

Eugenio Montale and the Literature of
the Sixties: Intertexts for *Satura* and the
Later Poetry

John Clifford Butcher

University College London

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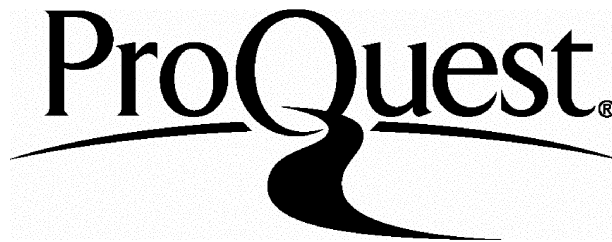
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Abstract

This thesis sets out to explore the significant impact that poetry, fiction and essays published in the Sixties had on the development of Eugenio Montale's later poetry. The primary focus is *Satura* (1971) but space is also accorded to Montale's ensuing four collections, *Diario del '71 e del '72* (1973), *Quaderno di quattro anni* (1977), *Altri versi* (1980) and *Diario postumo* (1996). The first part of this study delves into the role played by contemporary literature in that 'svolta' that took place with the composition of the 'Xenia' (*Satura*). Amongst those texts mentioned are an Italian translation of verse by William Carlos Williams and Natalia Ginzburg's *Lessico familiare*. The second part of this thesis deals with those works that helped effect the grand shift from the poetic mode of the 'Xenia' to that of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' (the final two sections of *Satura*). It devotes detailed attention to several works from the Sixties including Vittorio Sereni's *Gli strumenti umani*, Nelo Risi's *Dentro la sostanza*, Karl Löwith's *Critica dell'esistenza storica* and Andrea Zanzotto's *La Beltà*. During the inquiries into the genesis of the overall form and content of the 'Xenia' and 'Satura I' / 'Satura II' many cases are identified in which the works examined would also appear to have contributed directly to the creation of a particular passage in one of the poems in *Satura* (or in the successive collections). The third and final part of this study sets out several hypotheses of local textual influence relating to works not discussed extensively in the earlier two parts,

dealing firstly with Italo Calvino's fiction of the Sixties and then with other contemporary texts by Italian writers such as Luciano Erba, Antonio Barolini and Umberto Eco.

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Preface

Che sia venuto il momento di rileggere Montale
non gli *Ossi* l'ultimo ma quale?
Satura per esempio dal linguaggio sottotono [...]

(Nelo Risi, '*Che sia venuto il momento*')¹

Whilst acknowledging the fact that there exist significant points of divergence between *Ossi di seppia*, *Le occasioni* and *La bufera e altro*, as well as the fact that the successive five collections by the same poet manifest a certain degree of heterogeneity amongst themselves, one may nonetheless claim quite legitimately that Montale's verse production falls into two grand phases. On the one hand, there is the Montale of the first three collections, the Montale of dramatic seascapes and landscapes, of abundant flora and fauna, of fervid eros, of rich imagery, of grand allegories, the intensely lyrical Montale that has long since been accorded pride of place in the realm of Twentieth-century Italian verse. On the other hand, there is the 'later' Montale, the poet of the Sixties and Seventies, the prosaic, the comic, the gnomic, the satirical, the diaristic Montale of *Satura*, *Diario del '71 e del '72*, *Quaderno di quattro anni*, *Altri versi* and *Diario postumo*.² Now, if the Montale from *Ossi* to *Bufera* has been the object of a vast amount

of writing (amongst modern Italian authors only figures like Pirandello, Gadda, Pasolini and Calvino can come anywhere near to rivalling the Genoese poet from the standpoint of sheer quantity of critical studies), the later Montale has to date been relatively neglected by scholars. This is a shame since the post-*Bufera* verse is, qualitatively speaking, on a par with the bulk of the most interesting Italian verse of the last few decades. In particular, *Satura*, one of the most important works in Italian to have been published in the second half of the Twentieth century, deserves a great deal more attention than that which it has received so far.³

Unlike most of the studies focusing on the later verse currently available, the principal critical approach adopted in this investigation is neither formal nor thematic. It is, instead, intertextual. The following pages will argue that literature first published in the Sixties, give or take a few years, stimulated and moulded to a large degree the poetry of Montale's final two decades. The primary focus of the present study will be *Satura* (1971), that work which inaugurated the second grand phase in Montale's poetic career, but ample space will also be reserved for the successive *Diari* (1973) and *Quaderno* (1977). Some mention will also be made of *Altri versi* (1980), a collection compiled by the editors of *L'opera in versi*, and the controversial 1996 volume *Diario postumo*.

Following an introduction discussing Montale's relationship with other texts, relevant works of criticism, the issue of the validity of intertextual conjectures and sources of information concerning what the poet read, the first part of this thesis delves into the importance of contemporary literature for the composition of the 'Xenia' (*Satura*). The major innovations to be found in this series of poems compared to Montale's previous verse are, it is argued, the deployment of a less elaborate lexis and syntax, a greater

emphasis than ever before on the everyday and the humdrum and, in general, a noteworthy lowering of tone, from the high lyricism of *Bufera* to something far closer to the colloquial. Most likely, recent American literature enacted some role in this shift in Montale's style and, indeed, in part one space is apportioned to two writers from the United States: Robert Lowell and William Carlos Williams. Naturally, contemporary Italian verse was also of salience for the 'Xenia'. Here, we may talk generically of an influence on Montale of the overall literary *Zeitgeist*, exemplified in Mario Luzi's production and in the early work of writers such as Nelo Risi, Luciano Erba and Giorgio Orelli. All the same, only one recent Italian poetry collection stands out as being worthy of special attention within the context of an intertextual investigation into the genesis of the 'Xenia', Giorgio Caproni's *Il seme del piangere* and, in particular, the section in this volume entitled 'Versi livornesi', like the 'Xenia' a miniature 'canzoniere' for a dead loved one articulated in a most transparent language and style. Yet, the principal contemporary Italian intertext for the 'Xenia' was in all likelihood not a collection of verse but, instead, a novel first published in 1963: Natalia Ginzburg's *Lessico familiare*. The final section of part one is entirely devoted to this most unusual volume.

The second part of this thesis deals with texts that might conceivably have contributed to the formation of the final two sections of *Satura*, 'Satura I' and 'Satura II', a corpus of material that in good part differs substantially from the 'Xenia' and, indeed, all of Montale's prior verse output. Firstly, it is suggested that Vittorio Sereni's *Gli strumenti umani* affected the metre of the later poems of *Satura* and that the same 1965 collection also encouraged Montale to engage as never before with the wider contemporary reality. Part two then moves on to investigate extensively the issue of possible literary sources for

that satirical vein which courses through ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ and indubitably represents the principal novelty of these two sections with respect to Montale’s earlier poetry. A brief mention of an important 1961 translation from the Nineteenth-century German poet Christian Morgenstern is here *de rigueur*. Still, the bulk of this, the longest section in the present study, revolves around two essentially satirical works containing verse by far more recent writers: an anthology by Cesare Vivaldi entitled *Poesia satirica nell’Italia d’oggi* and Nelo Risi’s *Dentro la sostanza*. It is contended that *Poesia satirica nell’Italia d’oggi* and the poetry of Risi helped nudge Montale into opening up a highly polemical dialogue with the reality of his time, furnishing him with some stimulating models of how to articulate in verse a satirical discourse. Part two proceeds to discuss Karl Löwith’s *Critica dell’esistenza storica*, a volume of philosophy from 1968 that must surely have spurred on those attacks against historicism to be found in ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’. Following this philosophical interlude, our critical gaze moves back to the genre of poetry and to another text first published in 1968, *La Beltà*. Andrea Zanzotto’s groundbreaking collection, with its polyptota and its strings of words connected by a common etymology, must have assisted in the creation of the distinctive rhetoric present in the latter half of Montale’s fourth collection.

In the course of the investigations into the textual motivations behind the genesis of the overall form and content of the ‘Xenia’ and ‘Satura I’ / ‘Satura II’, a host of instances are brought to light in which the presumed intertexts would also seem to have contributed directly to the conception of a particular passage in one of Montale’s poems, be it in *Satura* or in any of the subsequent collections. The third and final part of this thesis sets out a number of other examples of what might be deemed ‘local textual influence’, ones

pertaining to works not examined in detail in the first two parts. The emphasis falls initially on Italo Calvino's fiction from the Sixties or, to be more precise, on *Le Cosmicomiche* and *Ti con zero*. Successively, attention is devoted to a number of other Italian texts from the same decade: Luciano Erba's *Il male minore*, Giovanni Giudici's *La vita in versi* and *Autobiologia*, Antonio Barolini's *L'ultima contessa di famiglia*, Sergio Solmi's *Dal balcone* and Umberto Eco's *Apocalittici e integrati*. This study concludes with a concise summary and discussion of the intertextual hypotheses presented.

¹ See Nelo Risi, *Altro da dire* (Milan: Mondadori, 2000).

² In the present study the titles of Montale's verse collections will be abbreviated as follows: *Ossi* = *Ossi di seppia*; *Occasioni* = *Le occasioni*; *Bufera* = *La bufera e altro*; *Diari* = *Diario del '71 e del '72*; *Quaderno* = *Quaderno di quattro anni*.

³ De Rosa concludes a recent article: 'tutto l'ultimo Montale, fino a quello davvero ultimo di *Altri versi*, esige ancora molte glosse dai suoi lettori'. Francesco De Rosa, 'Dal quarto al quinto Montale', *Italianistica*, XXIX, 3 (September-December 2000), 395-421 (p. 421).

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed great interest in questions of intertextuality. The fundamental impetus for this renaissance in attention towards the relationships between literary texts came from France, and, in particular, from the writings of Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette, not to mention the work of the scholar of French literature Michael Riffaterre. Outside of the French-speaking world, perhaps the most influential writer on intertextuality has been Harold Bloom, author of a volume whose title is now almost proverbial: *The Anxiety of Influence*.¹ Still, rather than repeating the well-known ideas of these thinkers on how different texts relate to each other, let us commence with a striking remark by Montale to be found in a 1966 review of an Italian anthology of Theodore Roethke's verse. In a long preamble to his discussion of this anthology Montale endeavours to explain why it is so difficult for us to comprehend fully foreign poets. One reason he furnishes is that the reader needs first to be familiar with the tradition from which a work derives. He states: 'L'ipotesi romantica che l'arte nasca dalla vita anziché dall'arte già esistente, trova pochissime conferme nella storia' (*SMP* 2800).² An accurate observation, this. In fact, any work of art worthy of that name is to a very large degree the offspring of the artistic production that preceded it. This is not to say that the 'real-life' experiences of the artist are of secondary importance: when in a letter to his old friend Silvio Guarnieri, again from 1966, Montale averred '[l]a mia poesia non è vera,

non è vissuta, non è autobiografica' (*SMAMS* 1520), he was, no doubt, exaggerating in order to make a point. The truth of the matter is this: Montale's poetry results from a highly elaborate fusion of 'real-life' and artistic experiences; it represents, in other words, a potent alloy of the biographical and the cultural.

The most alert readers have long appreciated that Montale's verse owes a profound debt to its author's meditation on others' texts. Thus, Gianfranco Contini in his celebrated 'Pour présenter Eugenio Montale', penned for a 1946 *Choix de poèmes*, asserted that the poetry of the former, 'celui qui a «lu tous les livres»', 'naît au terme d'une véritable saturation culturelle'.³ Now, already by around the time of *Satura* several important studies had appeared delving into the salience of others' writing for Montale's early collections, amongst which work by Edoardo Sanguineti on Gozzano, by Pietro Bonfiglioli on Pascoli and by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo on D'Annunzio.⁴ The last two or three decades, however, have brought with them a quite extraordinary volume of intertextual research on the 'first' Montale. Limiting ourselves to just a selection of the more interesting pieces published in this field in the last five years, we might recollect the contributions of Charles Burdett on Cardarelli, of David Fairservice on 'L'anguilla', of Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin on 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto...', of Tom O'Neill on Dante, of Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti on Gozzano and others, of Filippo Secchieri on 'Elegia di Pico Farnese', of Maria Antonietta Grignani on Dante, Maeterlinck, Rossetti and Blake, of Angelo Fabrizi on Proust and others, of Angelo Marchese (whose *Montale: La ricerca dell'Altro* includes an ample discussion of Montale's theological and philosophical readings as a young man), of Tiziana de Rogatis (whose *Montale e il classicismo moderno* examines the importance of writers like Eliot, Valéry, Alain, Solmi and Praz for

the evolution of the Genoese poet's aesthetics between the two World Wars), of Rosita Tordi Castria, author of *Montale europeo: Ascendenze culturali nel percorso montaliano da "Accordi" a "Finisterre" (1922-1943)*, as well as the research of Giovanna Ioli (whose *Montale* incorporates a long chapter entitled 'I modelli e la cultura poetica').⁵

Inspired in its conception by Montale's words on the centrality for the work of art of '[l]'arte già esistente' and by the bountiful crop harvested by previous scholars in pursuit of sources for the early poetry, not to mention the radical difference between the 'first' Montale and the 'second', a difference that almost seems to beseech an intertextual exegesis, what follows will attempt to demonstrate that *Satura* and the poetry of the ensuing collections owe no negligible debt to verse and prose texts by other writers, young and old, Italian and otherwise. Up until now considerable work has been carried out on the formal and thematic aspects of the post-*Bufera* corpus (at the very least, we should recall in this context Éanna Ó Ceallacháin's groundbreaking *Eugenio Montale: The Poetry of the Later Years*).⁶ Quite insufficient attention, on the other hand, has been paid to the intertextual aspects of the later verse. Indeed, – and this is something of a rarity in the crowded world of *montalistica* – one might go as far as to claim that there exists something approaching a critical lacuna here. The present study aims to help redress this imbalance in the most un-Romantic belief that our appreciation of the poetry from *Satura* to *Diario postumo* is expanded, not diminished, by a comprehension of the modes in which its author enriched and vivified his writing by way of the artistic expressions of others.

In a 1926 article on Svevo, Montale claimed that 'è affatto naturale che ognuno risenta del proprio tempo' (*SMP* 98). The same person, twenty years later in his famous

‘Intenzioni (Intervista immaginaria)’, was to assert: ‘Ho avuto il senso della cultura d’oggi’ (*SMAMS* 1484). Here, we will concentrate on literature contemporaneous to the composition of the later collections and, more precisely, on new writing first published during the Sixties (give or take a year or two). The motivation behind this decision is, firstly, that this is the decade that corresponds to the formulation of that extraordinary new style that surfaces in *Satura* and persists substantially unaltered in the later collections. Moreover, this is also a period for which we possess many articles by Montale concerning contemporary literature, vital documents which reveal what the poet read and, crucially, what he thought about that material which he read (for the Seventies, on the other hand, we have very few such documents).

This thesis, then, will endeavour to prove that Montale was highly sensitive to the literature of the Sixties, that there appear to be reverberations of this literature in his writing from the Sixties and Seventies, or, to put it another way, that in his later output the Genoese poet is engaged in a sort of dialogue with the artistic production of his peers. Whilst it might be tempting to lend credence to that popular myth according to which the Montale of the Sixties and Seventies was a cantankerous old man, wholly uninterested in the vibrant cultural milieu of his time, it will be argued in what follows that this was anything but the case.

At this juncture let us now embark upon an analysis of currently existing criticism on literary influence in the final collections, focusing especially on those pieces that suggest the salience for Montale of more recent texts. It will be seen that whilst a certain amount has already been said on the subject of intertexts for *Satura* and beyond, much still remains to be done.⁷

Published not a long time after the momentous events of 1968, *Satura*, the volume that opens the second major phase in Montale's poetry, met with an extremely politicised climate. Not surprisingly, then, many of the first studies on this collection were strongly 'ideological' in nature: see, for instance, the remarks of Umberto Carpi, Franco Fortini and Pier Paolo Pasolini.⁸ Intertextual issues, on the other hand, were mostly neglected by early critics. When the question of sources did arise, it was usually in connection with Montale's own past writing and, very often, his prose. Indeed, Maria Corti went as far as to state that the antecedents for the gnomic poetry of *Satura* 'si ritrovano solo in qualche pagina di prosa giornalistica' (from the context, evidently alluding to Montale's own journalism).⁹ True, Mengaldo was to comment that '[n]eanche un poeta dell'altezza di Montale può essere del tutto estraneo allo svolgimento della ricerca letteraria dei suoi contemporanei' and that '[l]a nuova disponibilità e curiosità (sia pure critiche e dissolvitrici) che Montale per tanti aspetti rivela verso i fatti anche di costume del proprio tempo immediato, varrà anche sul piano delle correnti letterarie, e qua e là se ne può trovare traccia', but only then to write rather discouragingly that here 'si dovrà parlare piuttosto di confluenza che di dipendenza'.¹⁰

The only important early piece to insist unambiguously on the importance of contemporary literature for *Satura* was a paper delivered by Franco Fortini at the University of Kent in 1971. Fortini affirms:

Mi pare privo di vero interesse lo pseudo problema della continuità fra le altre opere di Montale e questa della sua vecchiaia. È un problema di storia delle poetiche, può servire ad illuminare la psicologia dell'autore; ma, semmai, molto più importante sarebbe una indagine che mettesse in evidenza i rapporti fra il linguaggio, la tematica di *Satura* e quelli di altri moderni autori, italiani o no, prosatori o poeti, insomma con quello che si chiama il comune contesto culturale.¹¹

Later, Fortini takes a step in the direction of such an investigation when he declares that ‘questo Montale ha chiaramente presenti le scritture di Sereni, di Giudici, di Raboni, di Pasolini, di Zanzotto, e dell’ultimo Luzi e di molti altri’.¹² Unfortunately, Fortini, essentially more concerned with ideology than with intertextuality, does not delve much further than this into the matter of sources. The present study aims to develop Fortini’s intuition, examining ‘i rapporti fra il linguaggio, la tematica di *Satura* [but also of the later collections] e quelli di altri moderni autori, italiani o no, prosatori o poeti’. Moreover, the ensuing sections will partially bear out the truth of Fortini’s words in the second quotation, demonstrating that of the above catalogue Sereni, Zanzotto and the later Luzi were all influential in one way or another on *Satura*. It will also be argued that Giudici inspired passages in the later *Diari* and *Quaderno*. With regard to Raboni and Pasolini, on the other hand, research has so far not thrown up anything that might be deemed particularly interesting and, therefore, a question mark must remain after these names, at least for the time being.

Shifting forward in the itinerary of Montalean research, it will be observed that the task of citing and evaluating every study from the second half of the Seventies onwards that discusses briefly possible intertexts for the later poetry would necessitate a quite excessive amount of space. Consequently, the next few pages will limit themselves to analysing noteworthy articles or books that pay a great deal of attention to others’ writing in relation to the post-*Bufera* verse, reserving a mention of other relevant works of criticism for later in the thesis, there where the context renders such a mention appropriate.

Without wishing to forget Giovanni Aquilecchia's 'Antecedenti lessicali aretiniani nel *Diario* di Montale?' and Edoardo Sanguineti's 'Muse appollaiate' (on sources for 'Sul lago d'Orta', a poem from *Quaderno*), it may fairly be stated that the late Seventies were primarily important, from the point of view of intertextuality and Montale's later poetry, for the appearance of Mario Martelli's *Il rovescio della poesia*.¹³ In this volume, published the same year as *Quaderno*, Martelli offers a detailed reading of 'Botta e risposta I', maintaining that this piece from *Satura* should be read both as the poet's autobiography and as a 'storia filosofica del genere umano'.¹⁴ If a sizeable part of Martelli's interpretation of 'Botta e risposta I' is somewhat debatable, *Il rovescio della poesia* is nonetheless extremely useful thanks to the vast number of words it devotes to investigating the influence of other texts on the poetry from *Ossi* to *Diari*. For example, in the chapter 'Poesia escrementizia' Martelli lingers on the importance of Beckett and the Surrealists for the post-*Bufera* verse, in 'Il «buio» dei senza-Dio' he looks at Hölderlin and in 'Ma qui la morta poesia resurga' he writes of the influence of Dante, above all on *Bufera*. Martelli also suggests a vast quantity of what will be denominated here as 'local echoes', that is, instances in which a text contributes directly to a precise passage in a poem, a phenomenon that might almost be described as voluntary / involuntary 'quotation'. The critic advances hypotheses of local influence in relation to all of Montale's verse and prose, referring to authors as varied as Char, D'Annunzio, Eliot, Hofmannsthal, Mallarmé, Merleau-Ponty, Nietzsche, Pound, Rilke and Valéry, to name but a few.

Many of Martelli's comments regarding the salience of other texts for the overall style of the later collections or for specific passages in these collections are convincing. To cite

just a single example, Martelli quotes the following verses from ‘La morte di Dio’ (*Satura*):

[...] e m’interrompi quando
tu scivolasti vertiginosamente
dentro la scala a chiocciola della Périgourdine
e di laggiù ridesti a crepelle [...]

and then, most opportunely, recalls these lines from ‘Provincia Deserta’, a poem by Ezra Pound for which Montale expressed admiration in his 1949 article ‘Fronde d’alloro in un manicomio’ (*SMP* 789-93): ‘I have walked | into Périgord, [...] Heard, under the dark, whirling laughter. [...] I have climbed rickety stairs’.¹⁵ On other occasions, however, Martelli’s intertextual hypotheses fail to persuade, as will be suggested later in connection to the verse of Nelo Risi. Meanwhile, a major weakness in *Il rovescio della poesia* lies in its tendency to put a work forward as a possible source without proffering any evidence that Montale actually ever read the work in question. But this, again, is a point to which we shall return further on.

Much less fertile than *Il rovescio della poesia* from the point of view of intertextuality is Martelli’s later *Eugenio Montale*, a volume which today remains, however, perhaps the most helpful introduction to Montale’s poetry after Romano Luperini’s *Storia di Montale* and Ioli’s *Montale*.¹⁶ Martelli opens his long section on the verse from *Satura* to *Altri versi* by claiming that for the ‘second’ Montale one must take into account a new way of thinking that became ever more widespread in Italy from the late Fifties onwards.¹⁷ He then explores the philosophies of phenomenology and existentialism, referring to Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Nietzsche, before going on to mention Freud and Lacan, Structuralism and, albeit only fleetingly, the Novissimi, Pasolini, Zanzotto and

Luzi. Sadly, however, in his actual discussion of Montale's poetry Martelli does not make a great effort to connect with concrete textual parallels the work of the above intellectuals to what appears in *Satura* and beyond, preferring to leave things quite vague (it is true that 'epoché' figures in 'Botta e risposta I' and that this word was associated with the school of phenomenology but, in fact, the same word had wide currency long before Husserl and his followers).

