length the disconnects between *Variazioni Belliche* and "Spazi metrici," and the difficulty of penetrating into the opaque way that Rosselli describes her own poetics. Giovannuzzi and others, like Antonio Loreto and Daniela La Penna have connected "Spazi metrici" to Olson's idea of "Projective Verse," though Jennifer Scappettone has also demonstrated how Rosselli interpreted Olson in her own highly idiosyncratic way. Stefano Giovannuzzi, *Amelia Rosselli: Biografia e poesia* (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 47–77; Antonio Loreto, *I santi padri di Amelia Rosselli.* Variazioni Belliche *e l'avanguardia* (Milan: Arcipelago, 2014), 138; Daniela La Penna, *"La promessa d'un semplice linguaggio." Lingua e stile nella poesia di Amelia Rosselli* (Rome: Carocci, 2014), 61; Jennifer Scappettone, "Cantonidisintegratidella / miavita': Closure and Implosion of the Canto(n) in Amelia Rosselli, and the Dream (or Nightmare) of a Transnational Language," in *Moderna. Semestrale di teoria e critica della letteratura*, Vol. 15, no. 2 (2013), 141.

Rosselli's experience in fieldwork in the Italian South and her research in ethnomusicology and acoustics—in particular, the role of recording in exploring all sorts of bodies and bodily expressions, in an attempt to understand and classify what makes bodies different and what makes them the same, across cultural and linguistic contexts.

Ultimately, in my analysis I argue that the poems of *Variazioni Belliche* and their paratexts represent a quest to find universal systems while still foregrounding the existence of various forms of difference on cultural, linguistic, and individual levels. This quest, in my reading, is related to various key aspects of Rosselli's intellectual life in the 1950s and early 1960s: ethnography and Third-Worldist discourses; research grappling with linguistic difference, dialects, and folk poetics within Italy; and explorations of phonetics carried out by electroacousticians, with implications for electronic music composition and ethnomusicological research.

The importance of the other in *Variazioni Belliche*

Before turning to the poems themselves, I want to examine how the poems were presented in their first publication, as "Ventiquattro poesie." Elio Vittorini, in his editor's note to the volume of *Il Menabò* in which the poems appeared, emphasizes that this issue is unlike previous ones in that it is not about the question of the relationship between "industry and literature." Instead, he sees this issue as a meditation on how literature makes "nessi" [nexuses] that are different from the linguistic connections of the "vecchio linguaggio" [old language], whose connections, in his mind, are akin to what Roland Barthes would formulate as the second-

order signification that characterizes the language of myth.[393] Instead, Vittorini sees this issue of *Il Menabò* as focusing on the creation of new nexuses in language. He describes these nexuses as making strange and different bodies: "noi crediamo al farsi dei corpi, estendersi, restringersi, mutare; e alla parte che ha la letteratura in questo farsi; quindi anche i nessi di un momento di una letteratura con un momento di un'altra ci interessano, e molto"[394] [we believe in bodies' creation, extension, restriction, mutation; and in the role that literature plays in this creation; and therefore the nexuses between a moment in one literature and a moment in another also interest us very much].

Pasolini, in his "Notizia su Amelia Rosselli," focuses on the idea of mutation that emerges from Vittorini's editor's note. However, rather than thinking about Rosselli's poems as articulating mutating nexuses between a self and an other, he centers on an idea of her poetic language as isolated, a self-replicating virus in a secluded laboratory that has suddenly burst forth: it is "nata come fuori dal cervello, quasi proiezione fisica di un involucro spirituale razionalmente inesprimibile"[395] [as if born outside the brain, almost a physical projection of a rationally inexpressible spiritual shell]. It is also "deforme"[396] [deformed], "abnorme"[397]

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[393] Elio Vittorini, untitled editor's note to *Il Menabò di letteratura*, Vol. 6 (September 1963), 2: "'catene' e 'spirito', 'materia' e 'sospiro ardente', 'valle di lagrime' e 'paso doble', 'soldato' e 'bandiera', 'peccato' e 'redenzione', 'carne' e 'caro ideal', 'elettrodomestici' e 'missa est', 'esistere' ed 'essere', 'Coca' e 'Cola', eccetera eccetera" ["chains" and "spirit," "matter" and "ardent sigh," "valley of tears" and "paso doble," "soldier" and "flag," "sin" and "redemption," "flesh" and "dear ideal," "appliances" and "mass is ended," "existing" and "being," "Coca" and "Cola," etcetera etcetera]. Barthes explains, in *Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard and Annette Lavers (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 223: "myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain that existed before it: it *is a second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system becomes a mere signifier in the second."

[394] Elio Vittorini, untitled editor's note to *Il Menabò di letteratura*, Vol. 6 (September 1963), 2.

[395] Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Notizia su Amelia Rosselli," in *Il Menabò di letteratura*, Vol. 6 (September 1963), 66.

[396] Pasolini, "Notizia," 68.

[397] Pasolini, "Notizia," 67.

[abnormal], "epilettic[a]"[398] [epileptic], and as terrible or terrifying as a cancer or an atomic explosion: "questa lingua — ripeto — è dominata da qualcosa di meccanico: emulsione che prende forma per suo conto, imposseduta, come si ha l'impressione che succeda per gli esperimenti di laboratorio più terribili, tumori, scoppi atomici, dominati solo scientificamente, ma non nei sintomi della terribilità, in quel loro accadere ormai oggettivo. Sicché il magma — la terribilità — è fissato in forme strofiche tanto più chiuse e assolute quanto più arbitrarie"[399] [again, this language is dominated by something mechanical: an emulsion that takes shape on its own, possessed, as it seems occurs for the most terrible laboratory experiments: tumors, atomic explosions, mastered only scientifically in their by-now objective occurrences, but not in the symptoms of their terribleness. So the magma—the terribleness—is fixed in strophic forms that are as closed and absolute as they are arbitrary].

Rosselli's language is diseased, in Pasolini's telling,[400] and marked by the use of the "lapsus," the term he employs for the ways the poems misuse words or create neologisms. The terminology, "lapsus," is Freudian, and implies a slip of the unconscious into conscious linguistic production.[401] Pasolini describes these moments as eruptions of terror within scenes of beauty, or vice versa: "lussureggiante oasi fiorita con la stupefacente e casuale violenza del dato di fatto, ai margini del dominio," "un terreno dove esplodere con la funesta e meravigliosa fecondità dei

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[398] Pasolini, "Notizia," 67.

[399] Pasolini, "Notizia," 66.

[400] Here I am borrowing from Elizabeth Leake, in *After Words: Suicide and Authorship in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), who says that Pasolini's "Notizia su Amelia Rosselli" initiated a "discourse of disease" surrounding Rosselli's poetry (79), further amplified in critical analyses after Rosselli's death by suicide in 1996.

[401] Sigmund Freud, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (London: Benn, 1914).

funghi atomici"[402] [luxurious flowering oasis with the stupefying and random violence of facts, at the margins of dominion; a terrain in which to explode with the sinister and marvelous fecundity of atomic mushrooms]. He concludes by defining her poetic production as participating in the "Mito dell'Irrazionalità"[403] [Myth of Irrationality], marked by "i grandi temi della Nevrosi e del Mistero"[404] [the great themes of Neurosis and Mystery].

Rosselli's response to Pasolini's note is the first of her own paratexts to her poems that I examine, and, like the glossaries I analyze later in the chapter, it was not meant to be public. She countered Pasolini's interpretations privately, in a letter to her brother John from October 1963, right after the issue of *Il Menabò* was published (later, after Pasolini's death in 1975, she would make her qualms about Pasolini's "Notizia" public in interviews):

> As to the metrics of the poems, I see that Pasolini in his note makes no mention of them: they are quite and unexpectedly rational, but I'll have to publish the essay on metrics separately, so as to clear the mystery. As to Pasolini's note, it's certainly nice enough, though I don't agree with his use of the word "lapsus" (which is grammatically purely Freudian)—my "mixtures," linguistically, are rarely mixtures, at all, but refer to baroque or absurd turns of phrases or syllables, in use in Italy specially in the South, in the poetry of [Dino] Campana, in dialect, or in other languages… etc., etc.
> As to "Mystery" + "Neurosis" + "Mito dell'Irrazionale" [Myth of the Irrational]—same type of objection—I would have rather spoken of the "Mito del Razionale"! Anyway P.[asolini] made [did] me a very big favour, in a certain sense unexpected (he'd not shown me his essay) what with his compliments, & his great help in finding 2 big editors.[405]

[402] Pasolini, "Notizia," 68–9.

[403] Pasolini, "Notizia," 68.

[404] Pasolini, "Notizia," 69.

[405] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 25 October 1963.

The "essay on metrics" that Rosselli mentions is "Spazi metrici," which she actually wrote at Pasolini's urging in 1962.[406] Her explanation of her linguistic "mixtures" is one that remains consistent with other paratexts, which at this point, in 1963, were unpublished: two glossaries that she sent to Pasolini and Vittorini in 1962, in an attempt to clear up Vittorini's perplexities regarding what he viewed as Rosselli's error-riddled Italian.

With this statement to John, Rosselli insists on something that remains consistent throughout her paratexts to *Variazioni Belliche*: her strange language is not an expression of her unconscious, but rather reflective of the strange language of others. These strange languages seem most often to be the languages of people considered to be outsiders, even within Italy: not only languages that are unrelated to Italian, but also minor languages like dialects (especially, in Rosselli's telling, Southern Italian dialects), and, in the case of Dino Campana, a mentally ill poet who had been on the fringes of various Italian literary movements about fifty years prior to Rosselli's activity.[407] Rosselli sees her poetry as a turning-outward, an exploration of others, not an expression of her unconscious.

Rosselli also insists on the rationality of her poetry: "the metrics of the poems" are "unexpectedly rational." In her telling, her poetry revolves around the "Myth of the Rational," not the "Myth of the Irrational." In reading the poems of *Variazioni Belliche* alongside "Spazi metrici," I consider how the poems articulate a "Myth of the Rational" in their desire to uncover

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[406] Lucia Re, in "Amelia Rosselli: A Life of Poetry," introduction to *War Variations/Variazioni Belliche*, trans. Lucia Re and Paul Vangelisti (Los Angeles: Otis Books; Seismicity Editions, 2016), explains this discrepancy between Pasolini's knowledge of Rosselli's carefully curated and technical discussions of her poetics and his choice to describe her poetry as he did in the "Notizia": "Ironically, it was Pasolini himself who suggested that [Rosselli] write the essay entitled 'Spazi metrici' ['Metrical spaces']. He was, as their surviving correspondence indicates, aware of the serious research and work that lay beyond Rosselli's experimentalism, yet he chose to minimize it for reasons more connected to his general dislike of the avant-garde than with Rosselli's work in particular" (14).

[407] Rosselli loved a number of Italian "outsider-poets," or at least poets whom she considered to be outsiders: in addition to Campana, she appreciated Sandro Penna, Lorenzo Calogero, and Scipione (Gino Bonichi).

a system that can make sense of a wide variety of languages, cultures, people, places. Drawing on research in ethnomusicology and acoustics, the poems of *Variazioni Belliche* invoke, poetically, these fields' attempts to elucidate the complex relationships between self and other, in particular with regards to linguistic communication.

In the following sections of this chapter, I first turn to how Rosselli depicts self and other in *Variazioni Belliche*, analyzing moments from the poems alongside the glossaries and "Spazi metrici." I demonstrate how Rosselli's paratexts inscribe her poems into larger discourses on cultural and linguistic differences. For instance, the glossaries encourage a focus on marginalized Italian people and the languages they speak, encouraging a reading of the poems that centers shifting conceptions of geographic and linguistic centers and peripheries—a reading that, without the glossaries, is not necessarily obvious. In turning to "Spazi metrici," I analyze how its references to reels ("rulli") emphasize a technologically mediated encounter with the other in the elaboration of *Variazioni Belliche*. I argue that the ideas expressed in "Spazi metrici" are reminiscent of both the ethnographic encounter and the research on human vocality and language production taking place in electronic music studios throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Through "Spazi metrici," Rosselli inscribes the language and themes of *Variazioni Belliche* into research attempting to delineate the basic units of language. In my reading of both "Spazi metrici" and *Variazioni Belliche*, Rosselli demonstrates an interest both in uncovering these basic units and universal understandings of language, but also in maintaining the specificity of linguistic difference. In other words, I see her casting her poetic project as one that grapples with the difficult quest to pinpoint larger, universal systems without the destruction of variety.

Variazioni Belliche: making sense of the words of others

Variazioni Belliche is an enormous collection consisting of hundreds of poems divided into two parts. The first part, "Poesie (1959)," contains poetry that Rosselli supposedly wrote in 1959; they are more irregular in their form and are not all blocks of text on the page with roughly the same line length, structured loosely around the idea of a theme and variations, as is mostly the case in the poems from the second section, "Variazioni."[408] In many of the poems of "Variazioni" (written in 1960–1961), a phrase or elements of a phrase that start a poem are repeated, slightly modified phonetically or semantically, and/or rearranged (in their order, or across line breaks in varying enjambments). Associated words are also swapped in at times, and two different associations are played with: association based on definition or semantic field, or association based on sound and phonemes. (The twenty-four poems published in *Il Menabò* in 1963 all came from the "Variazioni" section of *Variazioni Belliche.*) Despite the formal differences between poems in "Poesie" and poems in "Variazioni," there are some consistent stylistic features: repetition and recombination of adjectives applied to different figures in the same poem; unorthodox uses of prepositions; and neologisms. I argue that each of these stylistic features is representative of an interest in attempts to understand what the differences between the self and the other are.