The Eighties saw a blossoming of interest in the later Montale and English-language verse. First, a short article by Paolo Brizzi looking at Valéry and 'L'educazione intellettuale' (*Quaderno*) but also, in some depth, at Montale's use of T. S. Eliot from *Satura* onwards.¹⁸ Then, more significantly, Ghanshyam Singh's 'Montale e la poesia inglese'.¹⁹ In this stimulating, although at times somewhat indeterminate article, Singh points out the close affinities between the post-*Bufera* Montale and the English verse tradition *en masse*, from Shakespeare to Auden. He remarks:

Si può, parlando all'ingrosso, dire che i primi tre libri delle poesie di Montale tendono al genere lirico nel senso contemplativo, e quindi pure essendo modernissimi nella loro originalità, sono meno vicini al mondo lirico anglosassone; mentre i quattro libri successivi [...] seguono [...] esigenze integraliste, in modo che gli elementi di cronaca, di satira e d'invettiva vi si mescolano liberamente, infischandosi delle esigenze e dei limiti di purezza del genere lirico. Ecco perché questi ultimi libri s'avvicinano di più alla tradizione poetica anglosassone [...].²⁰

Singh's article was followed in 1990 by Gabrielle Barfoot's 'Eugenio Montale and Thomas Hardy' (concerning the similarities and differences between the 'Xenia' and the poems written by the aged Hardy about his deceased spouse Emma Gifford) and Laura Barile's *Adorate mie larve*.²¹ In the latter volume, subtitled *Montale e la poesia anglosassone*, Barile claims that perhaps no other Twentieth-century Italian poet had

such a profound and modern relationship with English-language poetry as Montale.²² Much of Barile's volume regards the early collections but there also appear discussions of the ensuing production: in particular, we should mention 'Gli occhiali di Mosca', on Eliot's 'Four Quartets' and *The Cocktail Party* (a drama written in colloquial verse with a character named Julia who bears an uncanny likeness to the Mosca of the 'Xenia'), and the eponymous last article in which Barile looks at *Quaderno* from the perspective of the writing of Beckett, without, however, insisting on a causal relationship between the texts of the two men. Building on *Adorate mie larve*, the present investigation will look in detail at two Twentieth-century American writers that Barile touches upon only briefly in connection with the post-*Bufera* verse: Robert Lowell and William Carlos Williams.

Needless to say, the Eighties did not solely produce scholarship on the later Montale and English literature. This decade of *montalistica* got under way in fine style with the publication of Gilberto Lonardi's *Il Vecchio e il Giovane*, a subtle and intelligent volume that accords considerable space to Montale's relationship with other authors.²³ Although the emphasis in *Il Vecchio e il Giovane* lies very much with the 'first' Montale, Lonardi does not neglect the successive verse output. Above all, we should remember the eponymous section in which the critic looks at Leopardi in relation to 'Aspasia' (*Quaderno*) and 'Annetta' (*Diari*), observing *inter alia* how 'un modo della lirica per eccellenza leopardiano, quello del canto d'amore come canto-rimpianto della giovinezza, se sostanzialmente non ha luogo nel primo Montale [...], attend[e] la poesia del Vecchio per darsi esile corpo e figura secondo schema appunto leopardiano'.²⁴ (And, recently, Barile has returned to the nexus Leopardi-late Montale in her *Montale Londra e la luna*, noticing that *Quaderno* and *Altri versi* follow a line inaugurated by the Leopardi of the

last *Operette morali* and ‘La ginestra’, one which alternates and fuses the satirical and the lyrical.)²⁵ We ought also to recall in this decade Maurizio Bettini on Goethe, Mario Aversano on opera libretti and Giorgio Orelli’s *Accertamenti montaliani*, with its ingenious readings of the later verse, combining comments on form with intertextual parallels ranging from Virgil and Dante to D’Annunzio and Eliot.²⁶ And, on Dante in the post-*Bufera* corpus, we should at the very least remember Zygmunt Barański’s ‘Dante and Montale: The Threads of Influence’, which in an extremely helpful appendix lists a large quantity of *dantismi* to be found in *Satura*, *Diari*, *Quaderno* and *Altri versi*.²⁷

Finally, from the point of view of Eighties criticism, one should not forget Ottaviano Giannangeli’s ‘Capriccio montaliano’.²⁸ In this, certainly one of the most surprising articles ever to have appeared on Montale, Giannangeli alludes to a link between ‘Botta e risposta I’ and several verses from his own 1958 volume *Gli isolani terrestri*. Compare the passage below on the left, the opening to part 8 of the section ‘Gli isolani terrestri’ in the homonymous collection, with part II of the poem from *Satura*:

Uscire appena di convalescenza
era come tornare, *ributtati*
da smemorate *prode*, a questa urlante
platea dove mai gli uomini colloquiano,
dimesso l’uso antico, con le care
ombre dei morti o cenano con loro.

Uscire appena di convalescenza
era come vedere deformato
il tutto – alberi case – e, dietro i vetri
guardati con stupore, giocolieri
gli uomini intenti a reggere lo schema
che si sfalda di giorno in giorno della

favola che fu data a recitare.²⁹

Uscito appena dall’adolescenza
per metà della vita fui *gettato*
nelle stalle d’Augia.
[...]
finché dai cretti
il ventaglio di un mitra ci *ributtava* [...]
[...]
erano uomini forse,
veri uomini vivi
i formiconi degli *approdi*? [my italics]
[...]

Innocent, unintentional literary echoes? Perhaps not. As even the most absent-minded reader of *L'opera in versi* will quickly realise and as, indeed, Roberto Orlando has underscored in a long essay on 'Botta e risposta I', the above passage by Giannangeli – not to mention the rest of *Gli isolani terrestri* – is heaving with less than subtle *montalismi*.³⁰ Who knows, then, if in 'Botta e risposta I' Montale is purposefully parodying Giannangeli, as if to say: 'You ransacked my verse for ideas, now it's my turn...'? Whatever the case may be, the revelation of this intertext should remind us that in his later poetry Montale may draw on the most unexpected works.

Let us proceed to the Nineties. After an article by Aldo Rossi on Lautréamont, Breton and Montale – 'quando Montale scrive un rigo difficilmente si dimentica di aver letto tanti libri', sagely observes Rossi –, there appeared in 1992 an investigation into the later collections by Pierluigi Pellini that demonstrated how the Montale of *Satura* avails himself of two poems from Fortini's *Una volta per sempre*, as well as suggesting possible prose sources for *Satura* and *Quaderno* in, respectively, Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and Gadda's *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*.³¹

In the course of his article Pellini declared that 'l'interesse di Montale per i poeti più giovani che si andavano affermando nel secondo dopoguerra era più attento e costante di quanto la critica abbia finora ritenuto'.³² Pellini was quite right and, indeed, it was only with a 1993 study by Guido Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', that a major step was taken towards a comprehensive understanding of the value for the later Montale of the younger generation of poets.³³ In this, one of the most innovative and intelligent works of *montalistica* published in the last ten years, Mazzoni, having defined carefully the code of the 'first' Montale, sets out to document the salience of others' verse

for the passage from *Bufera* to *Satura*. Mazzoni concentrates primarily on an anthology by Cesare Vivaldi entitled *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* and the verse of Nelo Risi. For the critic, these two sources played a noteworthy part in the birth of that striking satirical vein to be found in the fourth collection. Still, whilst abundantly rich in perspicacious comments, '*Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento*' cannot be deemed to be either exhaustive or wholly persuasive. Apart from the fact that Mazzoni affords too scant attention to several of the poets cited – in particular, he could have said much more concerning Sereni and Zanzotto –, the critic underrates the novelty of the '*Xenia*', even going as far as to assert that '[s]e gli *Xenia* fossero stati la sua ultima opera [di Montale], forse non si sarebbe parlato di un'altra fase autonoma, ma solo di un'appendice ai testi maggiori'.³⁴ (The following part of the present study, on the other hand, will be founded on the assumption that the '*Xenia*' manifestly represent a radical break with all of Montale's previous writing.) Moreover, the passage in Mazzoni's conclusion where we read:

Satura (e in generale l'ultima produzione montaliana) acquista rilevanza non come nuovo inizio, ma come catastrofica sezione finale di un libro che contiene, nella parte centrale e più importante, *Le occasioni* e *La bufera*. Non contano i testi, ma il conflitto a distanza delle poetiche.³⁵

is certainly highly debatable. We observe here a critical stance that is common to a great deal of the writing on *Satura* and beyond, a stance that may also be found, for instance, in Luperini's generally excellent *Storia di Montale*: that is, the reading of the post-*Bufera* production as essentially the collapse of an idea of poetry or, indeed, as an attack on the very possibility of poetry in the modern world.³⁶ Francesco De Rosa justly queries:

perché il Montale della poesia-prosa con i suoi registri nuovi o rinnovati, dal satirico al sublime, dovrebbe essere per principio meno grande di quello integralmente e diversamente sublime delle raccolte precedenti? Perché, in altre parole, l'ultimo Montale va giudicato con i criteri di giudizio desumibili dal primo?³⁷

Surely, *Satura* and the later verse in general should be read and evaluated first and foremost for what they are, not what they are not? Rather than insisting on reading *Satura* as the apocalypse of one poetic *modus operandi*, it is felt that critics today would do far better to emphasise the extraordinary manner in which Montale with his fourth collection managed to reinvent himself, to discover an authentic new voice.

The second half of the Nineties, a period particularly rich in publications on Montale, thanks in good part to the impressive number of events organised to celebrate the centenary of his birth, saw two interesting intertextual readings of poems from *Satura*: Raffaele Pinto on 'Xenia II', 11 (regarding the Cavalcante episode in Dante's *Commedia* and Contini's reading of the same) and Cesare Federico Goffis on 'L'angelo nero' (regarding Valéry).³⁸ They also brought intertextual studies of pieces in *Diari* – Paolo Zanotti and Silvia Longhi read 'Il Re pescatore' in the light of various other works from the Bible onwards – and in *Quaderno*, where Cesare Segre pointed out the relevance of his own work and that of Sinisgalli for, respectively, 'Il sabià' and 'Sul lago d'Orta', whilst Arnaldo Di Benedetto suggested the importance of Melville's *Billy Budd*, translated by Montale in 1942, for the 'angeli (angli)' of, once more, 'Sul lago d'Orta'.³⁹ Attention was always given to the question of literary influences in *Diario postumo* (Liana Lomiento, Alessandro Parronchi, Giuseppe Savoca).⁴⁰ Finally, the late Nineties saw the first long study entirely devoted to the role of a work of fiction in the evolution of the 'second' Montale: Alberto Bertoni's 'Zeno nel *Quaderno di quattro anni*: un caso di intertestualità montaliana'.⁴¹

It is worth lingering an instant on this article about the value of Svevo's *La coscienza di Zeno* and its Chaplin-esque hero for the tardy production. In the above-mentioned 'Intenzioni (Intervista immaginaria)' Montale responded to an 'imaginary' question, perhaps something along of the lines of 'What exercises should a poet practise in order to refine his writing?', as follows:

Non mi fraintenda, non nego che un poeta possa o debba esercitarsi nel suo mestiere, in quanto tale. Ma i migliori esercizi sono quelli interni, fatti di meditazione e di lettura. Letture d'ogni genere, non letture di poesie: non occorre che il poeta passi il tempo a legger versi altrui, ma neppure si concepirebbe una sua ignoranza di quanto s'è fatto dal punto di vista tecnico, nell'arte sua. Il linguaggio di un poeta è un linguaggio storicizzato, un rapporto. Vale in quanto si oppone o si differenzia da altri linguaggi. E naturalmente il grande semenzaio d'ogni trovata poetica è nel campo della prosa. (SMAMS 1478)

So, Montale asserts that reading is of the greatest worth for a poet's development: 'i migliori esercizi [di un poeta] sono quelli interni, fatti di meditazione e di lettura'. These readings ought to include poetry: '[non] si concepirebbe una sua ignoranza di quanto s'è fatto dal punto di vista tecnico, nell'arte sua'. But, crucially, they should also consist of works not pertaining to the verse genre: the great seedbed of every poetic idea, Montale later asserts, is in the field of prose. Yet, despite the existence of Bertoni's piece and, still more recently, a fascinating investigation by Pierluigi Piovanelli and Claudio Zamagni into the relationship between 'Visitatori' (*Diari*) and an ancient legend reproduced in the third edition of Enrico Cerulli's *La letteratura etiopica* (1968), it must be admitted that to date far too little has been written on the importance of prose for the post-*Bufera* Montale.⁴² This will be another area upon which the present study will attempt to shed new light. If, in fact, the emphasis here will fall prevalently on verse, ample room will also be accorded to the 'grande semenzaio', ranging from a novel by Natalia Ginzburg

and short stories by Italo Calvino and Antonio Barolini to works by Karl Löwith and Umberto Eco.

Perhaps the most interesting article first published in the late Nineties on the post-*Bufera* production and intertextuality was Roberto Orlando's '«O maledette reminiscenze!» Per una tipologia della 'citazione distintiva' nell'ultimo Montale'.⁴³ In this piece Orlando illustrates and discusses several instances in the later verse in which the poet quotes quite distinctively passages from classic Italian and European writers, only to confute what these same writers have to say for evidently satirical ends. For example, in 'L'élan vital' (*Diari*) Montale writes 'Muore Giove, Eccellenze, e l'inno del Poeta | NON resta' (see Carducci's 'Sonetto a Dante': 'muor Giove, e l'inno del poeta resta'), whilst in 'Pasquetta' (*Quaderno*) he states 'O beata solitudo disse il Vate. | Non ce n'è molta nelle altre strade' (see D'Annunzio's *Il fuoco*: 'O BEATA SOLITUDO! | O SOLA BEATITUDO!'). Apart from underlining how strongly intertextual Montale's later poetry is, Orlando's well-argued article is helpful here in as much as it alerts us to the possibility that when Montale utilises texts by others, he may not be doing this 'innocently', so to speak. In other words, when we find local echoes of others, we should be prepared to question whether these echoes are simple 'reminiscences' or, if they are, alternatively, dissociative quotations (with all that this entails).

Proceeding, lastly, to studies published in the very early years of the Twenty-first century, aside from the above-cited collaboration between Piovanelli and Zamagni, only two texts stand out as being particularly deserving of note: Antonio Zollino's 'Il riferimento dannunziano nell'ultimo Montale (da *Satura* ad *Altri versi*)' and Francesca Ricci's *Il prisma di Arsenio*.⁴⁴ The author of the first of these two pieces sets out to argue

«Questo vuole il tuo tempo, perché
[non gli vai incontro?]
rimugina senza ironia apparente costui
non molto lontano dal pensare
a un'anima nuova di zecca pronta per il cambio.

(‘Nella hall’, *Nel magma*)

o più tardi
quando l’uomo non è più lui
e come dimesso da un giudizio
si regge con moti cauti
in una sopravvivenza minuziosa [...] ⁴⁵
(‘Il fiume’, *Su fondamenti invisibili*)

Mi resta il clavicembalo arrivato
nuovo di zecca. [...] ⁴⁶
Hanno una forma di sopravvivenza
che non interessa la storia [...] ⁴⁷
(‘Botta e risposta III’, *Satura*)

It is true that ‘Nella hall’ has, like ‘Botta e risposta III’, a definite ethical edge to it and that, if the poem from *Satura* refers in large part to Greece, ‘Il fiume’ mentions a ‘fuoco greco’. Nevertheless, to imply, as Ricci does, that the two passages on the left, with their ‘nuova di zecca’ and their ‘sopravvivenza’, might have held significance for the lines quoted from Montale’s ‘Botta e risposta III’, can hardly be said to be satisfactory.⁴⁶ Naturally, this is not to exclude *tout court* the prospect that in this case the Genoese poet was influenced by Luzi; just to say that the same is, at the very least, unlikely.

These, then, are the major works that discuss possible intertexts for the later poetry. The critical scene, as it currently stands, is certainly not barren of material. Nonetheless, it must be admitted that with regard to the literature of the Sixties – the focus of the present study – there does not exist an especially extensive corpus of research. But before going on to look at Montale, the post-*Bufera* verse and the literary production of this very period, it is necessary to set out a few points attached to the question of the validity of intertextual conjectures.

A critic adopting a Barthesian approach to the text, i.e. one based on a maximum empowerment of the interpretation of the reader, might put forward practically any text as the source for any other text.⁴⁷ Indeed, as Genette affirms in his seminal *Palimpsests*, ‘I can [...] trace in just about any work the local, fugitive, and partial echoes of any other work, be it anterior or ulterior’. Yet, this *modus operandi* is one that Genette resolutely

refutes, affirming that such an approach ‘would invest the hermeneutic activity of the reader – or archireader – with an authority and a significance that I cannot sanction’.⁴⁸ Concurring with Genette’s stance and rejecting a heavily ‘reader-centric’ mode of hermeneutics, the present study will make every effort in its hypotheses of influence to furnish persuasive evidence that Montale was familiar with the potentially influencing text or, where this proves impossible, at least that he knew the relevant text’s author.

The six principal sources of information for establishing the works of literature that Montale read – and, in all but the last case, his views on these works – are: (i) his articles, (ii) his poetry, (iii) the letters he wrote, (iv) the interviews he gave, (v) the testimonies of acquaintances, (vi) the *Catalogo del fondo Montale*. With regard to points (ii), (iii) and (iv), it will be noted that in his poetry, in the rather few letters from the Sixties and Seventies currently in the public domain and in his interviews Montale makes reference to his contemporary readings on only the rarest of occasions. As to point (v), it is common knowledge that memories of friends and acquaintances are frequently coloured or, indeed, radically altered by private convictions and prejudices. Points (i) and (vi), on the other hand, merit a more lengthy treatment, especially since so many of the ideas set out further on will revolve around them.

With the publication in 1995 and 1996 of *Prose e racconti, Il secondo mestiere: Prose 1920-1979* and *Il secondo mestiere: Arte, musica, società* the scholar at last has readily available almost all of Montale’s prose production. In particular, he finds before him in their entirety, or very nearly, Montale’s reviews, precious documents for discovering what the poet read and, vitally, what he actually thought about that which he read. Now, these reviews should be approached with an element of caution. Amongst other things,

the critic ought to bear in mind that the fact that Montale reviewed a volume does not assuredly mean that he found it stimulating or, indeed, even read it. It is not to be excluded that the authorities at *Il Corriere della Sera* might have instructed Montale to review specific books, especially in the early Sixties when his standing in the literary world was less consolidated. Other motives outside of pure intellectual passion might have enticed him to write about a volume. For example, Leonardo Sinisgalli, someone who did not hold Montale in the highest esteem, once related the following anecdote:

Chiesi anni addietro all'editore Diego De Donato come faceva, ogni volta che usciva un libro della sua casa editrice, ad avere pochi giorni dopo una recensione di due colonne firmata da Montale, o da qualcuno due [sic] suoi accoliti, sul *Corriere della Sera*. «Ogni volta che arrivo a Milano da Bari», mi confidò in un orecchio il fortunato editore, «porto con me due barattoli di peperoni secchi conservati sott'olio. Montale e la Mosca ne sono ghiottissimi».⁴⁹

Whatever the case may be here (and Montale *did* review more than one book edited by De Donato), it is beyond doubt that the poet sometimes carried out his duties at *Il Corriere della Sera* in a less than exemplary fashion. The case of the 'collaboration' with Henry Furst is a well-known and well-documented example of this.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, it would seem that in those reviews that he almost certainly did pen entirely by himself Montale's knowledge of the text under discussion was, at least occasionally, not nearly as thorough as it ought to have been under the circumstances. We might opportunely recollect the words of Zanzotto in a recent interview:

Quando Michel David ha pubblicato il suo fondamentale trattato, *La psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana*, Montale lo ha recensito con un dire/non dire, approvare/disapprovare. David mi ha chiesto: "Se vedi Montale, cerca di approfondire con lui il discorso, se non sulla psicoanalisi – perché si sa che non la vede tanto bene – almeno sul mio libro". Io ho tentato di porgli qualche domanda ma lui ha replicato: "Sai, come si fa a leggere

seicento pagine in due ore?” Battuta pungente, evidentemente era stata una lettura stocastica, distratta.⁵¹

Nonetheless, of all the reservoirs of information on Montale’s reading that we possess, his journalism is by far the most valuable. In fact, the majority of the detailed textual analyses set out here will regard works that Montale paid extensive attention to in the pages of *Il Corriere della Sera*. And, it should be added, in its examination of Montale’s journalistic writing the present investigation will not confine itself solely to mentioning those details that relate directly to the intertextual hypotheses it intends to propound. It will also devote a certain amount of room to elucidating various other remarks made by Montale in the course of his reviews, something which to date critics have for the most part neglected to do. If it is true, as Giorgio Taffon would have it, that in his articles from the late Fifties onwards ‘il Montale critico si dimostra un lettore più svagato, forse meno impegnato nell’impostazione del pezzo, anche per controbilanciare le immediate e quotidiane esigenze di corsivista del più importante giornale italiano’, it is also true that these same pieces are rarely of a less than excellent quality and eminently worthy of consideration.⁵²

The municipal library of Milan at Palazzo Sormani houses over three thousand books and periodicals that belonged to Montale and that after his death were donated to the city in which he spent much of his existence. Most of these items date from the last decades of the poet’s life (a part of the older material was ruined in the 1966 flood at Florence, as the interested party himself recalls in ‘Xenia II’, 14). In 1996, the year of the centenary of Montale’s birth, the municipal library published an inventory of its ‘Fondo Montale’, an invaluable new resource for scholars and something that will be taken full advantage of in the course of this thesis.⁵³

Needless to say, the potential pitfalls of the Fondo are manifold. In 1966 Montale wrote about Nelo Risi's *Dentro la sostanza*. However, this volume is not listed in the *Catalogo del fondo Montale*. Previously, he had reviewed *Il barone rampante*, *Il cavaliere inesistente* and *Le Cosmicomiche*, all by Italo Calvino. Again, none of these books are anywhere to be found in the Fondo. Indeed, quite a sizeable proportion of the works that Montale covered for *Il Corriere della Sera* do not figure in the *Catalogo*. In all likelihood, the absence of these books from the author's library is to be explained in good part by problems of space. Consider the below paragraph that rounds off Montale's 1964 review of Renato Barilli's *La barriera del naturalismo*:

D'altronde la critica, quando si cimenta su testi di attualità, ha sempre un carattere provvisorio. Ci son voluti quarant'anni per dare a un libro come *La coscienza di Zeno* il posto che oggi gli compete. Si vedano le bellissime pagine che ha scritto su questo argomento un lettore di eccezione – Vittorio Lugli – nel suo recente libro *Pagine ritrovate* pubblicato or ora da Einaudi. È un libro che vorrei tenere nei miei scaffali se quei pochi che ho non fossero già pieni zeppi. (SMP 2645)

Even a work with 'bellissime pagine' by a 'lettore di eccezione' was not guaranteed a home in the crowded shelves of Montale's flat on via Bigli. In short, one should not presume that Montale did not read a volume merely because it does not figure in the Fondo.