To begin, many of the poems of *Variazioni Belliche* involve a reshuffling of adjectives and attributes that lead to questions of how to distinguish between the lyric I, the addressee, and

[408] I say "supposedly" because she later rewrote the timeline (in interviews). Since the long poem "La libellula" was written in "metrica chiusa" in 1958, she ultimately claimed that the non-"metrica chiusa" poems of "Poesie (1959)" had actually been written *before* "La libellula" in 1958. According to Stefano Giovannuzzi, in "Amelia Rosselli a Pasolini. Frammenti di una biografia letteraria," in *Lettere a Pasolini. 1962–1969* (Genoa: San Marco dei Giustiniani, 2008), this discrepancy can be explained as Rosselli trying to make her poetic trajectory more cohesive/methodical than it was.

other elements described in the poem, as in this passage from the poem "Stesa a terra pugnalavo il mio miglior amico": "Gli alberi tornando / a casa erano delicatissimi. Io ero delicatissima tornando / a casa! io giacevo supina come una mosca imbrattata di / miele. Lui era il mio re debolissimo io la sua regina imbrattata / di sangue. Tu sei il mio re debolissimo imbrattato di porpora!"[409] [Going back / home the trees were very delicate. I was very delicate going / back home! I lay on my back like a fly smeared with / honey. He was my very weak king I his queen covered / with blood. You are my very weak king covered with purple!][410] Each element takes on the attributes of something or someone else: the trees are delicate, and so the speaker is delicate; the speaker is like a honey-soaked fly, then becomes a blood-soaked queen, and the addressee takes on the same attribute, becoming purple-soaked. The speaker thematizes the question of sameness and difference that emerges in these adjectival exchanges in another poem, stating "Non so se di tra le pennella rustiche del tuo / mentire, esista una differenza: tra me e te e il / belvedere. Non so se di tra me e te nel belvedere / esista una differenza. Io so che di tra me e / te esiste la gloria e la differenza"[411] [I don't know if among the rustic brushes of your / lying, a difference exists: between me and you and the / view. I don't know if between you and me in the view / exists a difference. I know that between me and / you exists glory and difference.][412] Whether there is a difference between "you" and "me" is unclear: first the speaker is unsure

[409] Amelia Rosselli, "Stesa a terra pugnalavo il mio miglior amico. Ma gli affari," in *Variazioni Belliche*, in *Amelia Rosselli. L'opera poetica*, ed. Stefano Giovannuzzi, Francesco Carbognin, Chiara Carpita, Silvia De March, Gabriella Palli Baroni, Emmanuela Tandello (Milan: Mondadori, 2012), 44.

[410] Amelia Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Lucia Re and Paul Vangelisti (København; Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2005), 103.

[411] Rosselli, "Non so se di tra le pietre spuntate de la indifferenza," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 92.

[412] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Evangelisti, 203.

about the difference, then she knows it is there. What makes the self a self, and the other an other, is always up for debate.

In this respect, a one-line poem that Rosselli had originally planned to put last in the collection is emblematic:[413] "Cercatemi e fuoriuscite"[414] [Look for me and be released (literally "go outside"; fuoriuscire is a combination of "fuori" (outside) and "uscire" (to go out/leave)].[415] The self cannot be defined by its interiority; it is only explicable in relation to others outside of it. A similar statement is made in another poem, included in the twenty-four poems originally published in *Il Menabò* in 1963: "Perché non spero giammai tornare nella città delle bellezze / eccomi di ritorno in me stessa. Perché non spero mai ritrovare / me stessa, eccomi di ritorno fra delle mura. Le mura pesanti / e ignare rinchiudono il prigioniero"[416] [Because I do not hope ever to return to the city of beauty / here I am back inside myself. Because I do not hope ever to find / myself again, here I am back between walls. Heavy and dull / walls shut in the prisoner].[417] The poem opens with an almost-undisguised citation of Guido Cavalcanti's *ballata*, written in 1300, "Perch'i' no' spero di tornar giammai" [Because I do not hope to ever return], where the poet in exile sends his poem to his beloved. The Cavalcanti poem, being a *ballata*, avails itself of a kind of repetitive, circular movement formally, since every stanza is followed by the refrain. In Rosselli's poem, the repetitive, circular movement is on a smaller scale, but it is also thematized. The speaker cannot return to the city, and so returns to herself; but then she cannot find herself,

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[413] Rosselli, *Lettere a Pasolini*, 36.

[414] Rosselli, "Cercatemi e fuoriuscite," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 156.

[415] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 335.

[416] Rosselli, "Perché non spero tornare giammai nella città delle bellezze," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 160.

[417] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 343

so she returns to the walls (of the city), where a prisoner is hemmed in. The self and the city switch places, and then the self switches gender: returning "between the walls," the "me stessa" (myself, gendered feminine) seems to switch places with a "prigioniero," a male prisoner. This poem reveals Rosselli's continued investment in poetry *as* lyric, quoting from one of the early, quintessential Italian lyric poets. At the same time, the speakers, interlocutors, and locations of these poems are constantly shifting, creating people-objects, multi-gendered speakers, and spaces that are both closed and porous.

In my reading, the excessive use of prepositions in the poems of *Variazioni Belliche* is also representative of these poems' attempts to understand the networks of relationships between the self and others. Throughout the poem "Non so se di tra le pietre spuntate de la indifferenza"[418] [I don't know if among the blunt stones of indifference],[419] for instance, the word "tra" (between) is always unusually and unnecessarily preceded by "di" (of): "di tra," of between. Other unusual and mostly unnecessary prepositional pairings are "dopo di" (after of) and "contro di" (against of). Sometimes these prepositional pairings alternate with more typical uses of single prepositions: "dopo" alternates with "dopo di," "contro" alternates with "contro di," all in the same poems. According to Stefano Giovannuzzi, Rosselli seemed to see these double prepositions as representative of her poetic language.[420] At the same time, they end up being a key element indicating the quest to understand relationships between self and other in these poems.

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[418] Rosselli, "Non so se di tra le pietre spuntate de la indifferenza," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 92.

[419] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 203.

[420] Giovannuzzi, "Amelia Rosselli a Pasolini," 111.

Another surprising and somewhat disorienting feature of the poems are the neologisms, what Pasolini termed the "lapsus." One appears in the first poem of the "Variazioni" section of the collection: "Se nella notte sorgeva un dubbio su dell'essenza del mio / cristianesimo, esso svaniva con la lacrima della canzonetta / del bar vicino. Se dalla notte sorgeva il dubbio dello / etmisfero cangiante e sproporzionato, allora richiedevo / aiuto"[421] [If in the night a doubt arose about the essence of my / christianity, it disappeared with the tear in the pop tune / from the nearby café. If from the night a doubt arose on the / changing and proportionless etmisphere, then I again asked for / help.][422] The doubts here are related to the neologism "etmisfero," a word that Rosselli explained, in her glossary, as a mixture derived from "'emisfero' e 'atmosfera', riducendo spazio a livello umano"[423] ["hemisphere" and "atmosphere," reducing space to the human level]. In other ways, the invented word is reminiscent of a fusion of "emisfero" and the prefix *ethnos*, "etno-" in Italian. The idea of an "etmisfero" is a kind of expansion of the "ethnos," an expansion of people into the context of a larger world. At the same time, this expansion does not entail easy comprehension: the "etmisfero" is "cangiante e sproporzionato," changing[424] and disproportionate, a world that encapsulates the diversity of people but is also just out of the reach of comprehension. The neologism occurs again, gendered feminine, in another poem, in which an "anacoreta" [anchorite] who is also an "amorosa" [an amorous woman]

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[421] Rosselli, "Se nella notte sorgeva un dubbio su dell'essenza del mio," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 41.

[422] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 96.

[423] Amelia Rosselli, "Glossarietto esplicativo a *Variazioni Belliche*," in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 70.

[424] Rosselli particularly loved the word "cangiante." This may also be related to a mystical sense of change, through Montale's translation of Gerard Manley Hopkins' "Pied Beauty," "Bellezza cangiante," as is pointed out by Francesco Carbognin, *Le armoniose dissonanze: "spazio metrico" e intertestualità nella poesia di Amelia Rosselli* (Bologna: Gedit, 2008), 62.

studies “piani e etmisfere / senza controllo”[425] [plans and etmispheres / without control].[426] Here is another conflict, between a desire for solitude and desire to be in relation with others (“anacoreta” and “amorosa”) is coupled with the quest for an ordered world that still contains the vast differences of people (“piani e etmisfere”).

Tracking the *ethnos* in *Variazioni Belliche*: creating new geographic relationships

Actual references to different *ethnos*, or to ethnography, are present, but obliquely, in the poems of *Variazioni Belliche*. There are few proper names, of people or of places, but the first one that appears in “Ventiquattro poesie” is in the third poem: “Se l’anima perde il suo dono allora perde terreno, se l’inferno / è una cosa certa, allora l’Abissinia della mia anima rinasce”[427] [If the soul loses its gift then it loses ground, if hell is / a sure thing, then the Abyssinia of my soul is born again].[428] In the “Ventiquattro poesie,” the invocation of Italy’s former colony, and its association of Abyssinia with the speaker, comes right before the first poem that mentions Italy; in *Variazioni Belliche*, the order of the two is flipped, but still the two are right next to each other, a reminder of the uncomfortable proximity of colonialism. In both the “Ventiquattro poesie” and *Variazioni Belliche*, China appears, as well as Tibet, as well as pre-Columbian America. A new set of geographic relationships is gestured toward in these poems, new constellations of places that mirror the shifting connections between lyric I, addressee, and other elements of poems conveyed by the linguistic techniques I outlined above. Abyssinia is placed

[425] Rosselli, “Contro del re dell’universo gridavano anacoreta e,” in *Variazioni Belliche*, 72.

[426] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 161.

[427] Rosselli, “Se l’anima perde il suo dono allora perde terreno, se l’inferno,” in *Variazioni Belliche*, 47.

[428] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 109.

alongside Italy, for one. Eastern carpets are placed alongside Picasso and granite from Tibet;[429] ancient China contains Andalusian flowers, a description that merges into a cold and distant Japan that is the homeland, "patria," of the addressee.[430] Present-day "America" exists alongside the "massa agricola precolombiana" [the pre-columbian peasant mass] and the "grande Fiume Tao"[431] [great river Tao].[432] In the poem immediately following, the "feste precolombiane" [pre-columbian holidays] join the "danubio" [danube], which joins Russia and which, in the end, recalls the "Comare d'Italia"[433] [Old peasant women of Italy].[434]

These gestures toward a redrawing of maps, bringing together places where different *ethnos* live, exist in the brief moments where the poems of *Variazioni Belliche* actually reference place names. They signal a desire for proximity with places previously considered to be distant, the places that, as I have shown throughout this dissertation, captured Rosselli's scholarly interest, her fantasies and her imagination: places in Asia, places in Africa, places that had been her points of focus in her studies at the Musée de l'Homme.[435] Southern Italy comes up as well,

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[429] Rosselli, "Nel tappeto di Balzabar era la rinascita. Nell'ombre," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 70. This is also the twelfth poem in the "Ventiquattro poesie."

[430] Rosselli, "Nell'antica Cina vi erano fiori d'andalusa. Tu non fischi," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 148.

[431] Rosselli, "Il condominio pagava la sua parte di rancore ed accomodava," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 66. This is also the eleventh poem in "Ventiquattro poesie."

[432] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 149.

[433] Rosselli, "Simile ad un pugnale si levava il grido della gentilezza:," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 67.

[434] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 151.

[435] The mention of Andalusia is interesting, as well, especially in relation to Rosselli's interest in Federico García Lorca. There has been a paucity of scholarship analyzing the connections between Rosselli and García Lorca, but she may have read his "Juego y teoría del duende," which connected Andalusian poetry to Arabic roots. Sara Sermini has connected Rosselli's interest to García Lorca to her interest in Bartók, in *"E se paesani/zoppicanti sono questi versi": povertà e follia nell'opera di Amelia Rosselli* (Florence: Olschki, 2019), 87: "È possibile istituire un parallelo tra musica e poesia intrecciando cronologicamente lo studio di Bartók e della musica popolare alla scoperta della poesia di Lorca, in particolare dei canti gitani e andalusi" [It is possible to institute a parallel between music and poetry by chronologically intertwining the study of Bartók and folk music with Rosselli's discovery of Lorca's

though no places in Southern Italy are named. Instead, the Italian South is invoked through the constant mentions of "analfabeti" [illiterate], "contadini" [peasants/farmers], and "poveri" [the poor], lexical choices that are closely related to how Rosselli's good friend, the Lucanian writer and politician Rocco Scotellaro, described his fellow Southern Italians, whom he was working to document sociologically and emancipate economically. However, like the vague geographical references that gesture toward redrawing a world map, the references to Southern Italy are hazy and difficult to pick out. And yet, in Rosselli's paratexts—the glossaries to *Variazioni Belliche*—she repeatedly pointed to a Southern Italian, or folk, or dialect influence in her poetic language.

The Italian South in *Variazioni Belliche*, through a reading of Rosselli's glossaries

Rosselli claimed, throughout her life, that her strange language in the poems of "Ventiquattro poesie" and *Variazioni Belliche* had Southern, folk, or popular roots. She stated this as early as 1962, when she wrote a glossary for her poetry due to Vittorini's confusion about her poetic language. In a letter to Pasolini from June 21, 1962, she explained her reasoning behind making the glossary as an answer to Vittorini's reaction to her strange language: "Vittorini sembrò così imbarazzato da quella mia 'duttilità' o anarchia linguistica (parole 'fuse', inventate o storpiate, o arcaizzanti) che come tu sai mi chiese di correggere il più possibile le 'stonature'. Gli ho scritto comunicandogli la mia decisione (e il tuo consiglio) di non cambiare affatto (soltanto qua e là, dove si trattava di sbagli di dattilografia) quella lingua parlata e a volte popolare per risonanza, o storpiata"[436] [Vittorini seemed so embarrassed by my linguistic

poetry, in particular *gitano* and Andalusian songs]. Some similar connections between Lucanian song and Arabic song in one of Rocco Scotellaro's poems, "I lucani cantano monotoni," in *È fatto giorno* (1954), in *Tutte le poesie, 1940–1953*, ed. Maurizio Cucchi (Milan: Mondadori, 2004), 91–92.

[436] Rosselli, *Lettere a Pasolini*, 17.