Neither should one presume that all the books in the Fondo were read by Montale. The poet once informed an interviewer, referring to his private library: 'Quei volumi in realtà non li guardo mai, sono soltanto un ornamento [...]. [...] Faccio come quelle persone che comprano i libri solo per arredamento'.⁵⁴ No doubt, in these words there lies a potent dose of that irony which typifies so many of Montale's statements: the notion that 'celui qui a «lu tous les livres»' never perused any of his books quite beggars belief. All the

same, a significant proportion of these volumes probably did go unread. As one of Italy's most prominent and influential intellectuals, Montale in his final years must have been inundated with printed material. Although he disposed of much of this, it is likely that some items, in particular presents from close friends, were kept without receiving anything more than a passing glance.⁵⁵ Sometimes a consultation of the volumes themselves turns out to be revealing. The *Catalogo* registers amongst the books in Montale's private library a large proportion of the grand Adelphi edition of Nietzsche's works. Basing himself on this data alone, the critic could be led to deduce that the author of *Ossi* nurtured a tardy passion for the philosophy of Nietzsche. Yet, upon inspecting the actual books, the same critic would find scarce comfort for such a deduction: most of the pages in these books prove to be uncut.

With these preliminary observations and *caveats* set out, it is opportune to initiate our investigation into the significance of contemporary literature for the later verse. In what follows we will examine in detail how the writing of others assisted in the shift from the first major phase in Montale's verse production to the second. We will also see how numerous passages from contemporary texts resurface in specific poems from *Satura* and the subsequent collections. In general, the approach taken will be one that avoids heavy-handed assertions of influence: in an artist as complex as Montale, somebody whose poetry springs from a long sedimentation of experiences, it is usually most unwise to claim that text A was indubitably the one and only 'source' for text B, thereby ruling out the possibility that other readings or, indeed, real-life events might have combined to catalyse the text in question.⁵⁶ Rather than adopting this sort of attitude, the present study will tend to proceed with a degree of circumspection, advancing considered hypotheses as

to how particular works from around the Sixties might have nudged Montale in a certain direction, might have inspired him to articulate his thoughts in a certain manner.

¹ See Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by L. Roudiez, trans. by T. Gora, A. Jardine and L. Roudiez (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 64-91 [the article which introduced the term 'intertextuality']; Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image Music Text*, trans. by S. Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-48; Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. by C. Newman and C. Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1978); Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). For a discussion of scholarship on intertextuality, see Thaïs E. Morgan, 'Is There an Intertext in this Text?: Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality', *American Journal of Semiotics*, III, 4 (1985), 1-40 and, more recently, Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000) and Andrea Bernardelli, *Intertestualità* (Rome: La Nuova Italia, 2000).

² In the present study the following abbreviations have been adopted for the 'Meridiani' containing Montale's prose production: *PR* = Eugenio Montale, *Prose e racconti*, ed. by M. Forti (Milan: Mondadori, 1995); *SMAMS* = Eugenio Montale, *Il secondo mestiere: Arte, musica, società*, ed. by G. Zampa (Milan: Mondadori, 1996); *SMP* = Eugenio Montale, *Il secondo mestiere: Prose 1920-1979*, ed. by G. Zampa (Milan: Mondadori, 1996, 2 vols.). It will be noted, furthermore, that quotations from Montale's verse in this

thesis are taken from either Eugenio Montale, *L'opera in versi*, ed. by R. Bettarini and G. Contini (Turin: Einaudi, 1980) or Eugenio Montale, *Diario postumo: 66 poesie e altre*, ed. by A. Cima (Milan: Mondadori, 1996).

³ Gianfranco Contini, 'Pour présenter Eugenio Montale', in *Una lunga fedeltà: Scritti su Eugenio Montale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), pp. 61-75 (p. 64) (Contini is quoting from Mallarmé's 'Brise marine').

⁴ Edoardo Sanguineti, 'Da Gozzano a Montale', in *Tra liberty e crepuscolarismo* (Milan: Mursia, 1961), pp. 17-39; Pietro Bonfiglioli, 'Il «ritorno dei morti» da Pascoli a Montale', in *Pascoli: Atti del convegno nazionale di studi pascoliani: San Mauro Pascoli 11 – 12 – 13 Maggio 1962* (Santarcangelo di Romagna: S.T.E.M., 1965), pp. 55-72; Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'Da D'Annunzio a Montale', in *La tradizione del Novecento: Da D'Annunzio a Montale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975), pp. 13-106.

⁵ Charles Burdett, 'Montale and Cardarelli: A Two-Way Traffic of Influence', in *Montale: Words in Time*, ed. by G. Talbot and D. Thompson (Market Harborough: Troubador, 1998), pp. 43-56; David Fairservice, 'Hypothesis on Montale's *Memoria dei poeti* in 'L'anguilla'', in *Montale: Words in Time*, pp. 119-24; Cormac Ó Cuilleánáin, 'Alone and Palely Loitering: Echoes and Influences in Montale's 'Meriggiare'?', in *Montale: Words in Time*, pp. 171-89; Tom O'Neill, 'Dante, Montale and Miss Brandeis: A (partial) revisitation of Montale's Dantism', in *Montale: Words in Time*, pp. 27-42 [on *Montale: Words in Time*, with particular emphasis on intertextuality, see my review of the same volume in *Annali d'Italianistica*, 18 (2000), 536-39]; Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti, 'La citazione montaliana (testo e altri testi)', in *Strategie di Montale: Poeta tradotto e*

traduttore: con una appendice su Montale in Spagna: Atti del seminario internazionale di Barcellona su «La costruzione del Testo in Italiano» (8-9 e 15-16 marzo 1996), ed. by M. de Las Nieves Muñiz Muñiz and F. Amella Vela (Florence: Franco Cesati, 1998), pp. 25-48; Filippo Secchieri, 'Un'occasione ipertestuale. Intorno all'«Elegia di Pico Farnese»', in *Strategie di Montale*, pp. 49-68; Maria Antonietta Grignani, 'Meaterlinck-Debussy [sic], Blake, Rossetti', in *Dislocazioni: Epifanie e metamorfosi in Montale* (Lecce: Piero Manni, 1998), pp. 13-41; Angelo Fabrizi, *Montale e Proust* (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 1999); Angelo Marchese, *Montale: La ricerca dell'Altro* (Padua: Messaggero di Sant'Antonio, 2000); Tiziana de Rogatis, *Montale e il classicismo moderno* (Pisa-Rome: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2002) [on *Montale e il classicismo moderno*, see my review in *l'immaginazione*, 193 (December 2002), 22]; Rosita Tordi Castria, *Montale europeo: Ascendenze culturali nel percorso montaliano da "Accordi" a "Finisterre" (1922-1943)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002); Giovanna Ioli, *Montale* (Rome: Salerno, 2002), pp. 197-253.

⁶ Éanna Ó Ceallacháin, *Eugenio Montale: The Poetry of the Later Years* (Oxford: Legenda, 2001).

⁷ For a synthesis of early criticism on the later Montale, see Pietro Cataldi, *Montale* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1991), pp. 113-17 and 153-55.

⁸ Umberto Carpi, 'Montale negli anni '60', in *Montale dopo il fascismo: Dalla Bufera a Satura* (Padua: Liviana, 1971), pp. 123-90; Franco Fortini, '«Satura» nel 1971', in *Nuovi Saggi italiani* (Milan: Garzanti, 1987), pp. 103-24; Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Satura', in *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, ed. by W. Siti and S. De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999, 2

vols.), pp. 2560-65. (Incidentally, on the famous polemic between Montale and Pasolini, see Francesca Ricci, 'Tra poeti: il caso Pasolini-Montale', *Studi e problemi di critica testuale*, 61 (October 2000), 143-55.)

⁹ Maria Corti, 'Un nuovo messaggio di Montale: *Satura*', *Strumenti critici*, V, II (June 1971), 217-36 (p. 228). For a summary of criticism on the relationship between Montale's journalism and the later poetry, see Alberto Casadei, 'Nella stagione di «Satura»', in *Prospettive montaliane: Dagli «Ossi» alle ultime raccolte* (Pisa: Giardini, 1992), pp. 67-91 (p. 67). Meanwhile, on self-quotation from the previous verse in *Satura* and beyond, see Giovanna Ioli, 'Autocitazione: il gioco intertestuale dell'ultimo Montale', in *L'arte dell'interpretare: Studi critici offerti a Giovanni Getto* (Cuneo: L'arciere, 1984), pp. 821-35; Maria Antonietta Grignani, 'Per una conclusione provvisoria: «Gli uomini che [non] si voltano»', in *Prologhi ed epiloghi: Sulla poesia di Eugenio Montale* (Ravenna: Longo, 1987), pp. 169-93; Francesco De Rosa, 'Scansioni dell'ultimo Montale', in *Montale e il canone poetico del Novecento*, ed. by M. A. Grignani and R. Luperini (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1998), pp. 47-72 (pp. 53-56).

¹⁰ Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'Primi appunti su "Satura"', in *La tradizione del Novecento: Da D'Annunzio a Montale*, pp. 335-58 (p. 357).

¹¹ Fortini, '«Satura» nel 1971', p. 109.

¹² Fortini, '«Satura» nel 1971', p. 117.

¹³ Giovanni Aquilecchia, 'Antecedenti lessicali aretiniani nel *Diario* di Montale?', *Lingua nostra*, XXXVIII, 3-4 (September-December 1977), 117; Edoardo Sanguineti, 'Muse appollaiate', in *Giornalino secondo: 1976-1977* (Turin: Einaudi, 1979), pp. 324-26;

Mario Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia: Interpretazioni montaliane* (Milan: Longanesi, 1977).

¹⁴ Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia*, p. 151.

¹⁵ Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia*, p. 160.

¹⁶ Mario Martelli, *Eugenio Montale: Introduzione e guida allo studio dell'opera montaliana: Storia e antologia della critica* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1982); Romano Luperini, *Storia di Montale* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1986); Ioli, *Montale*.

¹⁷ Martelli, *Eugenio Montale*, p. 97.

¹⁸ Paolo Brizzi, 'Tra Valéry e Eliot: allusività [sic] del tardo Montale', *Dimensioni*, VII, 22 (March 1982), 25-33.

¹⁹ Ghanshyam Singh, 'Montale e la poesia inglese', in *La poesia di Eugenio Montale: Atti del Convegno Internazionale tenuto a Genova dal 25 al 28 novembre 1982*, ed. by S. Campailla and C. F. Goffis (Florence: Le Monnier, 1984), pp. 205-20.

²⁰ Singh, 'Montale e la poesia inglese', p. 217.

²¹ Gabrielle Barfoot, 'Eugenio Montale and Thomas Hardy', *Italianistica*, XIX, 1 (January-April 1990), 131-43; Laura Barile, *Adorate mie larve: Montale e la poesia anglosassone* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).

²² Barile, 'Premessa', in *Adorate mie larve*, pp. 7-14 (p. 7).

²³ Gilberto Lonardi, *Il Vecchio e il Giovane e altri studi su Montale* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1980).

²⁴ The section 'Il Vecchio e il Giovane' may be found in 'Lungo l'asse leopardiano', in *Il Vecchio e il Giovane*, pp. 73-120 (pp. 101-11). The quotation is taken from p. 107.

²⁵ Laura Barile, 'Una luna un po' ingobbita', in *Montale Londra e la luna* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1998), pp. 107-47 (p. 107).

²⁶ Maurizio Bettini, 'Gli «Xenia» di Eugenio Montale', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, CLXII, 519 (1985), 401-06; Mario Aversano, *Montale e il libretto d'opera* (Naples: Ferraro, 1984) [in particular, 'Xenia tra Verdi e Puccini: agnizioni di lettura' (pp. 13-22) and 'Da *Satura* a *Altri versi*' (pp. 77-85)]; Giorgio Orelli, 'Tra le ultime poesie', in *Accertamenti montaliani* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984), pp. 95-136.

²⁷ Zygmunt Barański, 'Dante and Montale: The Threads of Influence', in *Dante Comparisons: Comparative Studies of Dante and: Montale, Foscolo, Tasso, Chaucer, Petrarch, Propertius and Catullus*, ed. by E. Haywood and B. Jones (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1985), pp. 11-48. The critical bibliography on Montale and Dante is voluminous: for a list of some of the major works on the subject, see Ioli, *Montale*, pp. 297-98.

²⁸ Ottaviano Giannangeli, 'Capriccio montaliano', *Italianistica*, XIV, 1 (January-April 1985), 15-22.

²⁹ Ottaviano Giannangeli, *Gli isolani terrestri* (Lanciano: Quadrivio, 1958).

³⁰ Roberto Orlando, 'D'après *Botta e risposta I* (Montale, *Satura*)', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, IV, II, 2 (1997), 735-81 (pp. 779-80). (Orlando also devotes space to intertextual questions elsewhere in his article, referring to Rensi, Dostoevskii and Dante, among others.)

³¹ Aldo Rossi, 'I grilli di Breton e Montale', *poliorama*, 7 (1990), 215-28 (p. 223); Pierluigi Pellini, 'L'ultimo Montale: donne miracoli treni telefoni sciopero generale', *Nuova corrente*, XXXIX, 110 (July-December 1992), 289-324.

³² Pellini, 'L'ultimo Montale: donne miracoli treni telefoni sciopero generale', p. 315.

³³ Guido Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', *Rivista di Letteratura Italiana*, XI, 1-2 (1993), 161-214. In very late 2002 Mazzoni's article was republished in a revised but – at least with regard to its intertextual discourse – substantially identical format: see Guido Mazzoni, 'L'ultimo Montale e la poesia del Novecento', in *Forma e solitudine: Un'idea della poesia contemporanea* (Milan: Marcos y Marcos, 2002), pp. 63-118.

³⁴ Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 161.

³⁵ Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 213.

³⁶ See Luperini, *Storia di Montale* and, in particular, the chapter on *Satura*, pp. 195-232.

³⁷ Francesco De Rosa, 'Profilo di Satura', *Chroniques italiennes*, 57 (1999), 111-28 (p. 127).

³⁸ Raffaele Pinto, 'Esegesi e invenzione in «Xenia, II – 11»: «Riemersa da un'infinità di tempo»', in *Strategie di Montale*, pp. 99-116; Cesare Federico Goffis, '«L'Angelo Nero»: un sogno montaliano di verità', *Italianistica*, XXV, 2-3 (May-December 1996), 233-58. On the sources behind 'L'angelo nero', see also many of the comments in Oreste Macrí, '«L'angelo nero» e il demonismo nella poesia montaliana', in *La vita della parola: Studi montaliani* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1996), pp. 271-337.

³⁹ Paolo Zanutti, 'A proposito del «Re Pescatore»', *Italianistica*, XXIV, 1 (January-April 1995), 139-52; Silvia Longhi, 'Il Re Pescatore', in *Operosa parva per Gianni Antonini*, ed. by D. De Robertis and F. Gavazzeni (Verona: Edizioni Valdonega, 1996), pp. 355-67; Cesare Segre, 'Due note per Montale', *Poetiche: Letteratura e altro*, 1 (June 1996), 25-31; Arnaldo Di Benedetto, 'Intertestualità montaliane', in *Poesia e critica del Novecento: Studi e frammenti critici* (Naples: Liguori, 1999), pp. 49-63 (pp. 61-63). But note that the possible intertexts for 'Sul lago d'Orta' mentioned by Segre and Di Benedetto had already been discussed years previously by Sanguineti and Macrí. See Sanguineti, 'Muse appollaiate' and Oreste Macrí, 'L'«improprietà» tra sublimità e satira nella poesia di Montale (con un'appendice sul questionario Guarnieri)', in *La vita della parola*, pp. 339-85 (pp. 359-61).

⁴⁰ Liana Lomiento, 'I *fliaci* di Eugenio Montale: una metafora 'cercidea'', *La rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 102, 2 (July-December 1998), 575-78; Alessandro Parronchi, 'In "Diario postumo": echi montaliani da sé e da altri', in *Atti del seminario sul Diario postumo di Eugenio Montale: Lugano, 24-26 ottobre 1997* (Milan: All'insegna del pesce d'oro, 1998), pp. 118-26; Giuseppe Savoca, 'Il filo leopardiano del "Diario postumo"', in *Atti del seminario sul Diario postumo di Eugenio Montale*, pp. 145-50.

⁴¹ Alberto Bertoni, 'Zeno nel *Quaderno di quattro anni*: un caso di intertestualità montaliana', *Poetiche: Letteratura e altro*, 4-5 (1996), 87-104.

⁴² Pierluigi Piovanelli and Claudio Zamagni, 'Abimelec in visita da Eusebio. Eugenio Montale lettore di un frammento dei *Paralipomeni di Geremia*', *Studi e problemi di critica testuale*, 61 (October 2000), 157-88.

⁴³ Roberto Orlando, '«O maledette reminiscenze!» Per una tipologia della 'citazione distintiva' nell'ultimo Montale', in *Montale e il canone poetico del Novecento*, pp. 95-120.

⁴⁴ Antonio Zollino, 'Il riferimento dannunziano nell'ultimo Montale (da *Satura* ad *Altri versi*)', *Nuova Rivista di Letteratura Italiana*, IV, 2 (2001), 445-72; Francesca Ricci, *Il prisma di Arsenio: Montale tra Sereni e Luzi* (Bologna: Gedit, 2002).

⁴⁵ Here, as elsewhere in the present study, the quotations from Luzi's verse are taken from Mario Luzi, *L'opera poetica*, ed. by S. Verdino (Milan: Mondadori, 1998).

⁴⁶ Ricci, *Il prisma di Arsenio*, p. 172.

⁴⁷ See Barthes, 'The Death of the Author'.

⁴⁸ See Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Leonardo Sinisgalli, 'Non mi piace eppure esulto anch'io', *il Settimanale*, 5 November 1975, 70-71 (p. 71).

⁵⁰ For a period the American intellectual Henry Furst sent Montale reviews which the latter then published under his own name. For evidence, see Marcello Staglieno, 'Enrico, aiutami è una vita impossibile', *il Giornale*, 24 October 1989, 3. On this subject, see also Laura Pisanello, 'La «collaborazione» Montale-Furst', *Studi novecenteschi*, XX, 45-46 (June-December 1993), 73-91. For a considerably graver case of deceit on the part of Montale, see Giovanni Cecchetti, 'Sull'altro Montale', in *Studies for Dante: Essays in Honor of Dante Della Terza*, ed. by F. Fido, R. A. Syska-Lamparska and P. D. Stewart (Fiesole: Cadmo, 1998), pp. 351-59.

⁵¹ John Butcher, 'Le ultime poesie di Eugenio Montale. Intervista ad Andrea Zanzotto', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 19 (2001), 327-31 (p. 330).

⁵² Giorgio Taffon, 'Su Montale critico e i poeti italiani del Novecento', in *L'atelier di Montale: sul poeta, sul prosatore, sul critico* ([Rome]: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1990), pp. 81-104 (p. 100). On Montale's criticism, see also Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'Montale critico di poesia' and Giuseppe Nava, 'Montale critico di narrativa', both in *Montale e il canone poetico del Novecento*, pp. 213-39 and pp. 240-60. None of these three writers devotes much space specifically to Montale's Sixties criticism.

⁵³ *Catalogo del fondo Montale*, ed. by V. Pritoni (Milan: Biblioteca comunale, 1996).

⁵⁴ See Luciano Simonelli, 'Ma dopo il frac potrò mettere la giacchetta?', *Domenica del Corriere*, 18 December 1975, 26-31 (p. 31).

⁵⁵ In the course of a private conversation in Lugano on 10 November 2000 Annalisa Cima informed me that Montale could frequently be heard instructing his housemaid, Gina Tiossi, to take a batch of books away to the 'bancarelle'.

⁵⁶ For Montale and the notion of cultural 'sedimentation', see Tiziana de Rogatis, 'Eupalinos e gli Ossi di seppia', in *Montale e il classicismo moderno*, pp. 39-70 (p. 63).

Part I – The ‘Xenia’

The ‘Xenia’ differ radically from Montale’s previous verse. Here, it will be argued that contemporary literature played no minor part in the composition of this innovative series of uxorial poems. Montale was encouraged by English-language writers to express himself in a less complex diction, to focus to a greater degree than ever before on realistic, mundane details and, in general, to lower the tone of his verse considerably. He was also pushed in this direction by his reading of Italian literary works and, above all, by Natalia Ginzburg’s 1963 novel *Lessico familiare*. Yet, before discussing *Lessico familiare* and other possible intertexts for Montale’s writing of the mid Sixties, let us first outline succinctly the principal novelties of the ‘Xenia’.

‘Una nuova grammatica’: The Nature of the ‘Xenia’

The lion’s share of the poems in *Satura* are quite unlike anything present in the earlier *Ossi*, *Occasioni* and *Bufera*. Montale himself was acutely aware of the tremendous novelty of his fourth collection. For example, in an interview with Grazia Livi published in *Il Corriere della Sera* a short time before *Satura* went on public sale he was to affirm: ‘*Satura* è un libro molto diverso dagli altri. Penso che turberà i critici i quali avevano

ormai cristallizzato il mio lavoro in tre periodi, e pensavano che io non avrei dato luogo a nient'altro. Qui, invece, il cristallo si è un po' rotto'.¹ *Satura*, destined to become one of the best selling volumes of Italian verse published in the Seventies, consists of five parts: a short introductory section entitled 'Il tu' containing just two poems – '*I critici ripetono...*' (1969) and 'Botta e risposta I' (1961) –, followed by 'Xenia I' (1964-1966), 'Xenia II' (1966-1967), 'Satura I' (1968-1970) and 'Satura II' (1968-1970).² 'Xenia I', 'Xenia II' and 'Satura I' each contain fourteen poems. 'Satura II' contains considerably more: in fact, if one takes 'Dopo una fuga' to be a single unit, then the sum of the pieces here is fifty-two. The content of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' will be the principal focus of the next part of this study. Let us concentrate here on the material to be found in 'Il tu', 'Xenia I' and 'Xenia II', those sections that contain the earliest texts in *Satura*.