'malleability' or anarchy ('fused,' invented, deformed, or archaicizing words) that, as you know, he asked me to correct the 'false notes' as much as possible. I wrote to him to communicate my decision (and your advice) not to change anything at all (only here and there, where there were typing errors) about my language, which is spoken and sometimes popular/folk in its echoes, or deformed]. Rosselli would emphasize the spoken, folk roots of her language in another glossary from 1962, and again in the condensed, edited, and published combination of these two glossaries in 1994. In the 1962 glossaries, she often justified strange turns of phrase as "forma meridionale arcaica" [ancient/archaic Southern form], "forma arcaizzante meridionale per ignoranza" [archaic Southern form due to ignorance], "goffaggine meridionale o popolare" [Southern or folk awkwardness].[437] In the later glossary, prepared for publication in 1994, there are fewer mentions of the South specifically, but they are replaced with references to "analfabeta" [illiterate] forms.[438]

In the glossaries, Rosselli justifies as Southern or folk many of the linguistic oddities that recur throughout *Variazioni Belliche*. Incorrect uses of definite articles is one: for "lavatemi gli piedi"[439] [wash my feet], she explains that the use of the article "gli" for "i" is a Southern Italian exchange.[440] "Cristo seduto al suolo *su delle* / gambe inclinate"[441] [Christ sitting on the ground

[437] These glossaries, in their original 1962 forms, have been published in the *Lettere a Pasolini*, 21–40.

[438] Giovannuzzi, in "Amelia Rosselli e Pasolini," states that the 1994 "Glossarietto" emphasizes her ethnographic work more than the 1962 ones. In a comparison of the glossaries, though, I have noted that Rosselli's ethnographic work was already present as a strong undercurrent in her 1962 glossaries, and the 1994 "Glossarietto" actually makes the references to ethnography less geographically specific (not "meridionale" [Southern], but "popolare" [folk] or "analfabeta" [illiterate]).

[439] Rosselli, "e cosa voleva quella folla dai miei sensi se non," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 30.

[440] Rosselli, *Lettere a Pasolini*, 24: "'gli piedi' = 'i piedi', forma arcaizzante meridionale per ignoranza."

[441] Rosselli, "Contiamo infiniti morti! la danza è quasi finita! la morte," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 46.

on / reclined legs][442] (my emphasis), an example of the double prepositions common in *Variazioni Belliche*, she describes as "popolarismo" [folk-ism] just as she does for "tarda giacevo *fra* / *dei* conti in tasca" (my emphasis), a line from the same poem.[443] Similarly, the combination of a preposition and a relative pronoun, incorrect in this case, in "Non ho nessuno *da cui* guidare / gridava!"[444] [I have nobody from whom to lead / he shouted!][445] ("Dentro della preghiera," my emphasis) is described as "goffaggine meridionale o popolare"[446] [Southern or folk awkwardness]. In the 1994 glossary, she identified some gender switching of common nouns as Southern. When discussing her choice to use "i valli" rather than "le valli" in "Non da vicino ti guarderò in faccia,"[447] she states: "intercambio di generi, frequente in tutto il libro *Variazioni Belliche*, del resto frequente, credo, nel parlato, nel letterario e probabilmente nei dialetti"[448] [exchange of genders, frequent in the entire book of *Variazioni Belliche*, which is, after all, common, I believe, in spoken and literary language and probably in dialects too].

Despite Rosselli's statements in the glossaries, it is not immediately obvious that any of these features are related to folk or Southern speech, or to speech at all. The glossaries' choice to write Southernness into the poems is another way for her to cast the poetics of *Variazioni*

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[442] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 107.

[443] Rosselli, *Lettere a Pasolini*, 27: "tarda giacevo fra / *dei* conti in tasca' = (per eliminare sgradevole legatura di 'fra i conti'; è anche goffaggine tipicamente popolare; anche arcaismo)"; "'Cristo seduto al suolo su *delle* gambe inclinate' = (per eliminare predominanza di 's' di 'seduto al suolo sulle'; per aggiungere forza e grottesco all'immagine; per accentuare 'posizione' e 'definizione'; anche popolarismo)".

[444] Rosselli, "Dentro della preghiera rimava ancora il prete con la," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 76.

[445] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 169.

[446] Rosselli, *Lettere a Pasolini*, 30.

[447] Rosselli, "Non da vicino ti guarderò in faccia, né da," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 11.

[448] Rosselli, "Glossarietto esplicativo per *Variazioni Belliche,*" 69.

Belliche as one that contains, at its core, an attempt to redraw the relationships between various selves and various others, various centers and various peripheries, regardless of whether or not it actually adheres to an imitation of spoken or folk language. In this intent, Rosselli's poetic project aligns with others in the Italian landscape in the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1955, Pasolini had published his *Canzoniere italiano: antologia della poesia popolare*, which collected folk poetry from across Italy. For Pasolini, the dialects and variations in speech of marginalized Italians (Southerners, the rural population, and the subproletariat living at the edges of metropolitan centers) came to represent elements of the Third World within Italy.[449] More influential for Rosselli's poetics is the Italian spoken by Lucanian peasants in the interviews that Rocco Scotellaro transcribed in his unfinished sociological exploration, *Contadini del Sud* [Peasants of the South]. Rosselli expressed the importance of *Contadini del Sud* in her poetic and ideological formation at various points in interviews she gave later in her life. In a 1987 interview, she stated that the book "sicuramente mi ha molto influenzato"[450] [surely influenced me a great deal], and in a 1995 interview she put it even more emphatically: "*Contadini del sud* è stata la mia Bibbia per un mare di tempo [...] proprio linguisticamente, per gli esperimenti che faceva Scotellaro, col linguaggio dell'analfabeta che trascrive"[451] [*Contadini del Sud* was my Bible for a long time [...] linguistically, really, due to the experiments that Scotellaro was carrying out, transcribing the language of the illiterate].

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[449] This begins, in Pasolini's oeuvre, in the late 1950s. For more, see Ara H. Merjian, "Race, Class, and the Limits of the Analogical Imagination: Pier Paolo Pasolini's African America," in *SubStance*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (2020, Issue 153), 71–75 in particular.

[450] Giacinto Spagnoletti and Amelia Rosselli, "Fatti estremi" (1987), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 83.

[451] Plinio Perilli and Amelia Rosselli, "Tra le lingue" (1995), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 168.

The part of the book that Scotellaro did finish consists of some introductory essays, written by Scotellaro, and then either transcriptions or actual writings of six different *contadini* of various degrees of literacy. In the sections where the peasants write their own stories, they are writing in Italian, attempting to write formally for public consumption of their work. Some of the errors that they make are similar to the ones that Rosselli defined as Southern or folk: for instance, articles are often mistaken, in both number and orthography (in Andrea DiGrazia's testimony, for instance, we find "litalia" instead of "L'Italia"; "il coltivatori diretti" rather than "i coltivatori diretti").[452] Swapping genders of common nouns, however, does not occur. In fact, most mistakes are orthographic in nature, and have to do with the pronunciation of consonants in Basilicata (and many other Southern regions): "qui" becomes "gui," "d" and "t" are often exchanged, as are "c" and "g" and "ci" and "gi," and there is some confusion between double and single consonants. A more interesting feature, consistent throughout the various documents, is the use of "tenere" in place of "avere," reflecting the more common use of that verb to indicate "to have" in a number of Southern dialects. None of these are reflected in the language of *Variazioni Belliche*.

In the decision not to emulate or mimic the actual features of Southerners speaking Italian, Rosselli's poetry deviates from ideas of dialect poetry in Italy, as well as attempts throughout the wider poetic world to create a poetics out of a vernacular, sometimes minoritized language, particularly in linguistic traditions where legacies of enslavement and/or colonialism had forced a language onto a population.[453] However, although Rosselli's emulation of a

[452] Rocco Scotellaro, *L'uva puttanella / Contadini del Sud* (Bari: Laterza, 2000), 200.

[453] I am thinking of Édouard Glissant's theorizations of the role of Creole in Martinican poetics (interestingly, Rosselli and Glissant overlapped at the Musée de l'Homme, though there is no evidence she knew of him); his first volume of essays on the topic, *Soleil de la conscience*, was published in 1956. Rosselli herself was very passionate about the Mozambican poet José Craveirinha when she read him in Italian translation in 1966; Craveirinha mixed

Southerner's speech is not mimetic, we should not discount the associations that she makes between her poetics and attempts to capture the spoken language of the illiterate or the speakers of minoritized languages within Italy. In many respects, Rosselli's language does give a similar feeling of disorientation as when listening to or reading the words of someone who is unaccustomed to communicating in standard Italian. Sara Sermini has described her language as an attempt to capture "[l]a 'lingua del povero'" [the language of the poor]: the strangeness of Rosselli's language constitutes, for Sermini, a liberation of constraints and oppressive hierarchies.[454] I argue that Rosselli's strange language serves as another way of redrawing relational maps, putting Abyssinia next to Italy, Spain next to China, and her explanations of this strange language as related to her ethnographic experiences with the marginalized in Italy are meant to encourage the reader to bring up further questions about relationships between centers and peripheries, selves and others, in *Variazioni Belliche*.

In the glossaries, Rosselli emphasizes the role of Southern Italian illiterates' speech in her poetics—a role that, I argue, is not mimetic (as Rosselli implies in the glossaries) but conceptual (as emerges from the poems themselves), a way of drawing different relationships between the

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Portuguese and Ronga in his poetry, though it is unclear how aware Rosselli was of this fact. In a note on Craveirinha she sent to Pasolini in 1968, she emphasized Craveirinha's ability to appeal to the educated and the illiterate, to the written and the oral: "lo può leggere chiunque, povero o ricco[,] colto o analfabeta. Sono poesie che vanno lette, ma anche dette, e sembra che tale sia il potere[,] la tensione e la forza di Craveirinha da richiedere non un lettore, ma una folla di lettori, una folla di facce tese in ascolto" [anyone can read him, rich or poor, educated or illiterate. These poems must be read, but also must be spoken, and it seems that Craveirinha has so much power, tension, and force that he needs not one reader, but a crowd of readers, a crowd of faces raptly listening] (*Lettere a Pasolini*, 63).

[454] Sermini, *"E se paesani/zoppicanti sono questi versi,"* 178: "La 'lingua del povero' è allora quella che, mettendo a nudo, fa 'fiori*re* i versi di altre altitudini', generando un 'farneticare' che sa allentare le 'redini' governate dal 'potere della razionalità' e sciogliere le 'briglie' che ci costringono." Or 212: "Amelia Rosselli vive in prima persona tali processi di ricostruzione [dopo la seconda guerra mondiale e tragedie personali] e, tuttavia, se ne emancipa per trovare la sua personale lingua di resistenza: una lingua che, pur iscrivendosi nell'antifascismo e nella realtà specifica del dopoguerra, è in grado di minare quella stessa realtà, di frantumarla e scomporla in mille piani, mettendo in discussione ogni verità precostituita. In un mondo che è tenuto 'sul suo asse / diagonato' dal 'passo degli analfabeti', la lingua zoppicante, la lingua 'babelante' di Amelia Rosselli diventa lingua di libertà."

dominant and the oppressed in her poetry. This emphasis in the glossaries also allows for a focus on other dynamics implied in the poems: ones that gesture toward a redrawing of the world map, a topic that was front of mind in an Italian intellectual scene that was increasingly interested in Third-Worldist perspectives. As I demonstrate in the next section of this chapter, Rosselli's research in ethnography, ethnomusicology, and acoustics were not far from these considerations: in the most famous of Rosselli's paratexts to *Variazioni Belliche*, "Spazi metrici" (1962) and its 1993 introduction, Rosselli invokes various forms of recording in *Variazioni Belliche*'s poetic attempts to understand the other.

Recording technologies in analyses of the other in "Spazi metrici"

Recording technology is rarely explicitly evoked in the poems of *Variazioni Belliche*; most references to technology are in the form of a vague "macchina" [machine]. Photography emerges in two poems, and in both cases, they showcase the mise-en-abîme that takes place when the self looks at the other, and the necessity of the other's gaze to be able to see the self, as in the following poem:

> Se Soraya non ha avuto quel bambino non è certo per
> colpa mia, – disse il fotografo bambino dinanzi
> alla sua effige. Di fronte al bar glaciale dei Veneziani
> riposava candela e sport: uomo che mi giudichi con
> le mie trebbiate gonne, luce delle stelle che non
> verificano la luce.[455]
>
> [If Soraya did not have that child it is certainly not / my fault,—the child photographer said in front of / her effigy. In front of the glacial bar of the Venetians / rested candle and sport: man you who judge me with / my threshed skirts, light of the stars that do not / verify the light.][456]

[455] Rosselli, "Se Soraya non ha avuto quel bambino non è certo per," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 59.

[456] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 133.

Disorientation begins from the opening line, with the name "Soraya": this is the one time that this name appears in the collection (and, out of the 170+ poems of the collection, only seven of them contain first names like this). Soraya, a name of Persian origins, would most likely have called to mind, to Rosselli's readers, Soraya Esfandiary-Bakhtiary, Queen of Iran from 1951 to 1958,[457] but the identification is hazy, as is what Soraya is meant to signify.[458] The poem also begins with direct discourse that is not identified as such until the second line. The child speaks of a child Soraya never had; what is the relationship between these two children? He is a photographer who is looking at some kind of image—an effigy, to be precise. Is the effigy of the child himself? Of the child Soraya never had? Of Soraya? The possessive adjective in Italian agrees with the gender of the thing possessed, in this case the noun "effige" (possessive adjectives do not correspond to the gender of the possessor, as they do in the case of third-person singular possessive adjectives in English), and therefore it is impossible to know whose effigy the child is regarding. Did the child make this effigy? Is the effigy a photograph? While the reader is left to ponder these questions, the action shifts to a bar/café where the first-person speaker is being looked at—in fact, judged—by a man. The only attribute we are given of the speaker is that she (though the gender of the speaker is not explicitly or grammatically clarified) is wearing "trebbiate gonne," or threshed skirts, associating her with agriculture, perhaps as a *contadina*. This image of the man judging the speaker in her threshed skirts is then connected to

[457] Soraya and the Shah were in Rome in 1953, during the Iranian coup d'état.