The full title of Montale's fourth major collection of verse is *Satura 1962-1970*. This title, it will be noted, effectively excludes 'Botta e risposta I', dated 1961, from *Satura*.³ And, in fact, 'Botta e risposta I', chronologically the first piece in the fourth collection, does not differ greatly from the poetry that immediately preceded it. It is true that this long autobiographical poem introduces a number of elements, above all thematic, that will be important in the post-*Bufera* verse. Roberto Orlando, for instance, finds in 'Botta e risposta I' the birth of the apophatic theology and the 'adialectical' worldview that will characterise the later collections, as well as the locus of the materialisation of that particular 'personaggio-Montale' so widespread in the successive writing.⁴ Yet, whilst recognising its indubitable significance in the grand 'romanzo' that is Montale's poetry, at the same time one ought to acknowledge that 'Botta e risposta I', with its elaborate lexis, its grandiose allegorical structure, its rich imagery and, in general, its elevated tone,

does not diverge drastically from the trajectory of the verse of the earlier *Bufera*. In particular, this text exhibits notable affinities with the two poems in the final section of the third collection, ‘Conclusioni provvisorie’.⁵ For instance, in ‘Il sogno del prigioniero’, first published in 1954, the ‘io’ is a captive, whilst in ‘Botta e risposta I’ the first person subject refers to a period that he spent as a prisoner. Meanwhile, the ‘infilzata fetida | di saltimbocca’ of the latter poem harks back to the many mentions of food in ‘Il sogno del prigioniero’, e.g. ‘crac di noci schiacciate’ and ‘[il] *pâté* | destinato agl’Iddii pestilenziali’. And in this context it is well worth observing that in a French translation of *Bufera* published in 1966, *La Tourmente et autres poèmes*, ‘Botta e risposta I’ was included as a third ‘conclusione provvisoria’, presumably with the consent of the Genoese poet.⁶

In a radio interview with Giansiro Ferrata – the ‘G. F.’ of the epigraph to ‘Ancora ad Annecy’ (*Diari*) – broadcast in late October and early November 1961, i.e. around the time of the composition of ‘Botta e risposta I’, a middle-aged Montale asserted: ‘è difficile alla mia età ritrovare una nuova grammatica, un nuovo dizionario, una nuova fisiologia, una nuova *Weltanschauung* (mi scuso di questa parola). [...] [I]o ho cominciato presto – con un certo margine di originalità – e potrei essere esaurito’ (*SMAMS* 1619). ‘Botta e risposta I’ certainly did not usher in ‘una nuova grammatica’. The successive ‘Xenia’, however, composed between 1964 and 1967, quite emphatically did. As a large proportion of the most authoritative experts on Montale have recognised, there stands an enormous gap between the twenty-eight short poems of ‘Xenia I’ and ‘Xenia II’ and the previous verse. To quote from just two critics, according to Maria Corti the ‘Xenia’ represent ‘qualcosa di profondamente nuovo nella poesia montaliana’, whilst

Franco Croce has asserted that '[i]l primo elemento che colpisce negli *Xenia* montaliani è la differenza netta dall'esperienza poetica precedente: non solo nei temi, nei sentimenti ma nel linguaggio, nel tono'.⁷ What, then, are the distinctive qualities of the 'Xenia', that which renders them 'qualcosa di profondamente nuovo nella poesia montaliana'? The following few paragraphs will seek to furnish a concise answer to this question.

On 20 October 1963 Montale's lifelong companion Drusilla Tanzi died. On the gravestone she shares with her partner at San Felice a Ema, a cemetery near Galluzzo just south of Florence, this lady appears as Drusilla Montale: in 1962, at Fiesole, Eugenio Montale and Drusilla Tanzi had married. A few months after the death of Tanzi, on 10 April 1964, Montale penned several short poems in his wife's memory. By February 1966 he had completed fourteen 'Xenia' (in ancient Greek 'xenia' means 'guest's gifts': the word had been employed as a title by other distinguished poets prior to Montale, amongst which Martial and, working together, Goethe and Schiller).⁸ These early 'Xenia' centre on Drusilla's modes of contact with reality and Montale's efforts to communicate with her. In the space of a year, from November 1966 to November 1967, Montale composed a further fourteen 'Xenia'. These poems are of a rather more varied nature and include short narrative episodes and a number of 'characters'.⁹

Now, the 'Xenia' are akin to numerous poems in *Bufera* in as much as they regard an absent woman, addressed in the second person singular, to whom Montale is linked by an intense emotional bond. The 'tu' of the 'Xenia' is depicted as an extraordinary creature, capable of unmasking people with her bat's radar, 'un tuo senso infallibile' ('Xenia I', 5). Yet, notwithstanding her exceptional perceptiveness, this interlocutor is certainly not an awe-inspiring, mystical creature in the *stilnovismo* tradition as Clizia, alias Irma



Brandeis, had tended to be in *Occasioni* and *Bufera*. Neither does she have a great deal in common with the Volpe of the later poems in *Bufera*, a dynamic angel charged with erotic energy. Indeed, there is little of the angelic about the woman that is depicted in *Satura*: ‘povero insetto che ali | avevi solo nella fantasia’ (‘Xenia I’, 2). Drusilla, nicknamed ‘Mosca’, is not sublimated; those ecstatic ‘impennate’, those lyric leaps towards the transcendent that had appeared so frequently in Montale’s previous love poetry are conspicuous in the ‘Xenia’ by their absence. The second and third sections of *Satura* introduce a very new female ‘muse’, an unassuming, at times humorous personality, unlike anything that had appeared in Montale’s previous verse. This ‘muse’, a sort of ‘beatrice dimezzata’, represents a fundamental archetype for the later poetry.¹⁰

One of the most distinctive features of the ‘Xenia’ with respect to Montale’s previous verse is what might be called their intimate and affectionate realism. (And Montale himself used the latter term with regard to *Satura*: ‘c’era una necessità di realismo’ (*SMAMS* 1700)). In the ‘Xenia’ Montale evokes his loved one’s mundane habits, describes seemingly minor events from her life and refers to those places, people and things that formed part of her existence. He devotes far greater attention than ever before to the humdrum, to the quotidian, to the minutiae of his muse’s being; with this miniature ‘canzoniere’ we have a ‘concessione nuova verso il privato, il confidenziale, il particolare quotidiano’ (Corti) or, in the words of Sereni, a ‘classicità del privato, dell’intimo, dello strettamente confidenziale’.¹¹ The following examples should suffice to illustrate the particular realism of the ‘Xenia’. In ‘Xenia I’, 4 Montale writes of a whistle he and his wife had worked on for the afterlife. He implies in the epigrammatic ‘Xenia I’, 9 that Drusilla spent some time on the telephone: ‘Ascoltare era il solo tuo modo di vedere. | Il

conto del telefono s'è ridotto a ben poco'. In 'Xenia I', 10 the reader is presented with a dialogue in which one of the speakers, in all likelihood Montale 'personaggio', affirms that Mosca would pray Saint Anthony to assist in finding lost umbrellas and other objects from the cloakroom of 'Sant'Ermite'. In 'Xenia I', 12 the poet remarks that he will no longer hear his wife talk about poisonous antibiotics, the pin in her femur and the 'beni di fortuna' which an 'occhiuto omissis' fleeced from her, whilst he seems to suggest in 'Xenia II', 1 that Mosca would avoid going to funerals: 'la morte non ti riguardava. || Ai funerali dovevo andare io'. In 'Xenia II', 2 Montale tells of his spouse's habit of remembering a certain 'signor Cap':

Spesso ti ricordavi (io poco) del signor Cap.
 «L'ho visto nel torpedone, a Ischia, appena due volte.
 È un avvocato di Klagenfurt, quello che manda gli auguri.
 Doveva venirci a trovare».

Elsewhere, he depicts his partner joking darkly over the well-known 'Inferno' wine – '«Devo berlo? Non basta | esserci stati dentro a lento fuoco?»' ('Xenia II', 6) – and sitting in a bar in Portugal with a 'contorno di aragostine' ('Xenia II', 10). In 'Xenia II', 9 he records one of Mosca's more unusual idiosyncrasies, her reluctance to look at nuns and widows: 'Le monache e le vedove, mortifere | maleodoranti prefiche, | non osavi guardarle'. The prominent role attributed in the 'Xenia' to ostensibly banal objects and events frequently provokes a smile in the reader. But not for long... To adapt a sentence from Leopardi's 'La ginestra, o il fiore del deserto', in the sensitive reader of the 'Xenia' pity eventually triumphs over any initial laughter: like very nearly all of Montale's poetry, these twenty-eight texts are pervaded by a deep-felt sense of melancholy.

In a dialogue published in the first issue of *Quaderni milanesi* (Autumn 1960) Montale discusses at some length the question of the relationship between poetry and prose. Asked by his adroit interviewer, possibly Vittorio Sereni, how he responds to the accusation that in his verse there exist noticeable ‘cadenze prosastiche’, Montale replies: ‘Nella mia poesia può esserci una dialettica musicale prosa-poesia: o meglio, c’è stata inizialmente [in *Ossi*], poi ha prevalso un tono più distaccato dal livello prosastico [in *Occasioni* and *Bufera*]. Domani... non so’ (SMAMS 1607-08).¹² In fact, the diction of the ‘Xenia’, destined to be born just a few years after the above-mentioned interview, is far less ‘poetic’, far more ‘prosaic’ than that of *Occasioni*, *Bufera*, ‘Botta e risposta I’ and even the prosaic-poetic *Ossi*. Take ‘Xenia I’, 1, for instance, the first poem in the ‘Xenia’ series. The reader of ‘Xenia I’, 1 cannot but be profoundly impressed by the linguistic distance between this short text and ‘Botta e risposta I’, composed three years earlier. The former is reproduced below:

Caro piccolo insetto
che chiamavano mosca non so perché,
stasera quasi al buio
mentre leggevo il Deuteroisaia
sei ricomparsa accanto a me,
ma non avevi occhiali,
non potevi vedermi
né potevo io senza quel luccichìo
riconoscere te nella foschia.

Surely few readers of Italian will encounter serious difficulties in the comprehension of this poem: one evening, whilst the first person subject of the text was reading *Deutero-Isaiah*, Mosca reappeared beside him, although she could not see him, nor he her. The lexis of ‘Xenia I’, 1 is elementary: only ‘luccichìo’ and ‘Deuteroisaia’ are words that do

not frequently occur in the most ordinary conversation (*Deutero-Isaiah* is a part of the *Book of Isaiah* in the *Old Testament*). The syntax of 'Xenia I', 1 is equally uncomplicated: with respect to the norm of everyday usage, there are no striking manipulations of word order. Mara Barbierato, discussing *Satura*, has asserted: 'Il lavoro sulla sintassi, l'adeguamento di essa ad uno *standard* linguistico del tutto regolare, che non ammette, se non in rarissimi casi, deroghe e forzature, è senz'altro l'elemento più originale della nuova maniera montaliana'.¹³ It may fairly be said that the new Montalean syntax of the fourth collection comes to life with the 'Xenia'.

Montale's miniature 'canzoniere' for Mosca, then, has much of the 'prosaic' about it. Yet, whilst stressing the 'prosaicism' of the 'Xenia', it is important to underscore that the same texts maintain a sizeable distance from prose: in the 'Xenia', as elsewhere in the post-'Botta e risposta I' production, Montale presents 'una poesia che apparentemente tende alla prosa e nello stesso tempo la rifiuta' (*SMAMS* 1699). The 'Xenia' 'refute' prose principally through their euphony. This euphony, less accentuated than in many of the earlier works, is evident in the above-quoted 'Xenia I', 1. Observe, for example, the preponderance of *settenari* and hendecasyllables, the half-rhyme 'luccichìo' / 'foschia' in the final two verses, the series of understated end rhymes at a distance – line two 'perché' / line five 'me', line three 'buio' / line eight 'luccichìo', line four 'Deuteroisaia' / line nine 'foschia' – and the alliteration and assonance, e.g. the repetition of /k/ in 'Caro piccolo insetto | che chiamavano mosca non so perché' and the series of /o/, /v/, /e/ and /i/ in the final four verses.¹⁴

The 'Xenia' poems mark the end of the *ore rotundo* and the *trobar clus* of *Ossi, Occasioni* and *Bufera* and inaugurate that *sermo humilis* that will dominate the later

collections. The general tone drops from the high lyrical to something bordering on the discursive or conversational as Montale supplies his reader with a wealth of realistic details regarding his deceased wife in a lexis and syntax that is more elementary than ever before. The essence of the 'Xenia' is well summarised by Gianfranco Contini, writing immediately after the completion of the same: 'realità quotidiana fulminata in un linguaggio quotidiano'.¹⁵

What, one must wonder, provoked this astonishing metamorphosis in the poet's writing? The answer probably lies in part in the nature of Montale's muse. Drusilla Tanzi was a down-to-earth, practical person, habitually more concerned with the logistics of everyday living and the latest gossip than with the finer points of high culture.¹⁶ It is reasonable to presume that the 'quotidian' style of the 'Xenia' was in part a result of the unassuming and pragmatic character of their 'begetter'. As Corti has pointed out, Mosca was 'un essere mobilissimo, a sorpresa, troppo vitale perché gli perten[esse] l'ingresso in un universo stilnovistico o petrarchesco'.¹⁷ Romano Luperini, meanwhile, has conjectured that, as had happened with the death of the poet's mother and 'A mia madre' (*Bufera*), the grief at the loss of the loved one led the poet 'alla specifica, determinata esperienza terrena della donna scomparsa, alla sua individuale fisicità' and therefore acted as a stimulus towards the 'quaggiù', as a sort of 'lezione di realismo'.¹⁸ Yet, it is the contention here that the new style that came into being with the 'Xenia' was not exclusively due to the particular nature of the 'ispiratrice', that behind the parturition of these poems and their most innovative mode of expression there was another major factor at work. The following, focusing on volumes published in the very late Fifties and in the

Sixties, will endeavour to demonstrate that the writing of others contributed greatly to that remarkable renaissance that took place with the 'Xenia'.

The Importance of English and North American Poetry

Ghanshyam Singh has written that 'con *Xenia* la musa montaliana si è completamente rinnovata, anzi è rinata, e [...] questa rinascita si è verificata almeno in parte grazie al contatto con la poesia e la poetica inglese'.¹⁹ Indeed, there is something acutely 'English' about Montale's 'canzoniere' for Mosca: the sapient blend of the prosaic and the poetic, the generally understated tone, the absence of grand lyric gestures, the moments of irony, all of these aspects evoke the English-language poetic tradition and, in particular, Anglo-American verse of the Twentieth century. Inspired by Singh's comment, let us now investigate in some depth the question of the salience of English-language poetry for the Montale of the 'Xenia'.

A possible starting point for such an inquiry might be the work of T. S. Eliot, an artist whom Montale esteemed most highly. One might easily be tempted to linger on *Four Quartets* (1943), observing that if there would appear to be resonances of 'Burnt Norton' in the string of paradoxes to be found in 'Xenia I', 14, then, more generically speaking, it could well be claimed that with the 'Xenia' the Genoese poet draws closer than ever before to the music of *Four Quartets*, a delicate and subtle music that is, in the words of Montale himself, 'bassa, apparentemente prosastica, parlata e non cantata' (*SMP* 2693).²⁰ And, following on from Martelli and Barile, one might also dwell on Eliot's verse drama

The Cocktail Party (1949), a '[c]ommedia comica non priva di spunti farseschi e insieme dramma intimista di un'altezza di ispirazione che nessun drammaturgo europeo aveva più raggiunta dai tempi di Cecov' (*SMP* 2127).²¹ Still, the particular parameters of this study, focusing, as it does, on literature published in (or very near to) the Sixties, effectively exclude both these works from anything more than a cursory mention.

These same parameters also rule out the prospect of any comprehensive discussion of the numerous poems Thomas Hardy penned in his old age on the subject of his deceased wife Emma Gifford. This hardly leaves a gaping hole in Montale studies, however, since Gabrielle Barfoot has already published an article dealing extensively with the similarities and differences between Hardy's corpus of uxorial poems and the 'Xenia'.²² All the same, it ought to be noted here that Barfoot's article fails to make any reference whatsoever to a review by Montale of a 1968 Italian anthology of Hardy's verse compiled by the above-mentioned Singh.²³ In this review Montale states: 'Thomas Hardy ha trascorso gran parte della sua lunga vita nel Dorset, suo luogo natale. Non sono mai stato in quella regione; di dove mia moglie, intorno al '34, mi portò un nido di scricciolo, rimasto a lungo in casa nostra' (*PR* 561). By indicating a link between the English poet's life and that of his spouse, Montale rather deftly suggests a parallel between his recently completed poetic sequence regarding Drusilla Tanzi and the former's verse for Emma Gifford. And, in fact, Montale mentions this very verse further on in his article, remarking that there is general agreement that '[l]e liriche che egli [Hardy] scrisse negli anni 1912-1913 in memoria della sua prima moglie sono una delle vette della poesia moderna' (*PR* 562).

What, then, of more recent English-language works? In the opinion of Mazzoni, the code of the 'Xenia' belongs to a 'neocrepuscolarismo internazionale' that was one of the hegemonic forces in many national literatures during the Fifties and Sixties and, above all, in English and American writing due to the work of members of 'The Movement' and Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*.²⁴ Mazzoni does not delve into the potential importance for the 'Xenia' of either the artistic production of Philip Larkin and his peers or that of Robert Lowell. And yet the latter, at least, quite definitely deserves further attention.

The esteem between Montale and Lowell was mutual. If the older poet concluded a 1966 review of a Theodor Roethke anthology by exhorting Mondadori's 'Lo Specchio' to produce an anthology of the poetry of Lowell – 'Si avrebbe un libro non meno importante, dopo del quale ci sentiremmo dispensati, almeno per qualche tempo, dal seguire ciò che accade nella rigogliosa, ma spesso sconcertante, selva della nuova poesia americana' (SMP 2802) –, then in his celebrated volume of liberal translations *Imitations* (1961) Lowell published elegant versions of ten poems by Montale.²⁵ In an astute study Barile has demonstrated that the reading of Montale's poetry was of some significance for the verse output of Lowell. In fact, echoes of the American writer's reading of Montale are apparent in *Life Studies* (1959) and, above all, in the subsequent *For the Union Dead* (1964) (compare 'The Old Flame' with 'La casa dei doganieri').²⁶ Barile focuses principally on the traffic of ideas from Montale to Lowell, but she does also consider the possibility of a literary influence in the opposite direction. The parallel Barile draws between Lowell's 'Truth' (*The Dolphin*) and the first verses of 'Asor' (*Diari*), a humorous polemic against the young left-wing scholar Alberto Asor Rosa, is particularly thought-provoking:

The scouring voice of 1930 Oxford,
 “Nothing pushing the personal should be published,
 not even Proust’s *Research* or Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*,
 a banquet of raw ingredients in bad taste...”.

Asor, nome gentile (il suo retrogrado
 è il più bel fiore),
 non ama il privatismo in poesia.²⁷

Yet, in Barile’s essay there appears no suggestion that there might exist any intertextual relationship between Lowell’s verse of the late Fifties and the ‘Xenia’. It is to precisely this subject that we must now turn our critical gaze.

1951 saw the publication of Lowell’s *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*. There then followed a long pause during which the American poet pondered deeply on the future of his writing, in search of a way forward. The result of this reflection was *Life Studies*, one of the most influential collections of verse to have appeared in the United States in the latter part of the Twentieth century.²⁸ It is widely accepted that *Life Studies*, a copy of which is to be found in the Fondo Montale, represents a turning point in Lowell’s poetic career. With this collection the American writer leaves behind formalism and the sublime and concentrates as never before on the autobiographical.²⁹ Of particular interest with regard to the ‘Xenia’ is the series of poems about dead family members in the third and final part of the collection, homonymously entitled ‘Life Studies’. There, Lowell presents, in a conversational style with frequent touches of irony, intimate memories regarding his deceased loved ones. For instance, he recalls in ‘My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow’ a certain Cinder, ‘our Scottie puppy | paralysed from gobbling toads’ and Aunt Sarah who rose ‘like the phoenix | from her bed of troublesome snacks and Tauchnitz classics’. He remembers how his grandfather once spilled his demitasse onto the billiards-table cloth and that the number three ball, his grandfather’s favourite, even today conceals the coffee stain (‘Grandparents’). Elsewhere, he recalls that his

father, who was once a member of the navy, would thunder from his bathtub ‘Anchors aweigh’ and that whenever this same ‘left a job, | he bought a smarter car’ (‘Commander Lowell: 1888-1949’), whilst in ‘During Fever’ he relates that his mother had an electric blanket and ‘a silver hot water bottle | monogrammed like a hip-flask’, as well as ‘Italian china fruity | with bunches and berries | and proper *putti*’. Always alert to the sound of his poetry, Lowell deftly weaves his limpid autobiographical verse with a delicate music. Consider the opening strophe of ‘Dunbarton’:

When Uncle Devereux died,
Daddy was still on sea-duty in the Pacific,
it seemed spontaneous and proper
for Mr. MacDonald, the farmer,
Karl, the chauffeur, and even my Grandmother
to say, ‘your Father.’ They meant my Grandfather.

Notice the alliteration of ‘d’ in the first two verses and the prolonged series of weak rhymes: ‘proper’ / ‘farmer’ / ‘chauffeur’ / ‘Grandmother’ / ‘Father’ / ‘Grandfather’.

An understated tone, a simple, at times colloquial language, an attention to the minutiae of the past, a subtle euphony... It is indeed hard to abstain from speculating that something of Lowell’s *Life Studies* might have rubbed off onto the Montale of the mid Sixties. We might reasonably presume that the latter’s own ‘life study’ of Drusilla Tanzi could have sprung in part from the experience of reading Lowell’s poetry. If nothing else, we are faced with two works, separated in their composition by just a few years, that manifest quite extraordinary affinities.

Of course, any conjecture concerning a causal relationship between *Life Studies* and the ‘Xenia’ is somewhat enervated by the fact that, though there exists a copy of this volume in the Fondo Montale, there would not appear to be any evidence readily

available to confirm that Montale actually read and was interested by the same. This is not, however, the case with the other work by an American author that will be discussed in the present section, an anthology of the verse of William Carlos Williams entitled simply *Poesie* and published in 1961.³⁰ In fact, on 17 November 1961 *Il Corriere della Sera* printed a review by Montale of this very work, a volume that contains a selection of verse taken from *The Collected Earlier Poems*, *The Collected Later Poems*, *Paterson* and *The Desert Music and Other Poems*, as well as a hitherto unpublished text, ‘The world contracted to a recognizable image...’.