[458] Other proper names of women in Rosselli's poetry are more obviously placeable. Some are figures from ancient Greek literature, like Elettra, Antigone, Cassandra in *Variazioni Belliche*. Others are women described in poetry Rosselli loved: Ortensia (Rimbaud's Hortense) and Esterina (from the poetry of Montale) in *La libellula*. I have not come across an analysis of the name "Soraya" in Rosselli's poetry. She might represent a kind of fusion of East and West: a European-born woman, with an Iranian father and a Russian-German mother. Or the choice may relate to the poem's mention of motherhood, since Soraya and the Shah divorced due to Soraya's inability to bear him an heir.

the image of stars that are unable to confirm or verify the light that they themselves emit. The entire poem calls into question what it means to observe and be observed, whether we can observe ourselves, and what it is that we are observing, obliquely referencing photography (or, perhaps, even broader ideas of recording) and the images or perceptions of others and ourselves that it produces.

And yet, although references to recordings are present, they are not at all central in the content of the *Variazioni Belliche* poems. However, when turning to Rosselli's most famous paratext to *Variazioni Belliche*, "Spazi metrici," Rosselli brings up the role of recording in her poetics in multiple places. "Spazi metrici" is dedicated to Rosselli's attempt to explain the poetics of *Variazioni Belliche*. Her statements focus on her attempts to find a form of poetic language that goes beyond the individual or even the national, and instead expands into a universal. As I examined in Chapter 1, with "La serie degli armonici," which describes Rosselli's conviction that a universal mode of music-making is possible, in "Spazi metrici" Rosselli turns to universal modes of linguistic expression. She describes her attempts to write poems following her sensory experience of the space around her as she writes. The shape of the resulting poems, mostly a kind of square of lines of equal spatial length,[459] is associated in scholarly criticism of Rosselli with the "forma-cubo" or Cube-Form evoked in the *Diario in tre lingue*: an attempt to capture space, time, and timbre in the poem.

Twice in "Spazi metrici," as Rosselli describes her poetic process, her attempts to transcribe the development of her thought in a specific time and space, she refers to a "rullo," or a reel, within her thought: "Premettevo che il discorso intero indicasse il pensiero stesso, e cioè

[459] Maddalena Vaglio Tanet has analyzed this, through annotations of exact line lengths that Rosselli made with a ruler in documents contained in the Pavia archive, in "Babeling: Language, Meter, and Mysticism in Amelia Rosselli," Ph.D. diss. (Columbia University, 2017), 106–115.

che la frase (con tutti i suoi coloriti funzionali) fosse una idea divenuta un poco più complessa e maneggiabile, e che il periodo fosse l'esposizione logica di una idea non statica come quella materializzatasi nella parola, ma piuttosto dinamica e 'in divenire' e spesso anche inconscia. Volendo allargare la mia classificazione davvero non troppo scientifica, inserivo l'ideogramma cinese tra la frase, e la parola, e traducevo il rullo cinese in delirante corso di pensiero occidentale"[460] [I posited that the whole argument should indicate the thought itself, and thus that the phrase (with all of its functional colourings) was an idea that had become slightly more complex and manageable, and that the sentence was the logical exposition of an idea that had become slightly more complex and manageable, and that the sentence was the logical exposition of an idea, not static like the one materialized in the word, but rather, dynamic and 'becoming,' and often unconscious as well. Wanting to broaden my classification, which was truly not that scientific, I inserted the Chinese ideogram between the phrase and the word, and I translated the Chinese scroll in the delirious course of Western thought].[461] Rosselli wants to describe a thought not only in development, but in movement—not "statica" [static] but "dinamica e 'in divenire'" [dynamic and 'becoming']. In order to do so, she adds "l'ideogramma cinese" [the Chinese ideogram] which becomes the "rullo cinese" [Chinese scroll/reel] to provide a sense of movement to her "pensiero occidentale" [Western thought]. The insertion of Chinese here is reminiscent of Rosselli's fantasies of Chinese in *Le Chinois à Rome* and *Diario in tre lingue* (1954–1956), where, as I argued in Chapter 3, references to Chinese serve as invocations of a new medium that can universally communicate a specific corporeal experience of reality.

[460] Amelia Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 64.

[461] Amelia Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Jennifer Scappettone, in *Chicago Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Winter 2012), 38–9.

Rosselli explained her reference to the Chinese ideogram in a "Laboratorio di poesia" hosted by the poet Elio Pagliarani: "Che poi ci sia questa interruzione tra frase e parola tramite l'ideogramma cinese, che non è né frase soltanto, né parola soltanto, salvo che raramente, era una mia necessità di universalità"[462] [My necessity for universality is why there is this interruption between sentence and word, through the Chinese ideogram, which is not only a sentence and not only a word, except in rare cases]. The Chinese ideogram is connected a desire to render her point of view universally accessible, using the image of photography to indicate this subjectivity that could still be universally accessible;[463] as she went on to state in the "Laboratorio di Poesia," "Cercavo di capire fino a che punto i miei occhi restituivano se non un'immagine strettamente fotografica, una sintesi di quello che vedevo e che capivo della realtà semiconscia [...] Di notte, di giorno, cammina[vo], sta[vo] ferma, proprio per osservare questo mutamento della mia osservazione e dell'incontro delle cose con me o delle persone o degli spazi e del movimento e del tempo"[464] [I would try to understand how much my eyes were giving, if not a strictly photographic image, a synthesis of what I was seeing and understanding of semi-conscious reality [...] At night, during the day, I would walk, I would be still, just to observe this shift of my observation and of the encounter that things or people or spaces and movement and time had with me].

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[462] Elio Pagliarani and Amelia Rosselli, "Laboratorio di Poesia" (1988), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 236

[463] As I noted in Chapter 3, this idea of photography representing a "moment of temporal arrest corresponding to a particular subjectivity" is one that Christopher Bush has noted was also associated with the Chinese ideogram for modernist writers (Christopher Bush, *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 59–60).

[464] Rosselli, "Laboratorio di Poesia," 236.

The invocation of recording, associated with the ideogram, in Rosselli's statements from the "Laboratorio di poesia" aligns with the transformation of the "ideogramma cinese" into the "*rullo* cinese" in "Spazi metrici." "Rullo," in Italian, can mean both scroll and reel.[465] In the "Laboratorio di Poesia," Rosselli does not specify which version she meant, but instead focuses on the movement of the "rullo": "La forma rullo suggerisce il lento delirare, srotolarsi dell'idea"[466] [The word *rullo* suggests a slow raving, an unrolling of the idea]. The "rullo" provides a sense of movement, an unrolling, a spooling off that could be the scroll's or the tape's on an open-reel tape recorder. Although the word "bobina" was (and is) a more common way of designating a tape reel (and at times Rosselli does use this word),[467] Rosselli's letters contain multiple instances where she refers to tape reels as "rulli."[468] The "rullo" appears again in "Spazi metrici": "Più tardi presi ad osservare il mutare di questo delirio o rullo nel mio pensiero a seconda della situazione che il mio cervello affrontava ad ogni cantonata della vita, ad ogni spostamento spaziale o temporale della mia quotidiana pratica esperienza"[469] [Later I took to observing the mutation of this delirium or scroll of my thought in accordance with the situation

[465] Scappettone, in the translation cited above, opts for scroll.

[466] Rosselli, "Laboratorio di Poesia," 236.

[467] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 7 November, probably 1959: "As to my own work it is progressing quite rapidly, what with several new compositions on my part, rather strange things, unexpected. A man from the RCA came and heard my bobine and liked them and wanted to lanciarmi [launch me] but I sort of blocked him in view of a more serious encounter with him. I think he was impressed, and this means this terrible music will one day got [sic] on records, that I will have a chance to work with good technicians, and so on."

[468] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 25 February 1957: "Finished putting all my 15 'rulli per registratore' [reels for recorder] in order: took me nearly a month!"; 21 October 1959 (probably), she tells John that she is writing to him "while listening to a roll of old jazz registrations," where "roll" is an Anglicization of "rullo" and "registrations" is a false cognate for "registrazioni," recordings. On 6 May, 1953, Rosselli writes to John, using "rullo" as a way to refer, metonymically, to the instrument she was making, which she wanted to contain a reel, in order to record improvisations.

[469] Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," 64.

my mind confronted at each turn of life, at each spatial or temporal displacement of my daily practical experience].[470]

The "rullo" is also a space where one's thoughts encounter and process others in the space, as Rosselli goes on to explain in "Spazi metrici": "Notavo strani addensamenti nella ritmicità del mio pensiero, strani arresti, strane coagulazioni e cambi di tempi, strani intervalli di riposo o assenza di azione; nuove fusioni sonore e ideali secondo il cambiare del tempo pratico, degli spazi grafici e degli spazi circondantimi continuamente e materialmente. Nel discorrere e nel sentire altre presenze mentali o psicologiche assieme a me in uno spazio, il pensare diveniva più teso, più affaticato, quasi complementare a quello dell'interlocutore pur rinnovandosi o distruggendosi all'incontro con esso"[471] [I noted strange thickenings in the rhythmicity of my thought, strange arrests, strange coagulations and changes of tempo, strange intervals of rest or absence of action; new sonorous and ideal fusions in accordance with the changing of practical time, of graphic spaces and of the spaces surrounding me continually and materially. In conversing and in sensing other mental or psychological presences with me in a space, thinking became tenser, more fatigued, almost complementary to that of the interlocutor, even as it was renewed or destroyed in the encounter with him or her].[472] The dynamic described here is a process of noticing strangeness: strange thickenings, stops, coagulations, time changes. It then becomes a process of noticing alterity more explicitly: "*altre* presenze mentali o psicologiche assieme a me in uno spazio" [*other* mental or psychological presences with me in a space, my emphasis]. The dynamic between the self and the other described—the encounter with the

[470] Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Scappettone, 39.

[471] Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," 64–65.

[472] Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Scappettone, 39.

interlocutor that is, all at once, tense, exhausted, and complementary, and has the possibility to renew or to destroy—is reminiscent of the one outlined by the poems of *Variazioni Belliche*.

In this way, through her paratext, Rosselli inscribes the encounter with the other in *Variazioni Belliche* into the space of a recording. Although references to recording are sparing in the poems, "Spazi metrici" encourages a parallel between the process of recording and the attempt to understand the other—or to understand oneself through the other. Rosselli did not back away from this reference to recording; in fact, she reiterated it, and centered it even more, in her 1993 "Introduzione a 'Spazi metrici:'"[473] "Che le mie ricerche in campo 'folk', ossia etnomusicologico, abbiano influito nella ricerca d'un versificare più stretto, più severo, e di formulazioni geometriche, è ovvio [...] Tanto complesso mi pareva il problema che avevo perfino correlazionato la questione metrica a problemi di fotografia, vivendo la poesia senza scriverla, e 'filmando' mentalmente ed emozionalmente ogni realtà attorno"[474] [It is obvious that my research in the field of folk music, that is, ethnomusicology, influenced my quest for a prosody that was stricter, more severe, made up of geometric formulations [...] I believed the issue to be so complex that I had even connected the question of meter to issues of spatial photography, living the poem without writing it, and mentally and emotionally "filming" all reality around me]. Later in the "Introduzione," she emphasizes the interdisciplinarity of her concept of poetics: "Non si tratta di 'sistematizzazioni' grafiche ma di sensibilizzare il poeta ad altre discipline, quali quella dell'operatore cinematografico, la fisica moderna,

[473] This was meant to be an introduction to a reprinting of "Spazi metrici" that never actually materialized. The text was discovered in the Pavia archives and reprinted in *Una scrittura plurale*.

[474] Amelia Rosselli, "Introduzione a 'Spazi metrici,'" in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 60.

l'aerodinamica"[475] [These are not merely graphic "tweaks" but ways of sensitizing the poet to other disciplines, that is, that of the cinematographer, modern physics, aerodynamics].

In "Spazi metrici," Rosselli draws parallels between her musical and poetic interests; she opens the essay by stating that "Una problematica della forma poetica è stata per me sempre connessa a quella più strettamente musicale"[476] [Any problematic of poetic form has always been connected for me to that which is more strictly musical].[477] She describes her poetics as a continuation of her preoccupation, throughout her "adolescenza," with "cercare le forme universali"[478] [I set out at a certain point in my adolescence to seek universal forms],[479] in a reference to her attempts to define universal modes of musical production and perception. This quest for a universal form is thematized in the poems of *Variazioni Belliche*, as well. In the following section, I illustrate the search for order in *Variazioni Belliche*, and then I turn back to "Spazi metrici" to explore how Rosselli, through her essay, inscribed this quest into her ethnomusicological research and her quests for universal forms.

A quest for a universal linguistic order in *Variazioni Belliche*

The poems of *Variazioni Belliche* describe an interplay between order and disorder. Often the speaker is seeking to reconcile the two, trying to understand how vast differences fit

[475] Rosselli, "Introduzione a 'Spazi metrici,'" 60–61.

[476] Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," 63.

[477] Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Scappettone, 37.

[478] Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," 64.