In his preface to *Poesie* Vittorio Sereni – together with Cristina Campo, the translator of the poetry present in this volume – asserts: ‘Nemmeno mi sentirei di proporre Williams come esempio ad alcuno, se non a me stesso’.³¹ It has long been recognised by critics that Sereni’s reading and translation of Williams’ poetry had significant implications for his development as an artist.³² However, Sereni was not the only Italian poet to have been stimulated by Williams’ writing. In the above-mentioned study on Lowell, Barile notes that the name of Williams is one that ‘è indispensabile aggiungere [...] alla rosa che patrocina l’«anglosassonità» montaliana’.³³ Yet, Barile opts not to investigate extensively how Williams’ poetry might have animated Montale’s thinking. It is a question that is worth pursuing.

William Carlos Williams, writes Montale in his review of *Poesie*, ‘è poeta di cui si parla in Italia fin dal tempo in cui, da Rapallo, Ezra Pound cominciò a diffonderne il nome’ (*SMP* 2424). In all likelihood, Montale first came to hear about Williams directly from the same Pound, a man whom he met in 1925 and continued to see frequently both at Rapallo and Florence (see *SMP* 2996). Whatever the case may be, prior to the 1961

Poesie Montale certainly knew Williams' verse: he mentions in his review that he is already familiar with poetry by Williams to be found in anthologies and in two earlier 'volumetti', one by Sereni and the other by Campo. In Williams, states Montale (a critic who in his poetry reviews rarely neglected formal aspects), one does not find the traditional verse 'se non in forma di relitto vagante, quasi sempre solubile nel nuovo contesto armonico' (*SMP* 2424). The metrics of Williams' 'arabesco verbale' derive in part from a science of empty spaces, of *enjambements* and – the author of *Ossi* carries on his nautical motif – of 'grappini d'arrembaggio' which 'hook' one block of verses to another. Meanwhile, with regard to content Montale remarks of Williams: 'In lui si direbbe non esistere nulla se non il miracolo di una parola che concreta e insieme distrugge i piccoli eventi di una vita ormai uniforme, senza problemi e senza speranze. Non senza però un'alta, severa accettazione della nostra enigmatica avventura terrena' (*SMP* 2425).

Williams has been described as the most American of poets. Montale suggests that if the American archetype is represented by the theory and praxis of Action Painting, successful above all in the United States, then this description might be appropriate. By associating Williams' verse with the art of Action Painting, that school of painting spearheaded by Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning in which contingency and instinct were afforded a seminal role, the reviewer implies firstly that Williams is a most up-to-date writer, for Action Painting is widely recognised as being the style of painting that heralded the commencement of the most recent era of contemporary experimental art. Furthermore, by linking Williams's writing with Action Painting the reviewer suggests that the verse of the former exudes an almost anarchic spontaneity, something

that would rather distance Williams' work from that of Montale which, on the contrary, tends to conjure up images of the polished and the classical. Finally, and most importantly, with his reference to Action Painting Montale must have intended to underline the incredible vitality of Williams' work: Action Painting, in fact, was characterised by its passionate exuberance as the artist gave material expression to his innermost feelings, casting the paint onto the canvas with an enthusiastic abandon. And yet, having said all this, Montale goes on to urge caution with any analogy between Action Painting and the poetry of Williams. For whereas the practitioners of the former abandon themselves to chance or, at best, supervise it, during the creative process Williams maintains a relatively tight surveillance over his work. Montale affirms: 'In Williams questa sorveglianza è così assidua che il suo modo di comporre con parole usuali, disposte in filastrocche o incastrate in tasselli, elimina anche ogni tematismo e dà il maggior rilievo ai *petits riens* della nostra vita quotidiana' (SMP 2424).

Williams does indeed often employ 'parole usuali'. Take the first two strophes of 'The Young Housewife', a poem that tells of a housekeeper going about her everyday business:

At ten A.M. the young housewife
moves about in negligee behind
the wooden walls of her husband's house.
I pass solitary in my car.

Then again she comes to the curb
to call the ice-man, fish-man, and stands
shy, uncorseted, tucking in
stray ends of hair, and I compare her
to a fallen leaf³⁴

This is quotidian language at its most effective: through his lucid diction Williams invests the figure of this housewife with a marvellous sense of candour and simplicity. It has already been observed with particular reference to 'Xenia I',¹ that the lexis of the 'Xenia' is considerably less elaborate than that of Montale's previous verse, closer than ever to day-to-day speech. It might reasonably be conjectured that Williams' verse, in which 'parole usuali' are deployed to stunning effect, might have edged Montale towards that which would eventually be the language of the 'Xenia'.

Yet, the reading of William's verse did not furnish Montale solely with a vibrant model of the use of 'parole usuali'. It also served to remind him of how genuine poetry can spring from a seemingly 'banal' subject matter, from the 'piccoli eventi di una vita ormai uniforme, senza problemi e senza speranze', from the '*petits riens* della nostra vita quotidiana'.

Like his Nineteenth-century predecessor Walt Whitman, in his verse Williams sought to evoke the people, objects and places of the United States in all their rich diversity. The poet did not limit himself to writing about the great natural landscapes of America. Indeed, taking advantage of an expression used by Nelo Risi in *Di certe cose che dette in versi suonano meglio che in prosa*, Williams might be described as a 'stilista dell'usuale'.³⁵ In his preface to *Poesie*, a piece of writing which Montale describes in his review as 'illuminant[e]', Sereni rightly observes how Williams attributes to poetry 'una funzione [...] modesta, ma comunque una funzione: quella di puntare il dito, a modo suo, su fatti e condizioni che passerebbero altrimenti inosservati, confinati nel «semibuio» della cronaca'.³⁶ Williams, a poet who is not solely attracted by those themes which are conventionally considered the prerogative of lyric poetry, selects as the subject matter of

his verse events and objects such as the burying of a cat ('Complete Destruction'), the number on a passing firetruck ('The Great Figure'), the broken pieces of a bottle ('Between Walls') and, most famously, a wheelbarrow ('The Red Wheelbarrow'). The first sentence of 'Approach to a City' reads:

Getting through with the world –
I never tire of the mystery
of these streets: the three baskets
of dried flowers in the high

bar-room window, the gulls wheeling
above the factory, the dirty
snow – the humility of the snow that
silvers everything and is

trampled and lined with use – yet
falls again, the silent birds
on the still wires of the sky, the blur
of wings as they take off

together. [...]

Williams asserts at the end of 'Approach to a City' that entities such as dried flowers, wheeling gulls and dirty snow are in a sense superior to more impressive components of reality, claiming that 'there is small holiness | to be found in braver things'. Rather than on the 'braver things' of the world, the American poet concentrates on the ostensibly banal and mundane. To quote from Montale in his review of *Poesie*: 'Moderno e ben americano Williams appare soprattutto nel rifiuto di ogni contenuto che possa dirsi poetico per sua virtù naturale' (*SMP* 2425).

This feature of Williams' art, this inclination to refer to the 'piccoli eventi' and '*petits riens*' of day-to-day existence, something that likens him to the Lowell of *Life Studies*, must have contributed to the formation of the particular style of the 'Xenia'. Throughout

these poems, it has already been observed, Montale repeatedly focuses his attention on quotidian objects and episodes connected to his wife, such as the fact that Drusilla would talk of poisonous antibiotics and the pin in her femur, that she would joke over 'Inferno' wine and that in a Portuguese bar she received a small glass of Madeira with a 'contorno di aragostine'. In 'Xenia II', 3, meanwhile, we have the chronicle of the most mundane of objects one could possibly imagine, an 'infilascarpe', a 'cornetto di latta arrugginito' left one day in the Hotel Danieli at Venice and thence thrown by a maid called Hedia into the Canal Grande. All this, it should be emphasised, is not to imply that the 'Xenia' are in their essence profoundly akin to the poetry of Williams. Rather, it is to suggest that the American author's writing stimulated Montale to meditate on the nature of lyrical verse and that this same meditation was a salient passage in the long artistic journey towards the 'Xenia'.

The moment has almost arrived to leave Williams and Anglo-American literature in general and move on to material originally written in Italian. Yet, before doing so, it is worth lingering an instant on one particular poem in the Campo-Sereni anthology, 'Spring and All', a piece about the reawakening of plants with the advent of spring, i.e. about that vitality which Montale had associated with Williams in the course of his review of *Poesie* via his reference to Action Painting.

The season of spring appears several times in Montale's first three collections, frequently with negative attributes: in *Occasioni* we encounter 'primavere che non fioriscono' ('Carnevale di Gerti'), 'una primavera inerte, senza memoria' ('Dora Markus', I) and 'l'oscura primavera | di Sottoripa' ('Lo sai: debbo riperderti e non posso...'), whilst in *Bufera* a 'primavera hitleriana' and a 'piagata | primavera' ('La

primavera hitleriana') may be found. In *Satura*, meanwhile, there appears a spring that 'sbuca col suo passo di talpa', that 'avanza con le sue nebbie grasse, | con le sue luci lunghe, le sue ore insopportabili' ('Xenia I', 12) and a spring that 'tarda alquanto a prodursi' ('Nel silenzio'). In the case of this last poem, the author is describing a general strike, where the street is deserted and the presence of human life next door is suggested by a radio: 'Nella strada non passa nessuno. | Solo una radiolina dall'altra parte del muro. | Da qualche giorno deve abitarci qualcuno'. The somewhat similarly entitled 'Nel cortile' (*Diari*), meanwhile, like 'Nel silenzio' belonging to a long series of poems in which the aged poet looks out at the wider world with a darkly humorous gaze, also features both spring and desolation, beginning as follows: 'Nell'accidiosa primavera quando le ferie incombono | la città si svuota'. Moreover, just like in 'Nel silenzio', in the poem from *Diari* we come across a comment about nearby property and its state of occupation: 'Vasto l'appartamento del grande Oncologo, | sempre deserto e buio'. It would not be inconceivable, then, that the earlier 'Nel silenzio', with its spring that 'tarda alquanto a prodursi', might have inspired Montale to employ the adjective 'accidiosa' alongside 'primavera'.

Yet, it is our contention here that the key intertext for this precise passage in 'Nel cortile' is actually the aforementioned 'Spring and All' or, to be more exact, 'Primavera eccetera', as Campo's version of the same poem is entitled. Campo, in fact, renders Williams' two-verse strophe 'Lifeless in appearance, sluggish | dazed spring approaches—' as follows: 'Senza vita palese l'*accidiosa* | stordita *primavera* si avvicina —' [my italics]. The intertextual affinity is manifest. All the same, it is worth stating that if Campo's translation of 'Spring and All' was indeed the primary source for the opening words of

‘Nel cortile’, then it is quite striking that Montale adopts a phrase from a poem by Williams centred on the natural world only to then integrate it into a piece very much regarding the polar opposite of this same, the city and, above all, a courtyard ‘ingombro di tante macchine casse sacchi racchette’.³⁷

Spurred on by this correspondence, we might venture a further intertextual hypothesis pertaining to Montale’s fifth collection. Observe side by side the verses immediately succeeding the above-quoted strophe from ‘Primavera eccetera’ and ‘Il negativo’ (*Diari*), penned just three weeks before ‘Nel cortile’ (the subjects of the first sentence of the extract from Williams, reproduced on the left, are various types of flora):

Nel mondo entrano nudi,
freddi, incerti di tutto
se non di entrare. Li chiude
il freddo, noto vento –

Tuorli d’un solo uovo entrano i giovani
nelle palestre della vita. Venere
li conduce, Mercurio li divide,
Marte farà il resto. Non a lungo
brillerà qualche luce sulle Acropoli
di questa primavera ancora timida.

Both passages have in their first sentence subjects, be they plants or young people, that ‘entrano’ into life – ‘[n]el mondo’ in Campo’s version, in Montale a more elaborate ‘nelle palestre della vita’ – and in their second sentence a different subject (or subjects) that operates directly on the entrants: ‘LI ChiUDE | il freddo, noto VENto’ / ‘VENere | LI ConDUCE, Mercurio li divide, | Marte farà il resto’ (notice the strong phonic affinities, highlighted here with capitals). A somewhat tenuous hypothesis of influence, this. Or, rather, it would be, if it were not for that ‘primavera ancora timida’ that brings ‘Il negativo’ to a close.

The 'Xenia' and Contemporary Italian Poetry

Whilst acknowledging the substantial part that English and American poetry played in the formation of the 'Xenia', we should not neglect the issue of the significance of Italian verse for Montale's writing of the mid Sixties. First of all, a brief word about the 'crepuscolari', very much in vogue around the time of the 'Xenia' thanks to the critical activity of Aldo Vallone, Edoardo Sanguineti and others.³⁸ Montale was a firm admirer of the major protagonists of 'crepuscolarismo', that genre of poetry widespread in the early years of the Twentieth century, born in part as a reaction against the more bombastic D'Annunzio and characterised by its prosaic style, its understated tone, its mix of pathos and irony and its focus on the private sphere. Certainly, memories of the 'crepuscolari' may conceivably have exerted some influence on Montale when he came to compose his miniature 'canzoniere' for Mosca.³⁹

In this context it is well worth recalling the poet's 1962 review of a ponderous anthology of Govoni's verse entitled *Poesie*, for many of the reflections stimulated by this volume almost seem to portend the new road the poet was about to embark upon with his 'Xenia'.⁴⁰ For example, Montale notes that the two principal characteristics of 'crepuscolarismo', at least judging from the first books by Govoni, seem to have been 'l'abbassamento di tono apportato al verso tradizionale e la quasi parodia della rima ricca di tipo dannunziano e parnassiano' (*SMP* 2438). Now, if the music of Govoni's early poetry with its strong and insistent rhyming schemes appears far away from the muted euphony of Montale's 'canzoniere' (compare any one of the 'Xenia' with texts in the early pages of Govoni's *Poesie* such as 'Autunno', 'I gatti bianchi' and 'Sempre verdi'),

then nonetheless it is striking that the younger poet should refer to a lowering of tone when he himself was on the brink of making a giant stride in this direction with his verse of the mid Sixties. In *Fiale*, *Armonia in grigio et in silenzio* and subsequent works by Govoni, continues Montale, ‘temi, spunti e strofe del *Poema paradisiaco* si mostrano da un lato *en déshabillé*, dall’altro brillano di una nuova chincaglieria che li deforma ma anche li impreziosisce’ (SMP 2438). It will be observed, meanwhile, that in the ‘Xenia’ the themes of Montale’s previous collections reappear very much *en déshabillé* so that, for instance, the myth of the angelic woman present in *Bufera* gives way to the more comic figure of Mosca, that ‘povero insetto che ali | avev[a] solo nella fantasia’ (‘Xenia I’, 2). Montale goes on to state in his review of the Govoni anthology: ‘Questa tendenza fu poi perfezionata dal Gozzano, padrone di un verso che dissimula l’eleganza sotto la vernice della negligenza’ (SMP 2438). Upon reading this passage, it is indeed hard not to remember Montale’s earlier-quoted words regarding *Satura*: ‘una poesia che apparentemente tende alla prosa e nello stesso tempo la rifiuta’.

In Italy the Thirties and early Forties had been the period of the school of Hermeticism, formed by Alfonso Gatto, Leonardo Sinisgalli, Mario Luzi and others. However, the years following the Second World War were marked by a clear trend amongst major Italian poets away from the abstract, complex, intensely lyrical fragment that is the ‘hermetic’ text towards a poetry more rooted in the concrete, immanent reality, towards a verse characterised by a more ‘prosaic’ style and a considerably less elevated tone. Several of the poets who had figured amongst the most important practitioners of ‘hermetic’ writing moved in this direction: above all, Mario Luzi with his *Nel magma* (1963).⁴¹ This was also the road upon which a large section of the most talented young

writers born in the Twenties embarked: to name but a few collections, and without wishing to imply that any one of these were directly responsible for the genesis of the 'Xenia', we might recall Nelo Risi's *Polso teso* (1956), Luciano Erba's *Il male minore* (1960) and Giorgio Orelli's *L'ora del tempo* (1962).⁴² True, in the early Sixties there are almost no reviews by Montale of contemporary collections of Italian verse. (In fact, the only such review is a short piece on *Girasole*, a volume that gathers together poems by the then recently deceased Vittorina Papi.)⁴³ Nonetheless, it goes without saying that a writer such as Montale, someone who throughout his life was always acutely aware of the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, would have been sensitive to the general trajectory of Italian poetry of the Fifties and Sixties and that, at least to some extent, this same trajectory must have coloured his mode of thinking during the composition of the 'Xenia'.

One contemporary Italian poet that merits particular attention from the point of view of the 'Xenia' is Giorgio Caproni. As is well known, Caproni, like so many of the poets born in the second decade of the Twentieth century, was a great lover of Montale's poetry. It is, however, less well known that Montale was quite attached to Caproni. Proof of this lies in an interview with Annalisa Cima published some years ago in *La Repubblica*. There, Cima mentions a game that Montale and herself especially appreciated in which the player had to select those friends to cast from a tower and those to save: Caproni, recounts Cima, was amongst the friends whom Montale chose to salvage (alongside Zanzotto, Luzi, Solmi, Svevo and Cesare Segre).⁴⁴ Still, whilst on numerous occasions Caproni publicly lauded Montale, the latter, it would seem, never published so much as a sentence on Caproni's verse. Indeed, the four dense 'Meridiani' containing almost all of Montale's vast output in prose do not include a single mention of

Caproni. Perhaps Luigi Surdich is right when he speculates that Montale's utter silence regarding Caproni might have been due to the younger poet's ties with two men whom he did not particularly admire, Aldo Capasso (author of the preface to *Come un'allegoria*) and Pier Paolo Pasolini.⁴⁵ Whatever the case may be, Montale's lack of comment vis-à-vis Caproni is certainly more than a little curious.

It is likely that Montale would have been familiar with Caproni's second major collection of verse, *Il seme del piangere* (1959). Questions of personal acquaintance aside, the volume would probably have come to the older poet's attention by merit of the fact that it was published by one of Italy's major publishing houses, Garzanti, and that it benefited from reviews by prestigious critics such as Giuseppe De Robertis.⁴⁶ It is 'Versi livornesi', the first of the two sections in *Il seme del piangere*, that concerns us especially here. 'Versi livornesi', which forms the bulk of Caproni's 1959 collection, is essentially a 'canzoniere' *post mortem* for the poet's mother Anna Picchi. We can agree unreservedly with Geno Pampaloni when he affirms that this corpus of writing represents 'il più bel canzoniere filiale della nostra letteratura moderna'.⁴⁷ Caproni's 'canzoniere' is remarkable above all for its crystalline lucidity. Indeed, amongst Italian authors born in the early years of the Twentieth century perhaps only Sandro Penna can seriously rival Caproni in limpidity of expression. 'Scandalo' exemplifies the style of 'Versi livornesi':

Per una bicicletta azzurra,
Livorno come sussurra!
Come s'unisce al brusio
dei raggi, il mormorio!

Annina sbucata all'angolo
ha alimentato lo scandalo.
Ma quando mai s'era vista,
in giro, *una* ciclista?⁴⁸

Of course, there exist fundamental differences between Caproni's and Montale's 'canzonieri' *post mortem*. Aside from the fact that Caproni's depiction of Anna Picchi is evidently in large part the fruit of his fantasy or of second-hand information (the person described is frequently the young Anna, not yet mother to her poet), the 'Versi livornesi' set themselves apart from the 'Xenia' by virtue of their extraordinary music: their electric metre and rhyme are a world away from the muted euphony of the 'Xenia'. And yet, if Montale was indeed familiar with *Il seme del piangere*, how greatly must he have been impressed by Caproni's ability to evoke his beloved, to express his emotions at her loss in a simple, transparent diction alien to any sort of *ore rotundo*!

Staying with Caproni, it is quite conceivable that when Montale penned 'Il frullato' (*Diari*) he had in mind the lexis of 'Versi', one of the poems in the 1968 volume *Il «Terzo libro» e altre cose* (present in the Fondo Montale).⁴⁹ At the very end of the second strophe of 'Versi' we come across the lines 'il rumore | di tenebra, in cui *il battito del cuore* | ti ferma in petto il fruscio delle *streghe*!' [my italics], whilst in 'Il frullato':

Il battito di un cuore
 artificiale o vero
 era poesia.
 Scorribande di nuvole
 non di *streghe*
 erano un quadro,
 la fistula il fischietto il campanaccio
 dei bovi musica. [my italics]

All the same, there would not appear to be any local echoes from *Il seme del piangere* or, indeed, any of Caproni's collections from *Come un'allegoria* to *Congedo del viaggiatore cerimonioso & altre prosopopee* anywhere in the 'Xenia'. Let us, therefore, move swiftly

on to the last recent Italian poet that warrants consideration in connection with the birth of Montale's uxorial 'canzoniere', Leonardo Sinisgalli.

In an article published in *il Settimanale* in the immediate wake of the public announcement that Montale had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Sinisgalli recounts how a journalist asked him to confirm that he had boasted of having taught the author of *Satura* his 'poesia «povera»'. Sinisgalli replied to the journalist as follows:

Non so chi ti abbia spinto a provocarmi [...]. [...] È certo che, di punto in bianco, dopo avermi rimproverato (in una noticina semianonima, firmata Eusebio, in un numero de *L'Italia Libera* del dopoguerra) di fare della poesia-prosa, egli dopo qualche lustro abbandona il barocchetto curiale, il birignao, e si mette a scrivere, alla diavola, epigrammi agli infilascarpe e satire degradate [...].⁵⁰

Sinisgalli seems to insinuate that his earlier works, such as *Vidi le Muse* (1943) and *I nuovi campi elisi* (1947), might have contributed to the creation of the 'Xenia' – 'Xenia II', 3, it has been seen, is a text regarding an 'infilascarpe' – and the posterior poetry (from 'Satura I' onwards satire abounds in Montale's verse). Yet, Sinisgalli's suggestion that he could have influenced *Satura* is hardly very convincing. Whilst it is true that some of the Southern poet's earlier texts might be designated as being rather 'prosaic' – see, for example, 'Mosche canine' in *I nuovi campi elisi* – the similarities between these texts and the 'Xenia' are nowhere near sufficient to incline one to surmise that Sinisgalli's verse was a major source for Montale's writing of the mid Sixties.⁵¹ (If anything, it would be stimulating to compare *L'età della luna* (1962), a collection brimming with irony and satire, to the writing that immediately followed the composition of the 'Xenia'.)⁵² So, if it is indeed the case that Sinisgalli's poetry played a wholly negligible role in the

maturation of the overall style of the ‘Xenia’ and the later verse, what, we might wonder, occasioned Sinisgalli’s words?