[479] Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Scappettone, 38.

into one universal system. Sometimes this dynamic is described in musical terms, like harmony and dissonance, as in the following poem:

> i rapporti più armoniosi e i rapporti più dissonanti, tu povero
> che corri armoniosamente tu intelligente che corri con
> la dissidenza, voglia io unirvi
> in un universo sì cangiante sì terribilmente dissidente
> che solo la Gloria di Dio noi crediamo porti gloria
> sa riunire. E se veracemente con tutta la fiaccola di dio oh ordine
> che cadde consumato, si rinnovò e non fu per sempre e fu solo
> una balugine, io perdo! io non resto! riposato sulle erbe
> tranquille dei né paradisi né terra né inferno né normale
> convenienza con te ho cercato l'immenso e la totale
> disarmonia perfetta, ma basse corde risuonano anche se tu non
> le premi anche se tu non sistemi le valanghe i gridi e
> le piccole sgragnatiture in quell'unico
> sicuro scialle.[480]
>
> [the most harmonious relations and the most dissonant relations, you
> poor thing running harmoniously you smart thing running with
> dissidence, may I join you
> in a universe so ever-changing so terribly dissident
> that only the Glory of God we believe brings the glory
> to reunite. And if truly with all of god's torch oh order
> that falls used up, it made itself new and wasn't forever and
> was only a glimmer, I lose! I won't stay! resting on the tranquil
> grass of neither paradise nor earth nor hell nor ordinary
> convenience, with you I sought the infinite and the total
> perfect disharmony, but bass chords resound even if you don't
> pluck them even if you don't arrange the avalanches the screams and
> the little scratchlings in that single
> safe shawl.][481]

There are resonances here with Rosselli's musical work in her desire to unify "i rapporti più armoniosi" [the most harmonious relations] and "i rapporti più dissonanti" [the most dissonant relations], which gesture toward a kind of emancipation of dissonance and rethinking of the "ordine / che cadde consumato" [order that falls used up]. The "basse corde" [bass chords, or low

[480] Rosselli, "i rapporti più armoniosi e i rapporti più dissonanti, tu povero," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 35.

[481] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 87.

strings] that resound could be interpreted as a reference to the fundamental of a tone, the lowest note in the overtone series. Additionally, the idea of unification of the poor "you," who runs harmoniously, and the intelligent "you," who runs with dissidence, is another element that connects this poem to dynamics explored in Rosselli's intellectual work: the encounter of the intellectual and the oppressed. This universe is "cangiante" [ever-changing] and "dissidente" [dissident]—it is varied—but at the same time, in the last line of the poem, there seems to be an unfulfilled wish to unite this variety, gathering "le piccole sgragnatiture in quell'unico / sicuro scialle" [the little scratchlings in that single / safe shawl]. "Sgragnatiture" is a word Rosselli made up, as she wrote in the 1962 glossary she sent to Pasolini: "'sgragnatiture' = 'graffiature' e 'sgraffiature' e 'sgranare' e anche 'sgrammaticato' e 'sgranocchiare' e 'sgraziato' e 'gragnolare' = cader la gragnola (popolare per 'grandine')"[482] [sgragnatiture = 'scratch' and 'intense scratch' and 'to shuck' and also 'ungrammatical' and 'to crunch' and 'ungraceful' and 'to hail' = for hail to fall (vernacular for 'hail')]. Overall, "sgragnatiture" fuses some kind of scratch or inscription ("s/graffiature") with ideas of linguistic inelegance or perhaps even semi-literacy ("sgraziato," "sgrammaticato"). The speaker expresses a desire to take all of this difference—including linguistic difference—and join it together in an "unico / sicuro scialle."

This desire plays out formally in the "Variazioni" section of the collection, which makes up its majority: each poem is, largely, made up of a kind of theme and variations form. The beginning of the first poem of the "Variazioni" section demonstrates this effectively: "Se nella notte sorgeva un dubbio su dell'essenza del mio / cristianesimo, esso svaniva con la lacrima della canzonetta / del bar vicino. Se dalla notte sorgeva il dubbio dello / etmisfero cangiante e

[482] Rosselli, *Lettere a Pasolini*, 25. The explanation is almost exactly the same in the 1994 glossary: "*sgragnatiture* (onomatopea e fusione di 'sgraffiature'; 'sgranare'; allude anche a 'sgramaticato' [sic]; 'sgranocchiare'; 'sgraziato', 'gragnolare', cader la gragnuola' = popol. per 'grandine')" ("Glossarietto esplicativo per *Variazioni Belliche*," 70).

sproporzionato, allora richiedevo / aiuto"[483] [If in the night a doubt arose about the essence of my / christianity, it disappeared with the tear in the pop tune / from the nearby café. If from the night a doubt arose on the / changing and proportionless etmisphere, then I again asked for / help].[484] These if clauses are followed by others: "Se nell'inferno delle ore notturne" [If in the hell of nighttime hours], "se dalle lacrime che sgorgavano" [if from the tears that poured out], "se dalle finezze del mio spirito" [if from the refinements of my spirit]. The anaphora of the hypotheticals and the different combinations of recurring elements in them (doubt, tears, night, song) give the impression of a number of variations, a kind of fugue-like form where each entrance of the theme is slightly different, slightly more elaborate. The formal technique of theme-and-variation is itself a way of carrying out the desire to collect all of the "sgragnatiture" (the different variations) into an "unico sicuro scialle" (the poem).

In "Spazi metrici," Rosselli links her quest for a universal musical order to her quest for a universal language, bringing the question of linguistic difference into play explicitly. On a personal level, Rosselli, of course, was steeped in multilingualism, in her interplay of Italian, English, and French. Most likely, she saw multilingualism play out every day in Italy as well, over the course of the 1950s. As of 1951, according to a 1962 study by linguist Tullio De Mauro, most of the Italian population (four-fifths) used dialect regularly in daily life, and about two-thirds used it in every interaction.[485] Rosselli was exposed to a variety of other languages through the ethnographic field recordings to which she listened at the Musée de l'Homme, and in the "Laboratorio di Poesia" she claimed to have studied German, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, and

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[483] Rosselli, "Se nella notte sorgeva un dubbio su dell'essenza del mio," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 41.

[484] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 97.

[485] Tullio De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* (Bari: Laterza, 1962), 131.

Latin.[486] What remains of her library contains various language exercise books: Persian, Sanskrit, Arabic, Hebrew, German, and Spanish, in addition to Italian and English and an Italian-Latin dictionary.[487] The issue that she confronts in her poetics, as she puts it in "Spazi metrici," is that "la lingua in cui scrivo di volta in volta è una sola, mentre la mia esperienza sonora logica e associativa è certamente quella di tutti i popoli, e riflettibile in tutte le lingue"[488] [the language in which I write at isolated moments is only one, while my sonorous, logical, and associative experience is certainly that of all peoples, and reflectable in all languages].[489] The desire to gather all linguistic diversity into a system that can explain variations—how single languages all fit into a shared sonorous, logical, and associative experience—is reminiscent of the desire I outlined in the first chapter of this dissertation, to find a system that explains all aspects of all music-making and listening. In "Spazi metrici," Rosselli expresses her interest in an overarching linguistic system through descriptions that, I argue, are closely related to phonetics and phonology research. This research, in turn, was connected to ethnomusicological research to which Rosselli had been exposed and to the experiments in electronic music with which, by the early 1960s, she had intimate familiarity.

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[486] Rosselli, "Laboratorio di Poesia," 236.

[487] The books that remain are the following: Angelo De Martino, *Grammatica persiana* (Milan: Hoepli, 1911); Oreste Nazari, *Elementi di grammatica sanscrita: seguiti da esercizi graduali, antologia e lessico* (Turin: Chiantore, 1948); Laura Veccia Vaglieri, *Grammatica elementare di arabo* (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1951); Antonio Carrozzini, *Grammatica della lingua ebraica* (Turin: Marietti, 1950); E. Portal and Maurice Faure, *Grammatica provenzale: (lingua moderna) e dizionarietto provenzale-italiano* (Milan: Hoepli, 1914); Alfredo Ghiselli and Aroldo Chiari, *Grammatica italiana* (Milan: Sansoni, 1959); Gino Saviotti, *Grammatica italiana moderna: con molti esercizi* (Milan: F. Mariani); Ferdinando Bassi and Mario Ciulich, *Grammatica teorico-pratica della lingua tedesca* (Treviso: Canova, 1946); *L'inglese in tre mesi* (London: Hugo's Language Institute, 19?); Yves Mompart, *Grammaire espagnole: classes du 2. desré, cours complémentaires* (Toulouse: Privat, 1953); *Dizionario latino-italiano italiano-latino* (Ozzano Emilia (BO): Malipiero, 1969).

[488] Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," 64.

[489] Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Scappettone, 38.

Echoes of phonetics and phonology

"Spazi metrici" centers phonation from its second paragraph, zeroing in on speech and the physical apparatus that produces it: "Definire la sillaba come suono è però inesatto: non vi sono 'suoni' nelle lingue: la vocale o la consonante nelle classificazioni dell'acustica musicale si definiscono come 'rumore' [...] Comunque nel parlare di vocali generalmente noi intendiamo suoni, o anche colori, visto che a esse spesso addebitiamo le qualità 'timbriche'; e nel parlare di consonanti o di raggruppamenti di consonanti, intendiamo non soltanto il loro aspetto grafico ma anche movimenti muscolari e 'forme' mentali"[490] [To define the syllable as a sound is inexact, however: there are no "sounds" in languages:—in classifications of musical acoustics the vowel or consonant is defined as "noise" [...] In speaking of vowels, in any case, generally we mean sounds, or even colours, given we are often indebted to them for "timbric" qualities; and in speaking of consonants or groupings of consonants, we mean not only their graphic features, but also muscular movements and mental "forms"].[491] Rosselli repeatedly stated in interviews that "Spazi metrici" was only intelligible to readers who had knowledge of electroacoustic musical research, and the passage cited above demonstrates this. German composers and researchers in Cologne, at the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) electronic studios, and at Bonn's Institut für Phonetik und Kommunikationsforschung drew on studies of phonetics in their study of timbre. As Jennifer Iverson has noted, even from the late nineteenth century, acousticians had compared musical timbre to vowels and consonants, and in the postwar Werner Meyer-Eppler, at the Bonn

[490] Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," 63.

[491] Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Scappettone, 37.

Institut, showed that vowels and consonants exist on a continuum from pitched tone to colored noise.[492] In other words, vowels were pure sounds, and consonants were noisy sounds, as the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen gleaned from Meyer-Eppler's teachings.[493] These statements are reminiscent of Rosselli's assertions that vowels and consonants are "noise," but that vowels are closer to musical pitches and can provide some kind of insight into the phenomenon of timbre.

These resonances between Meyer-Eppler, Stockhausen, and Rosselli should not come as a surprise: Rosselli read Meyer-Eppler's research papers, and by 1962 she knew Stockhausen personally, thanks to her participation in the Darmstadt Ferienkurse in 1959 and 1961.[494] For Stockhausen, phonetics was an essential entrypoint into learning how to create and manipulate timbre in electronic music; in other words, how to make new sounds that were still accessible to the human ear, "new timbres [that] could be easily processed by the brain, which was used to dealing with acoustically intricate linguistic phonemes," as Iverson puts it.[495] This interest in phonetics was expanding in Italy, as well. The composers associated with the Studio di Fonologia musicale in Milan, founded by Luciano Berio and Bruno Maderna, had modeled the

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[492] Jennifer Iverson, *Electronic Inspirations: Technologies of the Cold War Musical Avant-Garde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 85.

[493] Iverson, *Electronic Inspirations*, 170–172.

[494] Letter from Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 10 September, probably 1959: "As to work [Darmstadt Ferienkurse], it couldn't have gone off better. Was made to give a short conference, though this was not in the program (scared stiff—). Stockhausen (the leading German composer & really the most intelligent) said he'd come see my work in Rome when he passes by shortly. Then he'll probably publish my technical articles in Germany." She saw Stockhausen in what was most likely May of 1961 as well, in Rome, as she states in a letter to John from 23 May, probably 1961: "Saw Tudor who came to Rome, divorced from his wife. Talked with him & Stockhausen and Cagul (an excellent composer, & a musician) at length. Good meeting. They're in Sicily now, for a series of concerts at a music-festival in Palermo." By "Cagul," Rosselli probably meant Mauricio Kagel, an Argentine composer who moved to Germany in 1957 to work at the WDR. Rosselli saw Stockhausen again and listened to his work at Darmstadt in the summer of 1961.

[495] Iverson, *Electronic Inspirations*, 87.

name of their institute off of the name of the Bonn Institut.[496] Delia Casadei has analyzed how the composers chose "phonology" rather than "phonetics" because of phonology's connection to language (*phone*, sound, + *logos*, word). Working in the shadow of structural linguistics (the composers of the Studio studied Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* alongside young semioticians like Umberto Eco),[497] Berio and Maderna were interested in how phonology combined the physiological and acoustic phenomena of voice with language, and how voice can stretch sounds toward and away from semantic meaning.[498]

Rosselli visited the Studio di Fonologia in Milan in April and May of 1962, and she was writing "Spazi metrici" around the same time.[499] By this time, the composers of the Studio di Fonologia had already begun making many pieces that Iverson has defined as "artistic responses to phonetics discourses."[500] These pieces involved playing with voice, language, and timbre. In a letter to John, Rosselli describes collaborating with Bruno Maderna on a piece (not preserved in

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[496] Originally, it seems that Berio had wanted to call it "Centro Sperimentale di Ricerche Radiofoniche" (409), but the inspiration for the eventual name was borrowed from the Bonn Institut, according to Delia Casadei, "Milan's Studio di Fonologia: Voice Politics in the City, 1955–8," in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 141, No. 2 (2016), 422. Casadei says that "[t]he name of the studio—which unusually juxtaposes a linguistic discipline with music—has been attributed to one of its head engineers, Gino Castelnuovo; whether or not Castelnuovo was responsible for this, by 1956 the complexities of the term 'phonology' had worked their way into the studio's aesthetic programme" (419).

[497] Rosselli definitely met Eco in 1963 at the first meeting of the Gruppo 63, but she may have met him even earlier through Berio. It seems that Rosselli did not read Saussure until 1965, but she was very taken with his theories, as is evidenced by letters to John from 7 November 1965 and 11 February 1966.

[498] Casadei, "Voice Politics in the City," 422. Iverson, in *Electronic Inspirations*, also analyzes the importance of structural linguistics in the activity of the Milan Studio di Fonologia, noting how Berio, his then-wife Cathy Berberian, and Umberto Eco would get together and read Saussure's *Cours de linguistique général* alongside James Joyce's *Ulysses* (178).

[499] In a letter to John Rosselli from 18 May 1962, she says that she is in Milan, working on electronic music studies and composition. At the end of the letter, she says she is working on a "note called 'Spazi Metrici'; on problems of form and metrica [meter/prosody] in my poetry."

[500] Iverson, *Electronic Inspirations*, 179.

the archives of the Studio di Fonologia, since, as Joanna Helms has demonstrated, the work of many women composers was not preserved by the Studio): "Maderna the Italian composer & direttore [conductor] of orchestra [...] is also here, and also likes me [...]. I do him a few favours such as entering the 'registrazione' cabin [recording booth] & giving him weird sound effects and screams with my rather malleable voice, which however by now is all out. He's working on a piece where the voice output of 2 people are transformed in velocity[,] pitch[,] attach [attack,] coda and in all other dimensions except in their originally quite complex timbre. Wants to dedicare il pezzo [dedicate the piece] to me, because I scream so well!"[501] This piece seems similar to Maderna's 1960 piece, performed by Cathy Berberian,[502] called "Dimensioni II (Invenzione su una voce, su fonemi di Hans G. H. Helms)" [Dimensions II (Invention on a voice, on phonemes by Hans G. H. Helms). To compose the piece, Maderna asked Helms, a German experimental poet and frequent collaborator with the WDR, to compose a text from a collection of phonemes, then asked Berberian to perform it with a wide range of vocal interpretations and timbres, and then cut and montaged the tape.[503] The order of the phonemes in the text that Helms wrote was apparently governed numerically,[504] but by chance, at certain points in the piece, the combinations sound like they could be words belonging to languages like French or English.[505] In other pieces composed at the Studio, like John Cage's "Aria" (1958), Berberian's voice was

[501] From Amelia Rosselli to John Rosselli, 18 May 1962.

[502] Berberian's voice was so essential to the Studio that she has been termed the Studio's "tenth oscillator." David Osmond-Smith, "The Tenth Oscillator: The Work of Cathy Berberian, 1958–1966," in *Tempo*, Vol. 58, No. 227 (January 2004): 2–13.

[503] Described in Osmond-Smith, "The Tenth Oscillator," 6–7.

[504] Osmond-Smith, "The Tenth Oscillator," 7.

[505] Iverson notes this, in *Electronic Inspirations*, 187.

also employed not only for the variety of timbres and styles she could produce, but her ability to articulate different phonemes and excerpts of texts from various languages ("Aria" contains linguistic excerpts in Armenian, Russian, Italian, French, and English, along with some points of random phonemic play).[506]

The poems of *Variazioni Belliche* are not a succession of random phonemes or multilingual snippets, but in "Spazi metrici" Rosselli inscribes them into the same impulse that spurred the composers of the Studio di Fonologia to experiment with their phonemic musical compositions: the attempt to understand how language works by analyzing its fundamental units, phonemes, and how they are combined differently for each language.[507] The question of phonemes' combinations came up frequently in phonetics research at the Studio, at the WDR, and, of course, at the Bonn Institut where Meyer-Eppler worked; acousticians would use the tools of the electronic music laboratory to reverse and repeat speech, so as to administer tests of phonemic perception.[508]

The relationship that Rosselli draws between electroacoustic phonetics research and her poetry in "Spazi metrici" allows a reading that connects references to "combinations" in *Variazioni Belliche* not only to different combinations of words in the theme-and-variations

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[506] For more details on "Aria"'s composition and its score, see Iverson, *Electronic Inspirations*, 190–191.

[507] Francesco Carbognin, in "'non son mai stata così collettiva (però nella lingua)'. Dall'ʻunità base del verso' allo ʻspazio metrico' di Amelia Rosselli," in *Trasparenze. Supplemento non periodico a "Quaderni di Poesia,"* Vol. 17–19 (2003), also brings up the importance of the "unità base" of language for Rosselli: "all'ordine la Rosselli crede di poter pervenire a partire dall'ostinata ricerca della cellule di esso, delle 'unità base', e non attraverso l'imposizione coatta di una forma estrinseca sopra un dato sonoro o percettivo magmatico e informe" (268). Carbognin, in his analysis, does not focus on phonemes; his interpretation focuses on Rosselli's discussion of the "word" as "idea" and how to put them together rhythmically.

[508] Werner Meyer-Eppler, "Reversed Speech and Repetition Systems as Means of Phonetic Research," in *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, Vol. 22, No. 6 (1950): 804–806, describes attempts to determine the number of repetitions it takes for listeners to understand the intelligibility of distorted and/or reversed phonemes.

structure of the poems, but also a broader consideration on how language is made possible through combinations of letters and phonemes. Thematically, many of the poems use key verbs, and their related adjectives, like "slacciare" [to untie], "rompere" [to break], "scombinare" [to mess up], "combinare" [to combine], "congiungere" [to join], and "unire" [to unite]. In the poems of *Variazioni Belliche*, the interplay between continuity and discontinuity is closely connected to the quest for an intelligible, shared order to the world, an understanding between self and other. But often, this order is beyond the grasp of the speaker and the addressee: as the speaker states in one poem, "L'amore era un gioco instabile; un gioco di / fonosillabe"[509] [Love was an unstable game; a game of / syllables].[510] Here, the "fonosillabe" (an alternate word for "syllables" in Italian that emphasizes their sounded nature) are emblematic of the instability of the relationship with the other. Despite the quest for a universal system of language that Rosselli invoked in "Spazi metrici" using references to 1950s research in phonetics, often the poems of *Variazioni Belliche* highlight the difficulty of accessing universals in the vast differences between self and other. In the following section, I demonstrate how difference—particularly linguistic difference—is ultimately invoked in "Spazi metrici," even in moments where Rosselli describes her quest for a universal language. I argue that, in these texts, the instability derives from the difficulty of seeking a universality that still allows for variety and difference within it.

[509] Rosselli, "L'alba si presentò sbracciata e impudica; io," in *Variazioni Belliche*, 74.

[510] Rosselli, *War Variations*, trans. Re and Vangelisti, 165.

The unstable game of variety and universality

The research in phonetics carried out by European electronic music studios in the 1950s was of interest to ethnomusicologists, as well. The American ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax (who worked in Europe from 1950 to 1958) wrote to Berio in 1954, asking for help in his projects aimed at converting sounds in field recordings into phonetic notation.[511] By 1959, Lomax had developed his controversial system of cantometrics, which was meant to focus on the relationship between folk songs from various places and social structures.[512] Cantometrics focused on voice and vocal style, prioritizing it over language and examining phonemes and timbre rather than semantic content, in an attempt to create a classification system that could be applied to all folk musics.

Like Rosselli, Lomax had studied recordings at the Musée de l'Homme in the early 1950s,[513] and in the mid-1950s he traveled around various parts of Italy with Diego Carpitella, creating field recordings for his *World Library of Folk and Primitive Music*. There is no evidence that Rosselli ever met or interacted with Lomax, but their similar formations are notable. And yet, unlike in Lomax's hope that phonetic transcription of folk song could allow him to bypass semantic meanings of different languages, Rosselli's quest for a fundamental unit of language is marked by linguistic difference from the start. In "Spazi metrici," as Rosselli describes her quest

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[511] Casadei, "Voice Politics in the City," 423: "Lomax had a direct relation with the Studio di Fonologia: in 1954, he had corresponded with Berio regarding experiments with the sonograph—a device that converted sound into phonetic notation. The written classification of sounds into phonemes—away from semantics—carried out via the sonograph was indicative of Lomax's analytical method with regard to field recordings, a method he would make public in 1959 as his now renowned 'cantometrics.' [...] Lomax's interest in speech-writing technology [...] would also become the means of formulating vocality's unmediated relationship to the body politic at large, without the middleman of language."

[512] Patrick E. Savage, "Alan Lomax's Cantometrics Project: A Comprehensive Review," in *Music and Science*, Vol. 1 (2018), 2.

[513] Savage, "Alan Lomax's Cantometrics Project," 3.

for a basic unit of language that could explain language's universal form, even the idea of "letters" or "phonetic nodes" are determined by linguistic difference:

> è con queste preoccupazioni ch'io mi misi ad un certo punto della mia adolescenza a cercare le forme universali. Per trovare queste cercai da prima il mio (occidentale e razionale) elemento organizzativo minimo nello scrivere. E questo risultava chiaramente essere la 'lettera' [...] Questa lettera, sonora ma egualmente 'rumore', creava nodi fonetici (chl, str; sta, biv) non necessariamente sillabici, ed erano infatti soltanto forme funzionali o grafiche, e rumore. Per una classificazione non grafica o formale era necessario, nel cercare i fondi della forma poetica, parlare invece della sillaba, intesa non troppo scolasticamente, ma piuttosto come particella ritmica. Salendo su per questa materia ancora insignificante, incorrevo nella 'parola' intera, intesa come definizione e senso, pozzo della comunicazione.[514]
>
> [it is with these preoccupations that I set out at a certain point in my adolescence to seek universal forms. To find these I sought from the beginning my most basic (Western and rational) organizational element in writing. And this turned out clearly to be the 'letter' [...] This letter, sonorous but equally a 'noise,' created phonetic nodes (*chl, str; sta, biv*) that were not necessarily syllabic, and were in fact only functional or graphical forms, and noise. For a classification that would be neither graphic nor formal it was necessary, in seeking the reserves of poetic form, to speak of the syllable, understood not overly scholastically, but rather as a rhythmic particle. Rising out of this still-insignificant matter, I came upon the word as a whole, understood as definition and sense, idea, well of communication.][515]

Even in the case of the fundamental unit that Rosselli cites, the letter, she notes that her conception is "Western" (and "rational," as a contrast to Rosselli's typical Orientalizing perspective of a more instinctual East). The phonemes she cites are similarly culturally determined: for instance, "chl" never appears in Italian, but it can exist in English. Even before reaching the word, a linguistically-determined "pozzo della comunicazione" [well of communication], it seems impossible to extricate the elements of language from linguistic difference. As in Maderna's "Dimensioni II," where the combinations of phonemes are random,

[514] Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," 64.

[515] Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Scappettone, 38.

listeners project linguistic difference onto them when hearing combinations of phonemes that sound like they belong to certain languages.

Thus, despite Rosselli's asserted desire for a universal language, her quest for this universal language's base unit, something that, put in different combinations, makes up all languages, is marked from the start by cultural and linguistic difference. The question of difference on an even smaller scale comes up when Rosselli discusses the issue of phonetic classifications in the second paragraph of "Spazi metrici": the noises of vowels and consonants are difficult to classify, she states, "vista la complessità del nostro apparato fonetico-fisiologico, e il variare da persona a persona perfino delle grandezze delle corde vocali e delle cavità orali"[516] [given the complexity of our phonetic-physiological apparatus, and the variation from person to person even of the magnitude of vocal cords and oral cavities].[517] Despite phonetics researchers' and acousticians' focus on emphasizing universal parameters of human perception and production,[518] and despite Rosselli's stated and recurring interest in universals, in her description of this quest for universals in "Spazi metrici" she seems drawn to emphasizing difference: cultural difference, linguistic difference, individual differences between bodies. To put it in the terms of her poetry, she keeps bringing in the "sgragnatiture" [scratchlings, in Re and Vangelisti's translation] that complicate the one, overarching system into which they are meant to fit.

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[516] Rosselli, "Spazi metrici," 63.

[517] Rosselli, "Metrical Spaces," trans. Scappettone, 37.

[518] Iverson, in *Electronic Inspirations*, notes this about the work of Werner Meyer-Eppler in perception and psychoacoustics, 114–5.

Conclusions

In a way, Rosselli's emphasis on linguistic differences is reminiscent of a statement that her friend Rocco Scotellaro had made, in an essay in *Contadini del Sud* that introduced a letter written by his mother, Francesca Armento. He cautions the reader that, in gathering this and other examples of linguistic difference from his region, he is not making a larger argument about realism, but rather reveling in variety: "non si crede che sia da farsi luogo al discorso sul realismo, leggendo questo e i mille altri racconti sconosciuti, ma solo si vuole credere all'infinita molteplicità della parola nell'infinita varietà del mondo, come lo vedono le creature umane che sanno amarlo e cercano di capirlo"[519] [reading this and the thousand other unknown stories is not meant to open the way for the discussion on realism; we only want to demonstrate the infinite multiplicity of the word in the infinite variety of the world, as it is seen by the human creatures that know how to love it and try to understand it]. I have argued that Rosselli, in her paratexts to *Variazioni Belliche*, inscribes her poems into a contemplation of the space between a structuralist approach to language and an approach more similar to Scotellaro's. This interplay between universality and difference—between an overarching order or system and the uniqueness of its component parts—relates to various systems of thought in the 1950s and early 1960s: Third-Worldist discourses, research on Southern Italy, electroacoustic experiments, ethnomusicology.

I see Rosselli's investment in how the "sgragnatiture," the scratchlings, fit into larger systems as an attempt to valorize these elements, these languages that have long been marginalized and not considered worthy enough to even be contemplated as potentially belonging to a larger system. However, as the 1960s progressed, Italian intellectuals began to

[519] Scotellaro, *Contadini del Sud*, 284.

contend with how declarations of universal systems in the postwar risked homogenizing difference by enforcing a hegemonic Western culture.[520] They also began to face the fact that recording technologies were increasingly not only used as tools to gain insight into cultural differences and/or shared physiological elements underlying human perception, but also as instruments of state surveillance. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I consider how political events in the 1960s and 1970s created crises in many of the disciplines and research projects that Rosselli had cited as central to her poetics in her paratexts to *Variazioni Belliche*.

[520] Here, I am drawing on arguments that Pieter Vanhove makes regarding Italian Third Worldism in the 1960s and 1970s, in *World Literature After Empire: Rethinking Universality in the Long Cold War* (New York: NY, 2021).