In his travel diary *Con Montale a Stoccolma* Domenico Porzio transcribes the poet’s reaction to Sinisgalli’s article: ‘Non è vero quello che afferma. Non ho mai usato, firmando recensioni, lo pseudonimo Eusebio. Sinisgalli, comunque, lo conosco poco. Ne ho letto pochissimo’.⁵³ Montale, then, appears to deny that he penned the above-mentioned article about Sinisgalli and claims to know little of his writing. He does not, however, rebuff point-blank the notion that he might have drawn on the latter’s poetry. And, indeed, there is an easily discernible ‘quotation’ from Sinisgalli’s verse in ‘Sul lago d’Orta’ (*Quaderno*), first published in *Il Corriere della Sera* on 26 October 1975, i.e. just days before the article in *il Settimanale*. The opening to ‘Sul lago d’Orta’, ‘Le Muse stanno appollaiate | sulla balaustrata | appena un filo di brezza sull’acqua’, was evidently inspired in part by the first sentence of Sinisgalli’s ‘Vidi le Muse’, a poem from the homonymous 1943 collection (present in the Fondo Montale): ‘Sulla collina | Io certo vidi le Muse | Appollaiate tra le foglie’.⁵⁴ Quite possibly, it was irritation at what he might have perceived as being something verging on plagiarism that induced Sinisgalli to insinuate that Montale had copied his poetic style.

The 'Xenia' and Natalia Ginzburg's *Lessico familiare*

It is now opportune to start excavating Montale's 'grande semenzaio' and to examine a prose work that proved to be a most fertile source of inspiration during the creation of the 'Xenia'. The work in question is *Lessico familiare*, published in the spring of 1963 and today considered by many to be Natalia Ginzburg's masterpiece.

On 7 July 1963, just days after Ginzburg's volume had been declared the winner of the prestigious Premio Strega, *Il Corriere della Sera* published a review by Montale of *Lessico familiare* entitled '«Lessico familiare» crudele con dolcezza'. Montale commences this article by stating that according to Silvio Benco one always senses 'la pulsazione del vero' in Ginzburg's prose. He adds, however, that this 'pulsazione del vero' is not more than the beating of a pulse. (In other words, the world that Ginzburg evokes through her prose strikes the reader as being 'realistic', but only faintly so.) This feature of the Turinese writer's art, asserts Montale, found perhaps its best expression in the short novel *Le voci della sera* (a work that the latter had reviewed in *Il Corriere della Sera* in 1961). Montale proceeds: 'In seguito, alla Ginzburg, trovata la perfetta accordatura del suo strumento, non restava che di restar fedele a una materia del tutto congrua a quella che è la sua semplice vocalità' (SMP 2592). Natalia Ginzburg's writing distinguishes itself from that of other authors 'per la delicatezza e quasi l'insignificanza del tocco, per l'arte sua di mimare non tanto la voce di chi discorre, ma la cadenza del suo chiacchiericcio' (SMP 2593).

Montale devotes a substantial part of his review to a discussion of the manner in which Ginzburg portrays her characters in *Lessico familiare*. These characters are modelled on

real people. Indeed, at the very beginning of her short foreword to *Lessico familiare* Ginzburg affirms: ‘Luoghi, fatti e persone sono, in questo libro, reali. Non ho inventato niente: e ogni volta che, sulle tracce del mio vecchio costume di romanziera, inventavo, mi sentivo subito spinta a distruggere quanto avevo inventato’.⁵⁵ Now, Montale’s attitude to the way in which Ginzburg represents real-life people is a mix of appreciation and concern. He writes, in fact, in his review of an ‘esatta ma quasi ingiusta riduzione dei [...] personaggi’ (*SMP* 2594), quoting as an example of Ginzburg’s mode of characterisation a segment of prose regarding Adriano Olivetti. Montale was impressed by the dexterity with which the author of *Lessico familiare* describes her brother, Mario Levi. Here, Ginzburg ‘diventa addirittura icastica, dimentica la deliberata umiliazione del tono e quasi scolpisce’ (*SMP* 2594). However, states the reviewer immediately afterwards, the Turinese writer does not always do likewise with her first husband Leone Ginzburg and her friend and colleague at Einaudi Cesare Pavese.

In the last paragraph of ‘«Lessico familiare» crudele con dolcezza’ Montale asserts that there is perhaps something of the ruthless about the art of Ginzburg; this author might harbour ‘il desiderio di esser dolcemente crudele come solo può esserlo una donna. Ma crudele con un certo languore, con una parvenza di semi-irresponsabilità’ (*SMP* 2594). In Ginzburg’s writing, at least superficially, sweetness prevails. This, claims the reviewer, explains why her prose is as much a source of pleasure for men as it is for women. Montale concludes his discussion of *Lessico familiare*:

Il giorno in cui Natalia ci darà un libro tutto per gli uomini vorrà dire che qualcosa del suo equilibrio sarà andato perduto. Non so se con perdita o con profitto; e non so nemmeno se dobbiamo augurarle quel giorno, tanto singolare ci appare quest’arte, anche nei luoghi in cui, come in *Lessico familiare*, la disadorna ma sapiente negligenza del tratto suggerisce il pericolo del manierismo. (*SMP* 2595)

At the beginning of his review of another of the major works of fiction published in Italy in the first half of the Sixties, *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini* (1962), Montale states that one of the most interesting features of Giorgio Bassani's Ferrara stories is that they deal with a particular section of contemporary middle-class life. He then wonders: 'Chi si occupa più dei borghesi in Italia?' (SMP 2444). The answer comes immediately: 'Probabilmente nessuno. Uomini e donne della borghesia s'incontrano in libri pieni di pornografia e di dolce vita, opere di scrittori che pretendono di decapitare la classe da cui sono usciti mentre ne rappresentano l'espressione più disastrosa' (SMP 2444). In *Lessico familiare* Montale found a detailed depiction of modern bourgeois life, a depiction that certainly does not incorporate any fervent ideological polemic against the middle classes and their *modus vivendi*. It is likely that all this appealed to the Genoese poet. Meanwhile, it is certain that Montale, an intellectual renowned for his love of irony, would have greatly relished the delectable moments of comedy present in Ginzburg's intimate chronicle. The author's fine sense of humour is evident throughout *Lessico familiare*, from the opening pages, in which she describes her father and his walks in the mountains, to the conversation between her mother and father with which the book concludes.

So, the bourgeois setting and the humour of *Lessico familiare* would probably have helped endear Ginzburg's volume to Montale. However, what must have fascinated the Genoese poet the most about the work in question were its characters, many of which he was closely familiar with. Natalia Ginzburg was the youngest of five children born to Giuseppe Levi and Lidia Tanzi. The latter, daughter of the socialist lawyer Carlo Tanzi, was the sister of Drusilla Tanzi. Speaking in the spring of 1986 to Francesca Ambrosi

about the important Florentine periodical *Solaria* (1926-1936), Ginzburg recalled Montale and his relationship with her aunt:

La critica può aver detto che ero del mondo di «Solaria». Io non ero di nessun mondo perché non facevo parte di quel giro. Loro stavano a Firenze, un ambiente molto preciso; io non è che li abbia avvicinati molto, anzi pochissimo. Attraverso Montale un poco, perché Montale viveva con una mia zia che era poi la Mosca, che qualche volta mi invitava a Firenze, dove mi trattenevo un pochino.⁵⁶

It might be noted, furthermore, that during part of 1944, the year in which Leone Ginzburg was tortured to death in Regina Coeli prison in Rome, Natalia lived, together with her children, in her aunt Drusilla's house.⁵⁷ In short, there can exist no doubt that Montale knew quite well Natalia Ginzburg, author and first person narrator of *Lessico familiare*. Given the family connection, one may also presume that he had met a large proportion of all the relatives that are described in Ginzburg's book. Additionally, Montale was certainly acquainted with a number of the people outside of Ginzburg's immediate family that are represented in *Lessico familiare*, e.g. Giacomo Debenedetti – one of the founders of *Primo tempo*, the first periodical to publish Montale's verse – and Giulio Einaudi, publisher of *Occasioni* and *L'opera in versi*. Interestingly, in '«Lessico familiare» crudele con dolcezza' Montale does not conceal the fact that he is emotionally tied to some of the figures described by Ginzburg, remarking: 'Semiaddormentata, apparentemente assente, Natalia riesce con poche parole anche a delineare personaggi che abbiamo conosciuti e amati' (SMP 2593).

With all the above said, we may now turn to Maria Antonietta Grignani who, in the course of a detailed analysis of *Lessico familiare* published some years ago, asserted that:

sarebbe interessante poter accertare il debito di Montale, che a partire dal 1964 scrive le poesie di *Xenia* in ricordo della moglie Drusilla Tanzi, per l'anagrafe sorella della Lidia di *Lessico familiare*; vedere quanto temi, tipi e persino linguaggio del canzoniere montaliano abbiano subito il fascino di quello che in una recensione alla Ginzburg Montale chiamava «lessico familiare crudele con dolcezza».⁵⁸

Today, well over a decade after Grignani's words, any serious inquiry into the repercussions of the reading of *Lessico familiare* for Montale and the 'Xenia' must take into account Domenico Scarpa's recent 'Cronistoria di «Lessico familiare»'. In this article, principally regarding the critical reception of *Lessico familiare*, Scarpa indicates a correspondence between a reflection regarding the moment of death in '«Lessico familiare» crudele con dolcezza' and 'Il grillo di Strasburgo notturno col suo trapano...', a poem that in the original edition of *Satura*, but not in the definitive version of this collection to be found in *L'opera in versi*, was the twelfth component in the section 'Xenia I'.⁵⁹ Montale observes in his review of *Lessico familiare*:

Ma oltre ai fratelli, alla sorella, ai parenti e agli amici del tempo delle «cospirazioni» c'è tutta una folla in questa cronaca di una vita, una folla di gente che fu viva ed ora vive solo nei suoi tic, nei suoi difetti, e non prevedeva che sarebbe balzata un giorno dalla memoria di Natalia come da una scatola a sorpresa. Così deve succedere in punto di morte; certo allora ricorderemo il volto di qualche persona che non ci interessava per nulla e dimenticheremo di dire quelle parole che ci assicurerebbero un miglior ricordo dai nostri discendenti. (*SMP* 2594)

In 'Il grillo di Strasburgo notturno col suo trapano...', meanwhile, in all likelihood written in the early months of 1968, Montale wonders what might have come into his wife's mind as she lay dying.⁶⁰ Perhaps a Strasbourg cricket, the Hôtel Maison Rouge, a barman who attempted to teach Drusilla Basque, a hobbling and rather tipsy Ruggero [Orlando], a certain Striggio, 'beccatore | di notizie e antipasti, tradito da una turca'. In

the final sentence of ‘Il grillo di Strasburgo notturno col suo trapano...’ the author transcribes his wife’s last words: ‘prendi il sonnifero’. On the face of it, these are not the most dazzling words; nothing like the ‘Mehr Licht! Mehr Licht!’ that, some say, Goethe let out at the fatal moment. This is not, one might think, the sort of utterance that would guarantee ‘un miglior ricordo dai nostri discendenti’, to quote part of the above extract from ‘«Lessico familiare» crudele con dolcezza’. (Probably only with the knowledge of a later comment by the poet can the reader appreciate that these words were, in reality, ones of immense love. In an interview with Achille Millo, Montale said of them: ‘Una cosa molto gentile, molto cara. Si vede che lei sapeva di andarsene, e pensava che questo fatto doloroso mi avrebbe sconvolto’ (*SMAMS* 1679-80).)

Scarpa does not fail to pose himself the question of whether Ginzburg might have exerted an influence on Montale, reflecting:

A pensarci bene, cos’è la dolcezza crudele di Natalia se non la «dolcezza e orrore in una sola musica» che è la cifra della presenza di Mosca (*Xenia*, II, 4)? E che cos’è la flebile pulsazione del vero se non il medesimo suono prodotto dal «quartetto/ di cannucce» diretto dalla Musa scheletrica che assiste Montale in quegli anni? E poi, il colloquio con i morti: «Avevamo studiato per l’aldilà/ un fischio, un segno di riconoscimento./ Mi provo a modularlo nella speranza/ che tutti siamo già morti senza saperlo» (*Xenia*, I, 4). Che cos’è quel «segno» se non un linguaggio privato, un codice segreto della vita affettiva? E reciprocamente, quando della sua lingua di famiglia la Ginzburg dice che «Una di quelle frasi o parole, ci farebbe riconoscere l’uno con l’altro, noi fratelli, nel buio d’una grotta, fra milioni di persone», cos’è quella grotta se non una Valle di Giosafat appena dissimulata?⁶¹

In these lines Scarpa seems to imply a causal connection between Montale’s meditations on *Lessico familiare*, a work that the latter describes as ‘crudele con dolcezza’, and the conclusion to ‘Xenia II’, 4, where the poet, addressing his wife, declares: ‘Così eri: anche sul ciglio del crepaccio | dolcezza e orrore in una sola musica’. In addition, he suggests a

link between the content of 'Xenia I', 4 and one of the best-known passages in *Lessico familiare*, that in which Ginzburg discusses the remarkable power of certain words and phrases, heard and repeated on infinite occasions during her childhood.⁶² Perhaps most interestingly, Scarpa also appears to imply that something of the faint 'pulsazione del vero', something of the peculiar 'realism' of *Lessico familiare* could have rubbed off on Montale: 'E che cos'è la flebile pulsazione del vero se non il medesimo suono prodotto dal «quartetto/ di cannuce» diretto dalla Musa scheletrica che assiste Montale in quegli anni?'.⁶³ Let us now look at the nature of Ginzburg's realism.

The author of *Lessico familiare* does not devote a very large amount of room to the historical events that occurred during the period in which her 'real-life' story takes place. Rather, she concentrates on the minutiae of the existence of members of her family and others. Montale justly notes in '«Lessico familiare» crudele con dolcezza' that:

il tempo resta il grande assente della presente cronaca. La narrazione che copre almeno quarant'anni – il prefascismo, il fascismo e il post-fascismo visti da un punto d'osservazione strettamente individuale, quasi che tutto fosse favola più che ricordo cocente – livella tutto al minimo denominatore di un gesto rimasto nella memoria, al colore di uno sguardo o di un vestito e spoglia tutto (uomini e cose) della loro gravità per renderle [*sic*] quasi irreali. (*SMP* 2593)

Ginzburg remembers in her novel the everyday expressions and habits of numerous family members, friends and acquaintances. She relates, for example, that her father would prepare yoghurt in the morning, that her mother loved going to the cinema in the afternoon with young friends, that Mario would recite the phrase 'il baco del calo del malo' (and variants on it), that Gino used to fall into a blissful slumber after dinner, even in polite company, and that [Felice] Balbo would forget to go to lunch. The author presents her reader with a wealth of intimate portraits, coloured with masterful touches of

humour. Thus, in the following extract she recollects just a few of her mother's idiosyncrasies:

Mia madre odiava il freddo; ed era per questo che comprava, da Neuberg, tutte quelle maglie. Odiava il freddo pur facendo, ogni mattina, quella doccia gelata, che le piaceva. Ma il freddo, il freddo costante e penetrante dei giorni invernali, lo odiava. – Che freddo! – diceva continuamente, infilandosi un golf sopra l'altro e tirandosi le maniche sulle mani. – Che freddo che fa! io non posso soffrire il freddo! – E mi tirava giù sui fianchi la maglia di Neuberg, mentre io mi divincolavo. – Tutta di lana Lidia! – diceva, rifacendo il verso a una sua antica compagna di scuola. E diceva: – Pensare che a vederti con questa bella maglia calda, io mi sento tutta racconsolata. (*Opere* 941)

Evidently, there exist strong similarities between Ginzburg's characterisation of her loved ones in *Lessico familiare* and Montale's representation of his deceased wife in the 'Xenia'. It could be said that in these poems Montale, like Ginzburg in her family chronicle, strips a whole life down to little more than the 'minimo denominatore di un gesto rimasto nella memoria', that he essentially despoils everything of its *gravitas*, that he erects a poetic universe in which 'il tempo resta il grande assente'. Inspired in part by Ginzburg's then recent volume, Montale in his 'canzoniere' for Mosca lends a greater emphasis than ever before to the ostensibly trifling minutiae of his muse's existence. Sometimes he recalls minor one-off events; very often, however, he describes Mosca's little habits. In 'Xenia I', 3, for example, Montale remembers an apparently banal detail of his wife's existence, her friendships with telephone operators:

Al Saint James di Parigi dovrò chiedere
una camera 'singola'. (Non amano
i clienti spaati). E così pure
nella falsa Bisanzio del tuo albergo
veneziano; per poi cercare subito
lo sgabuzzino delle telefoniste,
le tue amiche di sempre; e ripartire,
esaurita la carica meccanica,

il desiderio di riaverti, fosse
pure in un solo gesto o un'abitudine.

The author of the 'Xenia' is painfully aware that all of Mosca's nugatory 'abitudin[i]', all those little idiosyncrasies that formed the true sum and substance of his wife are no more; even the most minute 'gesto' by her is now impossible for death, terrible irreversible death has eradicated everything. And here lies an essential point of divergence between *Lessico familiare* and the 'Xenia'. The reader of Ginzburg's novel does at times pick up a note of sadness, a feeling of nostalgia for times past. However, overall the author tends to concentrate on offering a warmly humorous portrait of her family and friends, deliberately eschewing the temptation to dwell on darker themes such as sufferance and death, which would inevitably have lent a more tragic tone to her work. In short, in *Lessico familiare* the comic vein prevails. In the 'Xenia', on the other hand, as underscored previously, whilst the author frequently gives his reader cause to smile in his description of funny little details, at the end of the day one always eventually perceives a profound melancholy at the root of the poetry for Mosca. It is hard to forget that the heroine at the centre of the 'Xenia' is gone forever and that her husband misses her terribly.

Moving on from intertextual questions of characterisation and mindful of Grignani's assertion that it would be interesting to investigate the extent to which the language of the 'Xenia' might have 'subito il fascino' of *Lessico familiare*, it should be observed that in his review Montale claims that 'il linguaggio di *Lessico familiare* sta addirittura al disotto del livello medio del nostro *standard* di conversazione. È un sapiente parlato che resta terra terra' (SMP 2593). Now, even allowing that Montale's normal conversation was of a high quality, many readers would not be inclined to agree with the reviewer

when he declares that the diction of Ginzburg's book is beneath the 'livello medio del nostro *standard* di conversazione'. The text of *Lessico familiare* is, on the other hand, some distance from conventional Italian archetypes of 'literary prose'. In particular, it is remarkable for the proportion of 'simple', everyday words and expressions. The following short passage may be taken to be representative of the prose of *Lessico familiare*:

A mio padre piaceva molto fare quei viaggi, ogni tanto, quando c'erano congressi; e gli piaceva ritrovarsi con i biologi, discutere grattandosi la testa e la schiena, tirarsi dietro mia madre, in gran furia e senza mai permetterle di fermarsi, nelle gallerie e nei musei. Gli piaceva anche soggiornare negli alberghi. Soltanto, lui si svegliava sempre molto presto, al mattino, ed era, svegliandosi, sempre affamato. Finché non aveva fatto colazione, era di umore feroce; girava agitato per la stanza, guardando fuori, spiando le prime luci dell'alba. (*Opere* 1011)

Naturally, it goes without saying that the writing in *Lessico familiare* is anything but lacking in art. No sensitive reader will fail to realise that what might appear at a cursory glance to be the work of a naïve author is, in fact, a quite carefully crafted text. Montale himself seems to have been sensitive to the skill with which Ginzburg constructs her lucid prose, writing of a 'sapiente parlato' (*SMP* 2593) and, at the end of '«Lessico familiare» crudele con dolcezza', of a 'disadorna ma sapiente negligenza' (*SMP* 2595).

The language and syntax of the 'Xenia', it has been stressed here time and again, are discernibly less elaborate than that of the bulk of Montale's previous verse. Indeed, like Ginzburg's work, they almost have an aura of the 'anti-literary' about them. Did 'la delicatezza e quasi l'insignificanza del tocco', the 'sapiente parlato che resta terra terra' and the 'disadorna ma sapiente negligenza' of Ginzburg's prose in *Lessico familiare* affect Montale's manner of writing? Did the Genoese poet, when he came to discourse on

his deceased spouse, imitate, be it consciously or otherwise, the style of a volume penned by a close relative of the latter, a volume where many of Mosca's loved ones appear, a volume where – as will be seen presently – Drusilla herself is mentioned on more than one occasion? The answer must be affirmative, especially if one takes into account the temporal proximity between Montale's reading of *Lessico familiare* and the composition of the earliest (and prototypical) 'Xenia'. Ginzburg's volume, a work that rarely fails to leave a long-lasting, if not indelible, impression in the memory of the 'average' reader (and how much stronger an impression must it have left in Montale's memory, given that he was emotionally linked to many of the people mentioned in it!), would still have been fresh in the poet's mind in April 1964, the month of the first 'Xenia'.

In *Lessico familiare* Natalia Ginzburg's mother or, to put it another way, Drusilla's sister is the character most prone to reminiscing about relatives and others. Ginzburg recalls that Filippo Turati and Anna Kuliscioff were perennially present in her mother's memory. Yet, in Natalia's mind these two individuals would mingle with other people also omnipresent in Lidia Tanzi's recollections: 'Tuttavia [Turati e la Kuliscioff] si mescolavano, nella mia immaginazione, con altre figure anche esse sempre presenti nei ricordi di mia madre: i suoi genitori, il Silvio, il Demente, il Barbison. Persone o morte, o comunque antichissime anche se vive ancora' (*Opere* 940). In the remaining part of this section it will be demonstrated that of the above list of dead or aged relatives – Lidia's parents, Silvio, 'il Demente' and 'il Barbison' – all but the last make one or more appearance in the 'Xenia'.

Lidia's brother, Silvio Tanzi, is mentioned on several occasions in *Lessico familiare*.⁶⁴ Near the beginning of her book Ginzburg writes of Silvio's violent death: 'si

uccise a trent'anni, sparandosi alla tempia, una notte, nei giardini pubblici di Milano' (*Opere* 918). A few pages later, in the space of three paragraphs, she furnishes her reader with considerably more information regarding this uncle (*Opere* 937-38). In the Levi household, writes the author, Silvio's death was shrouded in mystery. Ginzburg affirms that even today she does not fully know why the young man committed suicide. Silvio Tanzi had been both a musician and a man of letters: he had, for example, set to music several poems by Paul Verlaine. Ginzburg's brief section on this enigmatic character concludes thus:

Il Silvio, in quei racconti di mia madre, era sempre un personaggio allegro: e la sua fine, quando io ne seppi i particolari, mi apparve indecifrabile. C'era di lui, sul comodino di mia madre, un ritrattino scolorito, con la paglietta e con i baffettini all'insù: accanto a un'altra fotografia di mia madre insieme ad Anna Kuliscioff, in veletta e cappelloni a piume, nella pioggia.

C'era poi del Silvio, in casa, un'opera rimasta incompiuta, il *Peer Gynt*. Erano alcuni grandi fascicoli, in cartelle annodate con fettucce, su in alto, in cima all'armadio. – Com'era spiritoso il Silvio! – diceva sempre mia madre. – Com'era simpatico! E il *Peer Gynt* era un'opera di valore! (*Opere* 938)

In the rest of *Lessico familiare*, it is important to emphasise, the reader is furnished with extremely little further information about Silvio.

Below appears 'Xenia I', 13, the penultimate poem of the first series of 'Xenia':

Tuo fratello morì giovane; tu eri
la bimba scarruffata che mi guarda
'in posa' nell'ovale di un ritratto.
Scrisse musiche inedite, inaudite,
oggi sepolte in un baule o andate
al macero. Forse le riinvento
qualcuno inconsapevole, se ciò ch'è scritto è scritto.
L'amavo senza averlo conosciuto.
Fuori di te nessuno lo ricordava.
Non ho fatto ricerche: ora è inutile.
Dopo di te sono rimasto il solo

per cui egli è esistito. Ma è possibile,
lo sai, amare un'ombra, ombre noi stessi.

'Xenia I', 13 is dated 10 December 1965. It is surely improbable that Montale, a man gifted with a fine memory, could have forgotten within a period of less than three years that Silvio had been named several times in *Lessico familiare*. One might, therefore, legitimately presume that when Montale wrote 'Fuori di te nessuno lo ricordava' and 'Dopo di te sono rimasto il solo | per cui egli è esistito', he intended to express cunningly his discontent about the paucity of facts in *Lessico familiare* regarding Silvio Tanzi, a person most dear to him ('L'amavo senza averlo conosciuto').

Still, there is more to be said concerning the relationship between *Lessico familiare* and 'Xenia I', 13. In fact, in all likelihood Montale had the above-quoted lines from Ginzburg's volume at the back of his mind when he composed this short poem about a man he had never met. The first sentence of the passage by Ginzburg quoted earlier mentions Silvio's demise: 'la sua fine, quando io ne seppi i particolari, mi apparve indecifrabile'. The first phrase of Montale's poem also regards the death of Silvio: 'Tuo fratello morì giovane'. In her second sentence Ginzburg describes a 'ritrattino scolorito' of Silvio, kept on the bedside table of her mother alongside a photograph of this last together with Anna Kuliscioff. Similarly, the second part of the first sentence of 'Xenia I', 13 mentions a 'ritratto', a portrait of Silvio's sister Drusilla, 'la bimba scarruffata che mi guarda | 'in posa' nell'ovale di un ritratto'. In the above passage Ginzburg proceeds to state that in the family house there sat on top of a wardrobe an unfinished work by Silvio, possibly an opera, entitled *Peer Gynt*. In the second sentence of 'Xenia I', 13 Montale, taking his lead from Ginzburg, tells of the destiny of Silvio's music: unpublished, not listened to, it lies buried in a trunk or has gone off to the pulping press.⁶⁵

Before progressing to the next intertextual hypothesis regarding *Lessico familiare*, it is worth observing that ‘Xenia I’, 13 is not the sole text in the ‘Xenia’ in which Silvio makes an appearance. Drusilla Tanzi’s sibling also pops up in the very last ‘Xenion’, ‘Xenia II’, 14, where Montale relates that a flood has ruined ‘tutte | le musiche di tuo fratello Silvio’. The inundation that he is referring to is on a literal plane the torrent that engulfed much of Florence in 1966. On an allegorical plane, however, it is the flood of the brave new post-boom world which dramatically swept aside a sizeable part of the pre-Second World War reality, interfering both with the high cultural tradition, symbolised in ‘Xenia II’, 14 by ‘le sterminate dediche di Du Bos’, ‘la barba di Ezra’, ‘il Valéry di Alain’ and ‘l’originale | dei Canti Orfici’, and with the strictly personal sphere, symbolised by amongst other things the music of Silvio. It is certainly no coincidence that the ‘Xenia’ should conclude with this poem for it signals a crisis in the possibility of a solipsistic immersion in the intimate private world.

Several lines after the first mention of Silvio in *Lessico familiare* there appears the following passage in which Ginzburg introduces her readers to her mother’s uncle, nicknamed ‘il Demente’, and then recalls a number of relatives on her father’s side of the family (as well as a servant named Bepo):

Mio padre, quando si sposò, lavorava a Firenze nella clinica d’uno zio di mia madre, che era soprannominato «il Demente» perché era medico dei matti. Il Demente era, in verità, un uomo di grande intelligenza, colto e ironico; e non so se abbia mai saputo di esser chiamato, in famiglia, così. Mia madre conobbe, in casa della mia nonna paterna, la varia corte delle Margherite e delle Regine, cugine e zie di mio padre; e anche la famosa Vandea, ancora viva in quegli anni. Quanto al nonno Parente, era morto da tempo; e così pure sua moglie, la nonna Dolcetta, e il loro servitore, che era Bepo fachin. (*Opere* 919)

This passage, incorporating one of the very few descriptions of ‘il Demente’ contained in *Lessico familiare*, probably inspired elements in the first text of the second series of ‘Xenia’.⁶⁶

The opening strophe of ‘Xenia II’, 1, a poem in which Montale ponders on what did and did not regard his wife, reads:

La morte non ti riguardava.
 Anche i tuoi cani erano morti, anche
 il medico dei pazzi detto lo zio demente,
 anche tua madre e la sua ‘specialità’
 di riso e rane, trionfo meneghino;
 e anche tuo padre che da una minieffigie
 mi sorveglia dal muro sera e mattina.
 Malgrado ciò la morte non ti riguardava.

Although it is not easy to know whether Montale ever met ‘il Demente’ (alias Eugenio Tanzi, author of the important *Trattato delle malattie mentali*, published in 1905), Drusilla, it may be assumed, would have spoken to her partner about this illustrious relative. In all likelihood, she would also have told Montale of her uncle’s nickname. If the only similarity between the above-quoted passage from *Lessico familiare* and the first strophe of ‘Xenia II’, 1 was this nickname, it would hardly be reasonable to claim that Montale was influenced by Ginzburg.⁶⁷ Yet, the two fragments of text manifestly have more in common than just this. Both employ quite a colloquial turn of phrase to describe the profession of ‘il Demente’: for Ginzburg he is a ‘medico dei matti’, for Montale a ‘medico dei pazzi’. In Ginzburg, the presentation of the ‘Demente’ is followed almost immediately by a list of deceased people that includes a grandfather and grandmother: ‘Quanto al nonno Parente, era morto da tempo; e così pure sua moglie, la nonna Dolcetta, e il loro servitore, che era Bepo fachin’. In ‘Xenia II’, 1, meantime, the

‘zio demente’ is part of a catalogue of defunct beings which, as well as Drusilla’s dogs, has a mother and father: ‘Anche i tuoi cani erano morti, anche il medico dei pazzi [...] anche tua madre [...] anche tuo padre’. Surely all these affinities cannot be coincidental. It would seem most likely that Montale was indeed influenced by the above lines from Natalia Ginzburg’s family chronicle.

And, incidentally, given that the Genoese poet was wholly or partially inspired to write the nickname ‘lo zio demente’ by his reading of *Lessico familiare*, then it is more than a little tempting to imagine that the same book, full of nicknames such as ‘il Barbison’, ‘la Barite’ and ‘le Beate’ (see below), might also have been one of the direct stimuli behind the numerical counterpart to ‘Xenia II’, 1 in the first series of ‘Xenia’. This poem, in fact, quoted in its entirety earlier on, commences with Drusilla Tanzi’s own nickname: ‘Caro piccolo insetto | che chiamavano mosca [...]’.

To round off our discussion of *Lessico familiare* and, indeed, this disquisition concerning possible literary sources for the ‘Xenia’, there ensues an intertextual reading of one of the more ‘obscure’ texts in *Satura*, ‘Xenia II’, 13. The poem in question is reproduced below:

Ho appeso nella mia stanza il dagherròtipo
di tuo padre bambino: ha più di un secolo.
In mancanza del mio, così confuso,
cerco di ricostruire, ma invano, il tuo pedigree.
Non siamo stati cavalli, i dati dei nostri ascendenti
non sono negli almanacchi. Coloro che hanno presunto
di saperne non erano essi stessi esistenti,
né noi per loro. E allora? Eppure resta
che qualcosa è accaduto, forse un niente
che è tutto.

The first two verses of 'Xenia II', 13 remind the reader of the previous 'Xenia II', 1 in which Montale also mentions an image of Drusilla's father: 'tuo padre che da una minieffigie | mi sorveglia dal muro sera e mattina'. In addition, they call to mind the identically numbered poem from 'Xenia I' in which the poet writes of a 'bimba scarruffata che mi guarda | 'in posa' nell'ovale di un ritratto'. In 'Xenia II', 13 Montale proceeds to claim that he is unable to reconstruct Drusilla's 'pedigree', before asserting that 'i dati dei nostri ascendenti | non sono negli almanacchi'. There are two principal ways of interpreting these last words: (i) data regarding the couple's astrological ascendants is not in any almanac (and it might be noted that the time-honoured *Barbanera*, an almanac that includes astrological data, is mentioned in 'Le stagioni', one of the poems in 'Satura II'); (ii) information regarding the couple's ancestors is not to be found in the *Almanach de Gotha* (this famous genealogical reference guide is also mentioned later on in 'Satura II').⁶⁸ In the following exegesis the second interpretation will be privileged.

Montale goes on to declare in 'Xenia II', 13 that those who imagined that they knew about his own and Drusilla Tanzi's ancestors did not themselves exist. Nor did Montale and Tanzi exist for them. But who, one might query, are these people that presumed to know about the couple's forbears? It is, of course, possible that the poet had nobody specific in mind. Yet, perhaps Montale was alluding to one person in particular. Perhaps he was alluding to none other than Natalia Ginzburg, author of *Lessico familiare*. In fact, this last volume, although devoid of any data concerning Montale's ancestors, does comprise a certain amount of information on Drusilla's most recent ancestors, her mother, Pina, and her father, a lawyer who used to say 'Ci sono *létère* per me?'.⁶⁹

Ginzburg, moreover, also furnishes her reader with quite a large quantity of facts about Mosca's aunts and uncles, mentioning, for example, Perego ('il Barbison'), Celestina ('la Barite') and Cecilia. Indeed, the very last sentences of *Lessico familiare* regard one of Drusilla's uncles:

– Tutte le domeniche, – disse [mia madre], – andavo dal Barbison. Le sorelle del Barbison le chiamavano le Beate, perché erano molto bigotte. Il Barbison, il suo vero nome era Perego. I suoi amici gli avevano fatto questa poesia:

*Bello è veder di sera e di mattina
Del Perego la cà e la cantina.*

– Ah non cominciamo adesso col Barbison! – disse mio padre. – Quante volte l'ho sentita contare questa storia! (*Opere* 1113)

According to 'Xenia II', 13, those who supposed that they knew about Drusilla's and Montale's ancestors 'non erano essi stessi esistenti, | né noi per loro'. The poet implies, then, that Natalia Ginzburg did not exist and that Mosca and himself did not exist for Ginzburg. Now, although Montale played some part in Natalia's younger life, as was highlighted earlier, there is not a single reference to him in *Lessico familiare*. Drusilla Tanzi, on the other hand, is mentioned a few times. Ginzburg reproduces an expression in dialect, originating from Drusilla's mother, that was repeated in the Levi household: 'Tuti i dì ghe ghe n'è una, tuti i dì ghe ghe n'è una, la Drusilla ancuei l'a rompù gli ociai' (*Opere* 917). Several lines later she recalls: 'la Drusilla [...] era miope e rompeva sempre gli occhiali' (*Opere* 918). Further on, Ginzburg records that her mother would mimic Drusilla's habitual expressions 'ce l'hai anche te la tua robina' (*Opere* 981) and 'Ma cosa ne farete voi di Alberto?' (*Opere* 984). Additionally, the author relates that Mosca had a son who did not study – when she was on holiday near the Levi family, Drusilla would

show his clothes to Natalia's mother, stating: 'Sai, Andrea ce l'ha anche lui la sua robina' – and recounts an amusing anecdote regarding her aunt's desire, when in the mountains, to receive her milk prior to the others (*Opere* 984).⁷⁰ Finally, at the end of *Lessico familiare*, Lidia affirms that Proust's Madame Verdurin, the authoritarian leader of 'le petit clan', must have been rather like her sister (*Opere* 1108). (And we might observe that both the fictional and the real characters were for a time married to art critics.)⁷¹

Natalia Ginzburg, in a conversation with Marino Sinibaldi and others broadcast on the radio in 1990, had, *inter alia*, the following to say concerning Montale, Drusilla Tanzi and *Lessico familiare*: 'lui [Montale] trovava che l'avevo resa [Tanzi] un po' una macchietta, mentre invece era molto importante per lui. Infatti io non è che ho fatto un ritratto vero della «Mosca»; era, così, come la vedevo io da bambina'.⁷² Montale must have felt that the Drusilla Tanzi that Ginzburg depicted in *Lessico familiare*, a maladroit materialist, represented a rather cruel caricature of a woman who, notwithstanding some grave problems in the past, was extremely dear to him. In her family chronicle Ginzburg neglects to mention the 'other' Drusilla, that individual who with extraordinary tenderness instructed her husband to take a sleeping pill so that he would not have to go through the agony of watching her last dying moments. It is as if the 'real' Drusilla, the complex, multifaceted companion of Montale, never existed for the author of *Lessico familiare*. In 'Xenia II', 13 the poet responds to the Turinese writer's representation of his wife, as well as to the fact that he himself is wholly absent from *Lessico familiare*, by negating the existence of Natalia Ginzburg: 'Coloro che hanno presunto | di saperne non erano essi stessi esistenti'. Arsenio astutely avenges himself.

¹ Grazia Livi, 'Un cristallo si è rotto', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 21 January 1971, 11.

² 'La belle dame sans merci', included in 'Satura II', may have been written considerably earlier than the other poems in the last section of *Satura*. See Maria Antonietta Grignani, '«Satura»: da miscellanea a libro', in *Prologhi ed epiloghi*, pp. 117-37 (p. 119).

³ See Oreste Macrí, 'Analisi del quarto libro', in *La vita della parola*, pp. 387-98 (p. 387).

⁴ Orlando, 'D'après *Botta e risposta I* (Montale, *Satura*)', pp. 735-81. On the novelty of 'Botta e risposta I', see also Carpi, 'Montale negli anni '60', pp. 131-32; Andrea Zanzotto, 'Sviluppo di una situazione montaliana (Escatologia – Scatologia)', in *Fantasie di avvicinamento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), pp. 21-28; Franco Croce, 'L'ultimo Montale: Le conclusioni provvisorie', in *La primavera hitleriana e altri saggi su Montale* (Genoa: Marietti, 1997), pp. 102-33 (pp. 122-32).

⁵ See Croce, 'L'ultimo Montale: Le conclusioni provvisorie', pp. 121-22.

⁶ See Croce, 'L'ultimo Montale: Le conclusioni provvisorie', p. 121.

⁷ Maria Corti, 'Un nuovo messaggio di Montale: *Satura*', p. 220. Franco Croce, 'L'ultimo Montale, II. *Gli Xenia*', *La rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 78, 3 (September-December 1974), 378-401 (p. 378). See also Mengaldo: 'Se si toglie la lirica più antica del libro, *Botta e risposta I*, che sia dal punto di vista tematico come da quello stilistico si lega strettamente alle due ultime della *Bufera* (*Piccolo testamento* e *Il sogno del prigioniero*), risulta che in sostanza l'ultimo Montale nasce con la serie degli *Xenia*' ('Primi appunti su "Satura"', p. 342).

⁸ See Bettini, 'Gli «Xenia» di Eugenio Montale'.

⁹ See Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, p. 217.

¹⁰ The phrase ‘beatrice dimezzata’ is taken from Laura Barile, ‘Un ocapi allo zoo di Londra’, in *Montale Londra e la luna*, pp. 59-87 (p. 86). For a discussion of the differences between Mosca and Montale’s earlier women, see Carpi, ‘Montale negli anni ’60’, pp. 138-41, as well as the first chapter, ‘Mosca and her Predecessors’, of Ó Ceallacháin, *Eugenio Montale*, pp. 19-52.

¹¹ Corti, ‘Un nuovo messaggio di Montale: *Satura*’, p. 221. The quotation from Sereni derives from ““Satura” di Eugenio Montale: da «Piccolo Pianeta letterario» (Redattore Adriano Sereni), in onda il 2 aprile 1971 sul Terzo Programma Radiofonico: testimonianze di: Maria Corti, Sergio Solmi, Vittorio Sereni, Stephen Spender ed una intervista ad Eugenio Montale’, *L’approdo letterario*, XVII, 53 (March 1971), 107-16 (p. 110). For Croce, meanwhile, the ‘Xenia’ are founded on a ‘realismo’, a ‘recupero delle piccole cose’, a ‘discorso articolatamente autobiografico’ (see ‘L’ultimo Montale, II. *Gli Xenia*’, p. 386).

¹² On the identity of the interviewer, see Marziano Guglielminetti, ‘L’io delle interviste’, in *Il secolo di Montale: Genova 1896-1996*, ed. by Fondazione Mario Novaro (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), pp. 647-65 (p. 655).

¹³ Mara Barbierato, ‘Tradizione e rinnovamento nella versificazione di «Satura»’, in *Quaderno montaliano*, ed. by P. V. Mengaldo (Padua: Liviana, 1989), pp. 67-99 (p. 90).

¹⁴ On the ‘music’ of the ‘Xenia’, see Stefano Agosti, ‘Forme trans-comunicative in *Xenia*’, in *Il testo poetico: Teoria e pratiche d’analisi* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1972), pp. 193-207.

¹⁵ Gianfranco Contini, *Letteratura dell'Italia unita: 1861-1968* (Florence: Sansoni, 1968), p. 814.

¹⁶ For a vibrant portrait of Drusilla Tanzi, see Fernanda Pivano, 'Eugenio Montale e la Mosca, 1966', in *Amici scrittori: Quarant'anni di incontri e scoperte con gli autori americani* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995), pp. 288-93. For a far less flattering representation of Tanzi, see Silvio Guarnieri, 'Con Montale a Firenze ed a Milano', in *L'ultimo testimone: Storia di una società letteraria* (Milan: Mondadori, 1989), pp. 9-67.

¹⁷ Corti, 'Un nuovo messaggio di Montale: *Satura*', p. 224.

¹⁸ Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, pp. 217-18.

¹⁹ Singh, 'Montale e la poesia inglese', p. 210.

²⁰ On Eliot and 'Xenia I', 14, see Singh, 'Montale e la poesia inglese', p. 208.

²¹ See Mario Martelli, 'L'autocitazione nel secondo Montale', in *La poesia di Eugenio Montale: Atti del Convegno Internazionale: Milano – 12 / 13 / 14 settembre: Genova – 15 settembre: 1982* (Milan: Librex, 1983), pp. 201-17 (pp. 202-03 and 214-15) and Laura Barile, 'Gli occhiali di Mosca', in *Adorate mie larve*, pp. 51-67. Montale might have refreshed his memory of Eliot's play through Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Teatro* (Milan: Bompiani, 1958), present in the Fondo Montale.

²² Barfoot, 'Eugenio Montale and Thomas Hardy'.

²³ Thomas Hardy, *Poesie*, ed. by G. Singh (Parma: Guanda, 1968).

²⁴ Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 208.

²⁵ Robert Lowell, *Imitations* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1961).

²⁶ Laura Barile, 'Troppo dolce sulla china', in *Adorate mie larve*, pp. 69-90 (pp. 85-86).

²⁷ Barile, 'Troppo dolce sulla china', pp. 88-89. Meanwhile, for a comparative reading of Montale's '*Poiché la vita fugge...*' (*Altri versi*) and Lowell's 'Epilogue' (*Day by Day*), see Alessandro Gentili, 'Per una lettura di: Eugenio Montale (1896-1981): "Poiché la vita fugge": Robert Lowell (1917-1977): "Epilogue"', *ATI: Association of Teachers of Italian: Journal*, 39 (Summer 1983), 53-65.

²⁸ Robert Lowell, *Life Studies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959).

²⁹ See Nicola Gardini, 'Robert Lowell, Giorno per giorno', *Poesia*, XV, 157 (January 2002), 3-6 (p. 4).

³⁰ William Carlos Williams, *Poesie*, trans. by C. Campo and V. Sereni (Turin: Einaudi, 1961).

³¹ Cristina Campo and Vittorio Sereni, 'Due letture', in Williams, *Poesie*, pp. 13-32 (p. 32).

³² On the salience of Williams' poetry for Sereni, see Maria Laura Baffoni Licata, 'L'aspetto williamsiano della poesia di Sereni: concezione di una lirica come organismo vivente', in *La poesia di Vittorio Sereni: Alienazione e impegno* (Ravenna: Longo, 1986), pp. 119-43.

³³ Barile, 'Troppo dolce sulla china', p. 87.

³⁴ All the poems by Williams mentioned here are present in *Poesie*.

³⁵ See the poem 'Premessa' in Nelo Risi, *Di certe cose che dette in versi suonano meglio che in prosa* (Milan: Mondadori, 1970).

³⁶ Campo and Sereni, 'Due letture', pp. 28-29.

³⁷ For an incisive reading of ‘Nel cortile’, see Ó Ceallacháin, *Eugenio Montale*, pp. 100-03.

³⁸ The early Sixties saw the publication of Aldo Vallone, *I crepuscolari* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1960) and Sanguineti, *Tra liberty e crepuscolarismo*, both volumes destined for considerable success.

³⁹ Luperini has insisted on the significance of the ‘crepuscolari’ for *Satura*: see *Storia di Montale*, pp. 200, 205 and 227. See also Fortini, ‘«Satura» nel 1971’, pp. 114-15.

⁴⁰ Corrado Govoni, *Poesie: 1903-1959*, ed. by G. Ravagnani (Milan: Mondadori, 1961).

⁴¹ Mario Luzi, *Nel magma* (Milan: All’insegna del pesce d’oro, 1963).