Conclusion

After *Variazioni Belliche*

After the publication of *Variazioni Belliche* in 1964, Amelia Rosselli became fairly well-known as a poet in Italian literary circles. Over the course of the 1960s and into the 1970s, she wrote and published the collection *Serie Ospedaliera*. She also began publishing short articles, primarily on literature in Italy and the United States, to supplement her income, mostly in newspapers with ties to the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI), like *Paese Sera*, *il manifesto*, and *L'Unità*, and the Italian Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Italiano, PSI) like *Avanti!* Occasionally, she wrote texts for radio broadcast programs. One, on "élite" poetry in the contemporary United States ("Poesia d'élite nell'America di oggi" (1976)), was actually broadcast, but she also proposed others: one on "Musica classica/musica leggera" [Classical music/pop music], and one on "Musiche folk da tutto il mondo" [World folk music], both proposed in 1971.[521]

Rosselli suggested in interviews that once she reached some success as a poet, she stopped her endeavors as a composer and her ethnomusicological research: in a 1981 interview, she said she had stopped her musical activities, because "non si può fare musica e poesia. O l'una o l'altra. Entrambe sono discipline severe"[522] [one cannot make music and poetry. One or the other. Both are demanding disciplines]. But this was not, strictly speaking, true. The proposal for the radio broadcast on world folk music betrayed an ongoing investment in

[521] These proposals are in the Pavia archives, in the "Collaborazioni radiotelevisive" folder.

[522] Adele Cambria and Amelia Rosselli, "Un armadio tutto per sé" (1981), in *È vostra la vita che ho perso. Conversazioni e interviste 1964–1995*, ed. Monica Venturini and Silvia De March (Florence: Le Lettere, 2010), 61.

ethnomusicological research, and the impulse toward categorizing musics geographically may signal an engagement with types of projects like Alan Lomax's cantometrics, which established similar categories of world music.[523] She also kept trying to secure funding for her instrument, which she insisted had uses both as a compositional tool and as a means of better understanding musics outside of the Western classical tradition. In 1977, she wrote to her brother John saying she had gotten back in touch with ethnomusicologist Diego Carpitella, and that he was willing to help her write grants so that she could be financed by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR, Italy's National Research Council). This partnership continued until 1979, when Rosselli instead turned to Gerald Bennett at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM: Institute for Research and Coordination of Acoustic/Music) in Paris. When that failed, she turned to Professors Vladimir Ibler and Branko Soucek, of the Inter-University Centre of Postgraduate Studies in Dubrovnik, in the 1981 letter cited in the first chapter of this dissertation. She hoped that her ethnomusicological research would be better received in the "Socialist countries": "the somewhat typically marxist and scientific approach to popular music does not much seem to interest the English, or Italian reviews (if there were any!) which I wrote to. French studies are mechanically computerized, and certainly deal rather with

[523] Rosselli proposed the following categories: two programs on "musiche folk europee," first "Inghilterra, Francia, Germania, Austria" and then "paesi balcanici e Polonia"; two programs on "musiche folk delle due Americhe," starting with "musiche folk nordamericane dal '600 a oggi" and moving to "musiche sudamericane: ad es. del festival brasiliano, dall'Argentina, Cile, Uruguay, Mexico ecc."; two programs on "musiche meridionali, medio-orientali e africane," split into first "Spagna, Portogallo, Grecia" and then "nord africa, Turchia, Congo e Africa in genere ad es. Biafra, Afro-percussione"; two or three programs on "musiche orientali," ranging from "canti buddisti, cerimonie Zen-buddiste, musica 'Sitar' dell'Oriente; dischi di musica indiana editi da Yehudi Menuhin, Alain Daniélou; riti orientali ecc."; two programs on "musiche nordiche e russe," containing "Russia; paesi scandinavi; 'Icelandic' singers ecc."; a program on "musiche delle isole (Tahiti, Hawaii, Antilles, le Bahamas, Madagascar ecc.)"; and a program on musics of ethnic minorities like "Yiddish, Zingari, Pigmei, Indo-americani ecc.". Lomax tended to group musics into 1. "African gatherers," 2. "proto-Melanesia and South America," 3. "Siberia," 4. "the Circum-Pacific," 5. "Nuclear America," 6. "the tropical gardener style," 7. "the Malayo-Polynesian cluster," 8. "Old High Culture," 9. "Central Asia," and 10., "Europe." A closer comparison of different categorizations in ethnomusicological research in the 1970s, and an investigation of whether Rosselli was at all aware of or influenced by Lomax, is necessary for further commentary.

the possibilities of electronics and mathematics, than with popular [folk] or Oriental music, in their substance."

Rosselli went on to tell the professors that "[i]n reality I find not only that I should try to publish the 'paper' in the Socialist countries, but also that I should, if necessary, 'prove' the point I make in the thesis"—that is, the centrality of the harmonic series to all musical systems, and its possibilities as a structure of all musical elements in a composition, making pieces universally intelligible, regardless of cultural background. By the time Rosselli was writing this letter, focus on universal parameters of human perception, concepts of Third Worldism, anthropological research in the Italian South, had all undergone vast shifts in Italy.

From the late 1960s to the mid-1980s were an incredibly turbulent period for Italy: the years of the "strategia della tensione," the "strategy of tension," marked by political instability and terroristic violence (also fomented by American secret services). The term itself was coined after the Piazza Fontana bombing (la Strage di Piazza Fontana) in Milan in 1969, a terrorist attack carried out by the neo-fascist group Ordine Nuovo that killed seventeen people and wounded 88.[524] Even before the 1969 attack, though, political unrest was brewing. Historian Nicola Tranfaglia pinpointed 1963–1964 as the time when radical right-wing groups in Italy ("la destra radicale") began arguing for violent means of suppressing the Italian Communist Party. Tranfaglia notes that one of the reasons for the perceived threat of communism cited by people like Clemente Graziani, future leader of Ordine Nuovo, in a 1964 article, was communist-led liberation movements in Algeria and Vietnam.[525] Patrizia Zangla keeps to similar dates, as well,

[524] The term was actually coined by a British journalist, Neal Ascherson, according to Patrizia Zangla, *I Neri e i Rossi, le trame segrete: 1964–1982, la strategia della tensione, le Brigate Rosse, il caso Moro* (Milan: Leone editore, 2017), 19.

[525] Nicola Tranfaglia, "La strategia della tensione e i due terrorismi," in *Studi Storici*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (October–December 1998), 992.

noting fervent neofascist activities from 1965 onward, directed at curtailing "il pericolo comunista"[526] [the communist danger].

These years were difficult for Rosselli. She felt exposed, as the daughter of a prominent anti-fascist assassinated for his political activities, and as an active (though low-profile) member of the Italian Communist Party.[527] She began experiencing vivid persecution complexes, in which the CIA and the Italian secret services were colluding to harm and incapacitate her. Many people around Rosselli did not know how to respond to her claims of being persecuted, since, in some respects, they were plausible, given Rosselli's symbolic status as the daughter of Carlo Rosselli and the widespread sense of surveillance and unease during those years. The psychological and physical pain that Rosselli experienced in those years also led to a diagnosis of Parkinson's. The debilitating nature of her illness or illnesses made Rosselli's ability to read and write unpredictable.

Rosselli wrote about her illness in the journal *Nuovi argomenti* in 1977, in an essay titled "Storia di una malattia" [Hi/story of an illness]. The editors (Attilio Bertolucci, Enzo Siciliano, and Rosselli's cousin Alberto Moravia) seemed not to know how to present the piece; they published it with a short note stating "Pubblichiamo volentieri questo testo di Amelia Rosselli a testimonianza di un'insolita esperienza esistenziale"[528] [We gladly publish this essay by Amelia Rosselli, which testifies to an unusual existential experience]. Francesca Caputo republished the text in her 2004 collection of Rosselli's essays, but put it as an appendix. In her note to the essay,

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[526] Zangla, *I Neri e i Rossi*, 29–32.

[527] Rosselli did not have political aspirations in the communist party, but, as stated above, she often wrote for communist party newspapers. She also organized and played her compositions at communist party concert series, and volunteered in a party base, performing basic maintenance tasks.

[528] Cited in Amelia Rosselli, *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 346.

she cited what Rosselli's cousin, Aldo Rosselli, said about Rosselli's persecution complexes in his novel-memoir *Prove tecniche di follia*:

> Più implausibile, atroce, inaccettabile era il suo racconto, più poteva sembrare che il visitatore di turno stesse inoltrandosi in un giallo dai contorni circonvoluti, nel nero di un congegno *horror* dove però persistevano spezzoni di quotidianità, addirittura familiarità. E nello svolgersi del suo interminabile plot esistenziale, presentato ora come una confessione affannosa, indicibile, ora come un soffocato grido d'incredulità pure da parte di chi dipana terrificanti momenti di implausibilità, blocchi di pura sofferenza presentati come i racconti di un orrore quotidiano, minimale (non dissimili, ad esempio, dalla prosa ingannatrice, crudelmente verosimigliante in un segno di minimalità che contraddistingue i vortici di domestico orrore di un maestro di pacata anomia che era Patricia Highsmith), Amelia coinvolgeva l'ascoltatore ignaro o renitente in una forzata ma anche soave accettazione.[529]
>
> [The more implausible, atrocious, unacceptable her account was, the more it might seem like the listener was entering into a mystery novel with contorted borders, into the darkness of a horror device in which, however, pieces of daily life, even familiarity, persisted. And in the unraveling of her interminable existential plot, which she alternately presented as a gasping, unsayable confession, or a choked cry of incredulity emerging from the very person who was telling these terrifying moments of implausibility, batches of pure suffering presented as stories of minimal, daily horror (reminiscent of, for example, the tricky prose, cruelly realistic in its minimality, which distinguishes the turbulent domestic horror of Patricia Highsmuth, master of understated anomie), Amelia engaged the unaware or recalcitrant listener in a forced but gentle acceptance.]

Caputo agrees with Aldo Rosselli's assessment, stating that "[i] termini 'giallo', 'congegno horror', 'plot esistenziale', il riferimento alla Highsmith, che Aldo Rosselli utilizza per delineare i ricorrenti racconti orali di Amelia, ne suggeriscono una curvatura finzionale percepibile anche nella versione scritta"[530] [the terms 'mystery novel,' 'horror device,' 'existential plot,' the reference to Highsmith that Aldo Rosselli uses to sketch Amelia's recurring oral storytelling suggest a fictional bent to the narrative that comes through the written version, as well]. As Elizabeth Leake puts it in one of the few critical analyses of "Storia di una malattia," the piece is

[529] Aldo Rosselli, *Prove tecniche di follia* (Rome: Empiria, 2000), 72–3.

[530] Caputo, *Una scrittura plurale*, 346.

deeply imbricated in history—indeed, on the surface it presents "Rosselli as a victim of historical forces"—and yet its literary quality is what is often emphasized.[531]

Rosselli's obsession with what she believed to be a conspiracy against her carried out by secret services was not a completely implausible scenario in the Italian political climate of the late 1960s and 1970s, and it was closely tied to anxieties manifesting in the Italian media, as well. As Paolo Mattera has noted in a recent article, from the late 1960s into the 1970s and 1980s, Italian television and films depicted countless narratives of collusion between the state and the police, which both reflected and reinforced many Italians' feelings of "detachment, distrust and intolerance" toward institutions and the state.[532] He identifies, as the symbolic beginning of this genre, Elio Petri's 1970 film, set in Rome, *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto* [Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion],[533] in which actor Gian Maria Volonté starred as a police inspector who murders his mistress and then actively attempts to steer the investigation toward himself, to prove his own "insospettabilità" ["unsuspectability"]. Various forms of recording technology figure prominently in the film. As cameras flash at the crime scene, the narrative flashes back to a moment that occurred prior to the murder: the inspector and his mistress play a game where he directs her to take the positions of dead bodies that he has discovered, and he takes pictures of her. One of these poses is based on the murder of a young pop singer, killed by either an ex-seminarian or an organist, and covered with vinyl LP records of sacred music; the murderer was apprehended listening to his victim's voice on a

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[531] Elizabeth Leake, *After Words: Suicide and Authorship in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 77.

[532] Paolo Mattera, "The Long 1970s and 1980s of Television and Movies in Italy: New Forms of De-Legitimization," in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2023), 221.

[533] Mattera, "The Long 1970s and 1980s of Television and Movies in Italy," 222.

jukebox.[534] As the inspector covers the mistress with records, taking pictures of her, a reel-to-reel tape recorder looms in the background. The police station is filled with massive tape recorders, as well: a number of scenes in the second half of the film take place in a windowless area of the station lined with rows of reel-to-reel tape recorders and players on which technicians are recording the telephone conversations of suspected subversives and listening back to recordings and taking notes. In another flashback, to a mock interrogation of the mistress, the inspector orders her: "pensa che io posso sapere tutto di te, perché lo Stato mi offre tutti i mezzi per mettere a nudo un individuo"[535] [think about how I can know everything about you, because the State offers me all the means to lay an individual bare]. The use of "mezzi" here is an ambiguous choice: of course, it can entail a generic "means," but it could also be a veiled reference to the technological means of surveillance to which the police force now clearly has extensive access, thanks to the State.

These menacing uses of the same recording technologies that have figured so prominently in the discussions of ethnography, ethnomusicology, electroacoustic studies, and electronic music composition that I have analyzed throughout this dissertation surface in "Storia di una malattia." In Rosselli's work in the 1950s and early 1960s, the recording device was an instrument of investigation of the relationship between self and other. It did present certain quandaries: how should one approach recording the other ethically? How can one use these new technologies to uncover shared bases of human cultural production while also maintaining a sensitivity to the intricacies of difference? At the same time, recording technologies offered redemptive potential. They were a means to reveal similarities among humans from even the

[534] Elio Petri, *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto*, 20:20–20:43.

[535] Petri, *Indagine*, 43:52–44:01.

most geographically distant places, in a political attempt to highlight the equal cultural and intellectual capacities of humans from all racial backgrounds. They introduced fantasies of being able to access the bodily experiences of others in new ways, opening paths to a new proximity between text and the body. But by the late 1960s and early 1970s, the association between recording technology, surveillance, and political violence became at least as strong for Rosselli as the association between recording technology, ethnography, and the quest to better understand the relationship between self and other. This new, threatening set of associations emerges in "Storia di una malattia."

Technologically mediated observation in "Storia di una malattia"

"Storia di una malattia" does not ease into its shocking allegations; it starts almost immediately by declaring that "La malattia era la Cia, il suo corrosivo o punto d'attacco il Sid o l'Ufficio Politico o ambedue"[536] [The sickness was the CIA; its corrosive or attack point was the SID (Servizio Informazioni Difesa, the Italian intelligence agency from 1965 to 1977) or the police headquarters or both]. After describing initial incidents—poisoned coffee and cigarettes—Rosselli describes hearing her phone calls being intercepted: "Intanto i telefoni saltavano, le conversazioni telefoniche erano ascoltate e si udivano addirittura reazioni psicologiche di divertimento o minaccia, nel sottofondo senza brusio di telefoni controllati a nastro" [Meanwhile, the telephone lines malfunctioned, my phone conversations were listened to and we could even hear psychological reactions, amused or threatening, in the quiet background of tapped phones]. Rosselli's description of the wiretapping, "telefoni controllati a nastro," is

[536] Amelia Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia," in *Una scrittura plurale. Saggi e interventi critici*, ed. Francesca Caputo (Novara: Interlinea, 2004), 317.

literally “telephones surveilled via tape”; already, she reveals an association between recording technology and surveillance.

She describes moving out of her apartment in 1971 into a new apartment, where at first she feels secure and then realizes that she is being surveilled: “cominciai a notare che venivo ‘auscultata’, cioè ascoltata”[537] [I began to notice that I was being ‘auscultated,’ that is, listened to]. The choice of the verb “auscultare” is an odd one: “auscultation” refers either to hearing a kind of religious confession or a medical form of listening, to the heart, for instance, often associated with the stethoscope. Sound studies scholar Jonathan Sterne has analyzed the emergence of what he calls “*mediate auscultation*,” which “refers to the practice of listening to movements inside the body with the aid of an instrument (hence *mediate*),” over the course of the nineteenth century.[538] He states that later medical technologies “designed to facilitate the search for the internal causes of external symptoms,” such as the speculum, CAT scans, or MRIs, “are direct descendants of mediate auscultation and the stethoscope.”[539] Rosselli’s description of herself as “auscultata” implies being listened to in a way that is invasive both spiritually and physically, as unknown listeners attempt to hear inside her thoughts and inside her body using unknown media. She wonders what “aggeggio” [contraption] has been planted in her house.[540] She and a friend suspect the television set: “spostammo addirittura l’apparecchio televisivo in giardino, sotto tela gommata, nel caso che udibilità, e quel che oramai si chiariva essere

[537] Rosselli, “Storia di una malattia,” 318.

[538] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 99.

[539] Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 101.

[540] Rosselli, “Storia di una malattia,” 318.

addirittura *visibilità*, dipendessero da antenna e scatola"[541] [we even moved the television set out to the garden, under a tarp, in case the audibility—and at this point it was becoming clear that even *visibility* was at issue—was due to the antenna and the converter box].

Rosselli goes on to describe a kind of torture that she believes is being administered to her through the use of electromagnetic waves: "Una notte mi svegliai soffocando, e sentii come la stanza piena d'onde elettromagnetiche, e me con le gambe addormentate e formicolanti. Forse un aumento di corrente durante il programma televisivo della sera prima, e un accumularsi d'onde nella stanza chiusa? Sospettai invece che qualcuno fosse andato nella cabina dello stabile, a rialzare la corrente"[542] [One night I woke up, choking, and I felt as if the room were full of electromagnetic waves, and my legs were asleep and tingling. Perhaps it had been an increase in the electric current during the TV program from the previous night, and an accumulation of waves in the closed room? I suspected, instead, that someone had gone into the building's transformer room, to increase the current]. The torture of the electromagnetic waves recurs: "venivano usati mezzi suppongo elettromagnetici per rendere tesissimi i muscoli, con conseguente ipertensione anche di pensiero"[543] [they used what I assume were electromagnetic means to make my muscles very tense, resulting in intense tension in my mind, as well]. The focus on electromagnetism here is an interesting one: while, of course, electromagnetism has many uses, the advent of electromagnetic means of recording was what allowed for widespread use of recording technologies like tape recorders and videotape.

[541] Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia," 318.

[542] Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia," 318.

[543] Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia," 320.

Alongside the surveillance and the torture of the electromagnetic waves (in addition to poisoning and other attacks), Rosselli describes hearing the voices of the agents listening to her and watching her. A collaboration between the CIA, Italian secret services, and British secret services are listening in and sometimes speak, but the CIA is the main culprit; Rosselli describes how both the Italian and British secret services were "disgustati dall'andamento delle cose, ma non riuscivano ad impedire l'aumentato trattamento oramai ovviamente definibile come tortura"[544] [disgusted by the way things were going, but they were not able to prevent the increased treatment, which was now obviously definable as torture]. By "trattamento," treatment, Rosselli is explicitly referring to the effects of the electromagnetism that she believes the CIA is employing: "[i] 'trattamenti' [...] andarono intensificandosi gravemente, e ne ricavai strappi muscolari dolorosissimi, anche perché i mezzi di 'tiraggio' elettromagnetico lavoravano proprio sui punti deboli dell'organismo"[545] [the "treatments" kept getting worse, and resulted in very painful muscle tears, also because the "circulating" electromagnetic means worked precisely on my body's weak points].

At first, Rosselli hopes the CIA agents in her hallucinations are "scienziati sociologi o psichiatri"[546] [scientists, sociologists, or psychiatrists]—professionals listening in on her thoughts. These professions were all related to research Rosselli had done in the past: science in her studies of physics and acoustics, sociology alongside her studies of anthropology, psychiatry

[544] Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia," 324.

[545] Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia," 324. "Trattamento" is also the term she uses in a 1976 letter to Elio Pecora: "la testa—non so se le arterie—mi scoppia per vio del 'trattamento' subito." In Amelia Rosselli, "[*Carissimo Elio*]—lettere da Londra a Elio Pecora," in *Trasparenze. Supplemento non periodico a "Quaderni di Poesia,"* Vol. 17–19 (2003), 91.

[546] Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia," 320.

akin to her studies in psychology. Here, she finds herself on the other side, being observed rather than being the observer; but the idea that the observation is originating from one of these professionals is the best possible outcome ("io *sperando* che si trattasse di scienziati sociologi o psichiatri"[547] [I, *hoping* that these were scientists, sociologists, or psychiatrists (my emphasis)]). The CIA's use of recording technologies, techniques, and media is a perverse misuse of these tools. But around the same time that Rosselli was experiencing her anxieties surrounding recording technology and surveillance, ethnographers and the intellectuals interested in their work were reevaluating their own uses of technology in attempts to gain access to others. And, in the same years, electroacoustic research and electronic music as Rosselli knew it was quickly becoming obsolete. In this changing landscape, Rosselli's nightmares place her on the other side of the technologically mediated encounter, reversing the position she had so often taken in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Shifting disciplines, new conceptions of ethics, and rethinking universality in the 1970s

In 1978, in the pages of *L'Unità*, the PCI-affiliated newspaper whose pages often contained Rosselli's work as well, a bitter debate took place between poet Edoardo Sanguineti and anthropologist Annabella Rossi,[548] just a few days before prime minister Aldo Moro's body was found in the trunk of a car on Via Caetani in Rome, murdered by the Brigate Rosse [Red

[547] Rosselli, "Storia di una malattia," 320.

[548] Rosselli definitely knew Sanguineti personally (although she did not value his poetry), since he had been a major representative of the Gruppo 63 and the *neoavanguardia*, a group with which Rosselli was marginally associated (and sometimes reluctantly). She may have known Annabella Rossi, who had been a student of Ernesto De Martino, but Rossi entered De Martino's orbit in the late 1950s, whereas Rosselli was more closely involved with De Martino's research in the early 1950s.

Brigades], on May 9. The debate was centered around the new documentary on which Rossi had collaborated, *Sud e magia* (a tribute to the twenty-year-anniversary of the publication of Ernesto De Martino's book of the same name), a four-part program shown on television. In his regular column "A parte," Sanguineti accused Rossi (who had studied with De Martino) and her collaborators, film directors Gianfranco Mingozzi and Claudio Barbati, of having betrayed the legacy of De Martino (who had died in 1965) by exoticizing and exploiting the Southern Italian ethnographic subjects.[549]

Rossi replied to Sanguineti in a scathing open letter, also published in *L'Unità*, in which she let Sanguineti know how little she thought of his knowledge of De Martino's legacy and of anthropology as a discipline. She told Sanguineti that she and her collaborators intended to communicate the discomfort of the ethnographic encounter, "[p]erché—comunque mascherato—un atto di violenza viene sempre compiuto, sia pure in misura diversa, nel rapporto tra etnologi, antropologi, sociologi e le persone intervistate: anche quando le interviste avvengono con il consenso e la piena collaborazione di queste persone. Atto di violenza che a nostro parere è non solo inevitabile ma necessario per tentare di conoscere, documentare e promuovere alla storia una cultura che dalla storia è stata sempre esclusa"[550] [because—however disguised it may be—an act of violence is always committed, albeit to different degrees, in the relationship between ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists and the people interviewed: even when these interviews occur with these people's consent and full collaboration. We believe that this act of

[549] Edoardo Sanguineti, "Folclore industriale," in *L'Unità*, 23 April 1978, 8.

[550] Annabella Rossi, "A proposito di 'Sud e Magìa'. Atto di violenza per capire una cultura esclusa," in *L'Unità*, 4 May 1978, 8.

violence is not only inevitable but necessary to try to know, document, and bring into history a culture that has always been excluded from history].

Rossi explained that this was why she and her collaborators chose to end the documentary with an interview with Maria di Nardò,[551] a woman who had suffered from tarantism and who had been studied by De Martino in the late 1950s. In this interview, at a certain point Maria di Nardò abruptly walks away, declaring that De Martino's troupe of ethnomusicologists and anthropologists and technicians, who recorded her during an attack of her tarantism, were "tutti infami" [all wicked].[552] Rossi stated that the decision to end the documentary with Maria di Nardò's statement in order to offer viewers "un esempio diretto e drammatico di 'violenza culturale' e di 'ribellione' a questa 'violenza'"[553] [a direct and dramatic example of "cultural violence" and of "rebellion" against this "violence"]. This is the legacy of De Martino: the consciousness of violence in the ethnographic encounter, which lurked at the edges of his meditations on his experiences in fieldwork in the 1950s, assumed a central role in the 1970s.

In the same years, electroacoustics and electronic music as Rosselli had known them were changing substantially. Tape was becoming obsolete in musical compositions, in favor of computers, and by 1983 the Studio di Fonologia musicale di Milano, where Rosselli had sung for Maderna, experimented with synthesizers, and created a tape composition, had shut down. In

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[551] This is not her full name. To protect her identity, De Martino referred to her by her first name, Maria, and where she was from: Nardò, a small town in Puglia, in the Salento region (province of Lecce).

[552] The documentary is not available in its entirety online, but the interview with Maria di Nardò is on YouTube, as it was re-aired in a Rai special called "Donne e religione": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUnF46uTaYg. Maria di Nardò says that they were "tutti infami" and walks away at around the 10:05 mark in this clip.

[553] Rossi, "A proposito di 'Sud e Magia," 8.

1968, equipment had been replaced, but in 1973 the new equipment was already deemed partially obsolete. In 1978, there was an attempt to update the studio with computer connections for computer music that went nowhere.[554] The research in phonology and phonetics and its use in musical compositions in which Rosselli had inscribed *Variazioni Belliche*, through "Spazi metrici," was no longer relevant.

Additionally, the meaning and political possibilities of the idea of universality, an idea that had so captivated and motivated Rosselli, were increasingly questioned. There was rising concern that contact between hegemonic Western society and places like Italy's South or the Third World as conceived by the Third-Worldists would simply result in homogeneity, in an imposition of the dominant culture. As Pieter Vanhove has put it in an analysis of Pasolini's Third-Worldist work, made in the late 1960s and early 1970s before Pasolini's murder in 1975, "[t]he Third World is no longer, as it had been before 1968, an untouched utopian space embodying an attractive alternative conception of the world [...] While Pasolini envisions an alternative conception of the universal—one made up of fireflies who can stand in opposition to the onslaught of global capital—he at the same time does not shy away from critiquing the very logic of universality and global translatability."[555] Pasolini's later work reveals an understanding that, when the Third World and the Italian South appropriated the logic of the dominant worldview, "this newfound knowledge could lead to the alternative universe's self-destruction as it became evermore similar to its hegemonic counterpart in the industrialized world."[556]

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[554] All of this information is represented in archival materials cited by Joanna Helms, "Electronic Music History Through the Everyday: The Rai Studio di Fonologia (1954–1983)," Ph.D. diss. (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2020), 194–196.

[555] Pieter Vanhove, *World Literature After Empire: Rethinking Universality in the Long Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 90.

[556] Vanhove, *World Literature After Empire*, 90.

Intellectuals began to contend with the potentially destructive nature of universality, how some declarations of universality in the postwar risked merely amounting to neocolonial enterprises advocating the expansion of a hegemonic Western culture.

The circumscribed historicity of Rosselli's projects, 1950–1964

What I have demonstrated throughout this conclusion is that the particular conceptions of cultural and racial difference, technology, and techniques of the body that I argue informed Rosselli's work through 1964 were mostly circumscribed to that period. The ethnographic and ethnomusicological practices with which she was familiar were increasingly questioned or qualified, and the idea of their violence was foregrounded. The research in electroacoustics and electronic music in which she had most actively participated quickly became perceived as obsolete. The instruments to which she had turned to seek a universal humanity became representative of tools of surveillance and state repression.

Rosselli's work in the 1950s and early 1960s, though, was rooted in transnational intellectual currents of those years that were deeply engaged in understanding how ideas of universal humanity could shed light on cultural differences, and, more broadly, on differences between self and other. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that Rosselli explored difference through new, sometimes fantastical conceptions of technologies and techniques of the body, with a primarily hopeful view that this exploration would lead to a reevaluation of hegemonic Western modes of understanding culture. In this sense, Rosselli's research projects, musical endeavors, and poetics are profoundly historical, and deeply imbricated within the fabric of the networks in which she was actively participating even before her rise to mild fame:

networks of people attempting to rethink differences and universals in humans across the postwar world.

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