⁴² Nelo Risi, *Polso teso* (Milan: Mondadori, 1956); Luciano Erba, *Il male minore* (Milan: Mondadori, 1960); Giorgio Orelli, *L’ora del tempo* (Milan: Mondadori, 1962).

⁴³ Vittorina Papi, *Girasole* (Pescia: Artidoro Benedetti, 1963). Montale’s review of this volume, entitled simply ‘Vittorina Papi’, appears in *SMP* 2599-2601.

⁴⁴ Stefano Malatesta, ‘I miei giochi con Montale’, *La Repubblica*, 11 October 1986, 22-23 (p. 23).

⁴⁵ Luigi Surdich, “‘In musica+idee’: tra Montale e Caproni”, in *Le idee e la poesia: Montale e Caproni* (Genoa: Il melangolo, 1998), pp. 89-148 (pp. 97-98 and 147-48).

⁴⁶ See Giuseppe De Robertis, ‘Il seme del piangere’, in *Altro Novecento* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1962), pp. 484-88.

⁴⁷ Geno Pampaloni, ‘Nota’, in Giorgio Caproni, *Poesie: 1932-1986* (Milan: Garzanti, 1989), p. 816.

⁴⁸ Quoted from Giorgio Caproni, *L'opera in versi*, ed. by L. Zuliani (Milan: Mondadori, 1998).

⁴⁹ Giorgio Caproni, *Il «Terzo libro» e altre cose* (Turin: Einaudi, 1968).

⁵⁰ Sinisgalli, 'Non mi piace eppure esulto anch'io', p. 70.

⁵¹ Leonardo Sinisgalli, *I nuovi campi elisi: Poesie: (1942-1946)* (Milan: Mondadori, 1947).

⁵² Leonardo Sinisgalli, *L'età della luna* (Milan: Mondadori, 1962).

⁵³ Domenico Porzio, *Con Montale a Stoccolma: Diario di Svezia, con un prologo a Milano e sedici fotografie dell'autore* (Milan: Ferro, 1976), p. 14.

⁵⁴ Leonardo Sinisgalli, *Vidi le Muse: Poesie: (1931-1942)* (Milan: Mondadori, 1943). The intertextual link 'Vidi le Muse'-'Sul lago d'Orta' has been pointed out by, amongst others, Sanguineti: see the above-cited 'Muse appollaiate'. Meanwhile, for the opening to 'Sul lago d'Orta' one should also take into account Ungaretti's celebrated 'Stasera' (*L'Allegria*): 'Balastrata di brezza | per appoggiare stasera | la mia malinconia' [my italics] (quoted from Giuseppe Ungaretti, *Vita d'un uomo* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969)). See Stefano Agosti, 'Il testo della poesia in Montale: "Sul lago d'Orta"', in *Profilo di un autore: Eugenio Montale*, ed. by A. Cima and C. Segre (Milan: Rizzoli, 1977), pp. 168-89 (p. 182).

⁵⁵ Natalia Ginzburg, *Opere*, ed. by N. Ginzburg (Milan: Mondadori, vol. 1, 1986; vol. 2, 1987), vol. 1, p. 899. Henceforth, this volume will be referred to as *Opere*.

⁵⁶ These words, that appear in the appendix to Francesca Ambrosi's 'tesi di laurea', are quoted by Anna Nozzoli in her 'Lessico familiare e altre storie torinesi (In appendice la

novella *Settembre*)', in *Natalia Ginzburg: La casa, la città, la storia: Atti del convegno internazionale: San Salvatore Monferrato: 14-15 maggio 1993*, ed. by G. Ioli (San Salvatore Monferrato: Edizioni della Biennale «Piemonte e Letteratura», 1995), pp. 43-58 (p. 45).

⁵⁷ See the 'Cronologia' in *Opere* xlix-li (p. l). Natalia Ginzburg's eldest son, Carlo Ginzburg, informs me that his mother's sojourn at Drusilla Tanzi's flat in Florence in 1944 probably lasted several weeks. Carlo Ginzburg, who was then very young (he was born in 1939), is certain that Drusilla Tanzi was present during that period but has no recollection of Eugenio Montale being in the flat at the time.

⁵⁸ Maria Antonietta Grignani, 'Un concerto di voci', in *Natalia Ginzburg: La narratrice e i suoi testi* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1986), pp. 41-56 (p. 51).

⁵⁹ Domenico Scarpa, 'Cronistoria di «Lessico familiare»', appendix to Natalia Ginzburg, *Lessico familiare*, new ed. 1999 (Turin: Einaudi, 1963), pp. 215-61 (p. 257). For a discussion of 'Il grillo di Strasburgo notturno col suo trapano...', see D'Arco Silvio Avalle, 'Dalla letteratura al mito', in *Profilo di un autore*, pp. 124-33 and Rossi, 'I grilli di Breton e Montale'.

⁶⁰ On the date of composition of 'Il grillo di Strasburgo notturno col suo trapano...', see Maria Antonietta Grignani, 'Storia di «Xenia»', in *Prologhi ed epiloghi*, pp. 85-115 (p. 87).

⁶¹ Scarpa, 'Cronistoria di «Lessico familiare»', p. 257.

⁶² See *Opere* 920: 'Noi siamo cinque fratelli. Abitiamo in città diverse, alcuni di noi stanno all'estero: e non ci scriviamo spesso. Quando c'incontriamo, possiamo essere,

l'uno con l'altro, indifferenti o distratti. Ma basta, fra noi, una parola. Basta una parola, una frase: una di quelle frasi antiche, sentite e ripetute infinite volte, nel tempo della nostra infanzia. Ci basta dire: «Non siamo venuti a Bergamo per fare campagna» o «De cosa spussa l'acido solfidrico», per ritrovare a un tratto i nostri antichi rapporti, e la nostra infanzia e giovinezza, legata indissolubilmente a quelle frasi, a quelle parole. Una di quelle frasi o parole, ci farebbe riconoscere l'uno con l'altro, noi fratelli, nel buio d'una grotta, fra milioni di persone'.

⁶³ The quotation is from 'La mia Musa' (*Diari*). The final strophe of this poem reads: 'La mia Musa ha lasciato da tempo un ripostiglio | di sartoria teatrale; ed era d'alto bordo | chi di lei si vestiva. Un giorno fu riempita | di me e ne andò fiera. Ora ha ancora una manica | e con quella dirige un suo quartetto | di cannucce. È la sola musica che sopporto'.

⁶⁴ See *Opere* 917, 918, 920, 937, 938, 939, 954, 959, 1075, 1110 and 1111.

⁶⁵ Compare the phrase 'musiche inedite, inaudite' in 'Xenia I', 13 with the words of Montale in the previously mentioned dialogue from *Quaderni milanesi*: 'Quel che mi pare strano [...] è l'idea che ad ogni volger di stagione debbano apparire di necessità poeti nuovi, diversi, *inediti, inauditi*' [my italics] (*SMAMS* 1608).

⁶⁶ The 'Demente' is also mentioned in *Opere* 920 and 1111.

⁶⁷ Interestingly, a 'zio demente' also appears in the first part of Montale's 'I nascondigli II' (*Altri versi*): 'Neppure allora mi posi la domanda | anche se una rastrelliera di casa mia | esibiva un fucile così detto a bacchetta, | un'arma ormai disusata che apparteneva | in altri tempi a uno zio demente'. Meanwhile, a 'zio demente' is to be found in the work of another Turinese writer, Guido Gozzano: see 'Totò Merùmeni' and 'Un'altra risorta',

both in *I colloqui*. (All quotations from Gozzano in this study are taken from Guido Gozzano, *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by A. Rocca (Milan: Mondadori, 1980).)

⁶⁸ Part I of 'Botta e risposta III' (*Satura*) commences: '«Ho riveduto il tetro dormitorio | dove ti rifugiasti quando l'Almanacco | di Gotha straripò dalle soffitte | del King George [...]»'. (See also, in *Diario postumo*, 'Al giovane critico genovese', which begins: 'Può certo figurare nel Gotha | dei critici più illustri il visitor | che oggi è da me visiting'.) In Montale's verse the lexeme 'ascendenti' appears on three other occasions: in 'Un mese tra i bambini' (*Satura*), 'I nuovi iconografi' (*Diari*) and 'A ritroso' (*Quaderno*). It would seem that in all three of the above poems the lexeme is employed to signify primarily 'ancestors'. And, on the subject of 'ascendenti', it might be noted that there exist striking affinities between 'Xenia II', 13 and the following lines from Montale's 1963 review of Roberto Ridolfi's *Il libro dei sogni*: 'È il fiorentino Roberto Ridolfi, discendente *ex filia* di Lorenzo de' Medici, uomo che sa tutto dei suoi ascendenti e che è una sorta di archivio fatto persona. | Il fatto singolare di questo purosangue umano è ch'egli non sia diventato, dacché ha intrapreso i più severi studi storici, qualcosa come il cavallino dottor Bucefalo di cui ci ha parlato Kafka' (*SMP* 2591).

⁶⁹ See, in particular, *Opere* 916-17.

⁷⁰ With regard to Drusilla's expression 'ce l'hai anche te la tua robina', see also the following passage: 'Noi il giorno prima, con Gino, avevamo guardato dentro ai cassetti di Mario, se non c'era qualcosa da bruciare; ma non avevamo trovato nulla, se non tutte le sue camicie, «la sua robina», come diceva la mia zia Drusilla' (*Opere* 994).

⁷¹ Drusilla's first husband was Matteo Marangoni (1876-1958), author of the enormously successful *Saper vedere* (Milan-Rome: Treves-Treccani-Tumminelli, 1933).

⁷² Natalia Ginzburg, *È difficile parlare di sé: Conversazione a più voci condotta da Marino Sinibaldi*, ed. by C. Garboli and L. Ginzburg (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), p. 137.

Part II – ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’

From several points of view it may fairly be claimed that a good part of the sixty or so texts that make up ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ are quite unlike the ‘Xenia’ and, in general, all of Montale’s previous poetry. Indeed, if the stylistic gap between *Bufera* and the successive ‘canzoniere’ for Mosca is wide, then the gulf dividing the third collection from ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ might seem at first sight all but immeasurable. It will be argued in the ensuing part of this study that a number of texts in Italian dating back to the Sixties were of consequence for the formation of this new poetic voice, amongst which Vittorio Sereni’s *Gli strumenti umani*, Cesare Vivaldi’s anthology *Poesia satirica nell’Italia d’oggi*, Nelo Risi’s *Dentro la sostanza*, Karl Löwith’s *Critica dell’esistenza storica* and Andrea Zanzotto’s *La Beltà*. However, before turning to these intertexts, it would be wise to concentrate for a moment solely on the latter half of *Satura*, sketching out a map of the principal innovations that it ushers in with respect to Montale’s previous output in verse.

The Novelty of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II'

In the weeks and months subsequent to the completion of the 'Xenia' in November 1967 the poet's activity was hardly feverish. In February 1968 he penned 'Vedo un uccello fermo sulla grondaia...' and initiated work on what would be 'Botta e risposta II'. In March he wrote 'La madre di Bobi' (*Poesie disperse*); the previously mentioned 'Il grillo di Strasburgo notturno col suo trapano...' is from approximately the same period. Then, on 10 August 1968, Montale published in *Il Corriere della Sera* 'Refrain del Professore-Onorevole' (*Poesie disperse*). An extraordinarily large quantity of poems soon followed in the wake of this acerbic satire of contemporary unrest in Italian schools and universities. In fact, according to Grignani's calculations, twenty texts of the future *Satura* were composed in the final months of 1968 (several other poems from the same period were excluded from the fourth collection).¹ Montale had discovered a new voice and was eager to experiment. A flood of poetry engulfed 1969 and the early months of 1970, terminating definitively the creative parsimony that had characterised the author of *Ossi*, *Occasioni* and *Bufera*. All these poems, together with 'La belle dame sans merci', eventually came to constitute *Satura*'s final two sections.

In a letter to Angelo Jacomuzzi dated 27 June 1969 Montale, after having supplied information about the 'Xenia', affirmed: 'Ho altre poesie (circa 40), in parte satiriche, in parte liriche (?) che pubblicherò non so quando. I critici (se neavrò) dovranno compiere numerose rettifiche, non so se con mio vantaggio. Forse mi hanno troppo imbalsamato, come Lei vedeva'.² Clearly, then, Montale was acutely aware that his most recent poetry, the texts that would eventually flow into 'Satura I' / 'Satura II', differed considerably

from anything that he had previously composed, including the 'Xenia' (at the time of writing, already published both in periodicals and in book form). In fact, as Flavia Ravazzoli has stated, the 'Xenia' and the 'Satura' sections of *Satura* 'sono così divaricati tra loro da mettere potenzialmente in crisi la coesione della raccolta rispetto alle altre raccolte dello stesso Montale'.³ Readers had already been taken aback by the novelty of the 'Xenia' but Montale had an even greater shock in store for them with his verse of the late Sixties.⁴

In order to comprehend fully the nature of the last two sections of Montale's fourth collection, it is essential to appreciate the meaning the poet attributed to the word that figures in both their titles: 'satura'. In 'Autointervista', published in *Il Corriere della Sera* on 7 February 1971, i.e. when the publication of *Satura* was close at hand, a rather evasive Montale declared: 'Il titolo [*Satura*] ha tre o quattro significati. Escluso quello di appetitosi *avantgouîts*, desidero che li mantenga tutti' (SMP 1501). Fortunately, the comments to be found in that essential paratextual document that is the 1971 interview '«Satura» di Eugenio Montale' prove to be much more helpful here. In this interview Montale implies that although *Satura* contains satirical poems, the primary sense he assigns to the term 'satura' within the context of the fourth collection is not that of 'satire'. (In Latin one of the meanings of the noun 'satura' is, of course, 'satire': 'satura quidem tota nostra est', famously declared Quintilian.) 'Invece', says Montale, 'come presentazione di poesie di tipo diverso, di intonazione e di argomento diverso, allora come, oserei dire, miscellanea, la parola ['satura'] poteva andare' (SMAMS 1701). (The substantive 'satura' was also adopted by the ancient Romans to indicate a dish containing a variety of fruits and, thence, a medley.) By dint of their sheer variety 'Satura I' and

‘Satura II’, unlike the ‘Xenia’, which manifest a profound internal unity, may quite appropriately be denominated a ‘medley’, a pot-pourri or, even, a poetic ‘olla podrida’ (to employ a Spanish phrase close to Montale’s heart). In fact, with respect to the Genoese author’s prior verse production, these two sections are characterised by an unprecedented miscellany of lexis, of subject matter and of tone.

Very broadly speaking, the poems of ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ fall into two distinct literary categories: the lyrical and the satirical.⁵ As to the first category, the lyrical poems of the final two sections of the fourth collection, by virtue of their subdued tone and their colloquial style, may be deemed quite close relatives of the ‘Xenia’, that corpus of writing that, as Macrí has asserted, represents the ‘modello generatore di tutto il quarto libro’.⁶ And, indeed, there appear here several other poems dedicated to Mosca, pieces that might comfortably have sat in the earlier two sections of *Satura*, including ‘Nel fumo’, ‘Gli ultimi spari’ and ‘Pasqua senza week-end’.⁷ One also encounters a ‘suite’ of eight poems revolving around an exuberant young lady, ‘Dopo una fuga’, texts in which the comic occupies a more prominent position than ever before in Montale’s verse for a female muse: ‘e intanto tu eri fuggita | con un buon topo d’acqua di me più pronto | e ahimè tanto più giovane’, laments the aged writer in ‘Tardivo ricettore di neologismi...’. In general, in poems such as ‘Lettera’, ‘Le revenant’, ‘A pianterreno’, ‘A tarda notte’, ‘L’Eufrate’, ‘L’Arno a Rovezzano’, ‘Gli uomini che si voltano’, ‘Ex voto’, ‘Le stagioni’, ‘Il repertorio’, ‘Senza salvacondotto’, ‘Il primo gennaio’ and ‘Rebecca’ ‘il grande stile della *Bufera* appare ridotto, smorzato’, to borrow the words of Mazzoni.⁸ In these poems the music of the earlier collections plays on, but with the soft pedal firmly pressed down. The overall tendency is away from any *ore rotundo*, away from the potent metaphysical

tensions and grand allegories of yesterday and towards a still more 'prosaic' sort of writing (one of the pieces in 'Satura II' is eloquently entitled 'Due prose veneziane'). In short, little wonder that in the above-cited letter to Jacomuzzi Montale should have inserted a question mark after 'liriche'.

If the later part of *Satura* had offered nothing other than poems like 'A tarda notte' and 'L'Arno a Rovezzano', it would more than likely have struck the average reader as being not so much a poetic 'svolta' as simply a creative enlargement and development of the discourse initiated with the 'Xenia'. The fundamental novelty of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' – there can surely be no doubt – lies in a large and variegated quantity of texts best gathered under the generic heading of 'satirical'.⁹ The satire of these two sections does not spare personalities and institutions but is primarily directed against the ideas, beliefs and ideologies of a world that Montale finds more intolerable than ever after the delusions of the post-war years and the dramatic upheavals of the economic 'boom'. To cite just some of the targets of the author's wide-ranging and at times ferocious polemic, we find here a satire of hierarchies ('Gerarchie'), of ideas regarding history ('La storia'), of the current climate of optimism ('Il raschino'), of theology and the Pope ('La morte di Dio'), of the philosophy of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin ('A un gesuita moderno'), of providence and dialectical reasoning ('Dialogo'), of the entire *Weltanschauung* of the present-day Western world ('Fanfara'), of *Ossi*, the state, *Il Corriere della Sera*, theologians and public opinion ('Piove'), of apocalypticism ('Nell'attesa'), of the notion of 'reform' ('Auf Wiedersehen'), of metaphysical thinking ('Cielo e terra'), of advertising ('Un mese tra i bambini'), of the possibility of authentic communication ('Incespicare'), of the Church, communism and censorship ('Botta e risposta III'), of the

scientific world ('Fine del '68'), of nationalism and war heroes ('*Sono venuto al mondo...*'), of technological advances ('Laggiù') and of man's relationship with God ('L'Altro').

Montale's polemical discourse is characterised by its abundant use of modern-day language. In 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' we have in the words of Francesco De Rosa 'l'apertura, pressoché a trecentosessanta gradi, nei confronti della lingua contemporanea, dal parlato ai forestierismi e ai tecnicismi, a scopo di mimesi parodica e di contestazione dall'interno di quei gerghi e dei loro messaggi'.¹⁰ Take 'Fanfara', for instance, that poem that perhaps better than any other text illustrates the revolution of the final two sections of *Satura*. There, the reader come across 'storicismo dialettico | materialista', 'propalatori | di fanfaluche credibili | solo da pazzi', 'meraviglia sintetica | non idiolettica', 'il salto quantitativo | macché qualitativo', 'il trionfo | nel sistema trinitario | dell'ex primate', 'noosfera' (the standard Italian translation of the French 'noosphère', a technical term from Teilhard de Chardin's theology), 'i papisti | modernisti o frontisti | popolari' and 'la guerra [...] progressista' – an ironic reference to events in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, as Montale once informed Silvio Guarnieri (*SMAMS* 1523). Truly, with the final poems of *Satura* the poet pushes his plurilingualism beyond the level of any of his other collections.

A further distinctive feature of the latter half of *Satura*, one common above all to the more polemical poems, is the massive and deliberately heavy-handed use of rhetorical figures. Indeed, in the 'Montale satirico' '[c]'è di che soddisfare il più patito cultore dell'*ornatus* medievale'.¹¹ Thus, the reader repeatedly comes across instances of oxymoron, antithesis, polyptoton, anaphora and so on. Interestingly, Corti points out that

this rhetoric ‘risulta abbastanza originale entro il panorama della poesia satirica di oggi, sicché nella storia ancora da farsi dello *status* odierno di tale arte del dire per figura *Satura* sarà un passaggio obbligato’.¹² To take just one poem, consider ‘Auf Wiedersehen’:

hasta la vista, à bientôt, I’ll be seeing you, appuntamenti
 ridicoli perché si sa che chi s’è visto s’è visto.
 La verità è che nulla si era veduto
 e che un accadimento non è mai accaduto.
 Ma senza questo inganno sarebbe inesplicabile
 l’ardua speculazione che mira alle riforme
 essendo il *ri* pleonastico là dove
 manca la forma.

It certainly requires some mental force to accept that this text from ‘Satura II’, with its heavy rhetoric (e.g. ‘chi s’è visto s’è visto [...] nulla si era veduto’ and ‘un accadimento non è mai accaduto’), its polyglot lexis (‘Auf Wiedersehen’ and ‘hasta la vista, à bientôt, I’ll be seeing you’) and its comic-satirical tone (see, for example, the wordplay revolving around ‘riforme’), sprung from the same pen that decades previously had created poems such as ‘Elegia di Pico Farnese’ and ‘Gli orecchini’. Nor it is easy to recognise in these lines the hallmark of the author of the ‘Xenia’. The time has come to offer a critical account of some of the motives behind the genesis of ‘Auf Wiedersehen’ and the other poems from ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’, basing this account on a selection of Montale’s readings from the Sixties. The starting point for our discussion will be *Gli strumenti umani*, published a short while after Montale had set to work on the ‘Xenia’ and a few years before he commenced the composition of those texts that would eventually form the final two sections of his fourth collection. It will be argued that Sereni’s volume of poetry

influenced amongst other things the versification, the position towards the wider contemporary reality and the use of direct speech within the later texts of *Satura*.

From Vittorio Sereni's *Gli strumenti umani* to *Satura*

It is common knowledge that Montale was a firm admirer of the verse of Vittorio Sereni, that 'amico' to whom he dedicated the 1948 edition of his *Quaderno di traduzioni*. We might recall here that in an interview with Achille Millo Montale defined Sereni as a '[poeta] molto important[e]' (*SMAMS* 1681) and that in the course of his 1975 trip to Stockholm he expressed the desire that the latter should be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.¹³ Not surprisingly, more than one scholar has suggested a link between the verse of Sereni and the post-*Bufera* poetry. Gilberto Lonardi, for instance, has affirmed that whilst up until towards the Sixties the creative relationship between the two Northern Italian writers consisted of 'una partita a scambio unico', i.e. ideas drifted exclusively from the older poet to the younger, successively 'la partita si fa doppia, con prevalente attenzione, ora, di Montale verso Sereni, sia il Sereni del *Diario d'Algeria* [...] sia quello degli *Strumenti*'.¹⁴ Still, to date just one critic, Francesca Ricci in the final chapter of her recent monograph *Il prisma di Arsenio*, has offered the reading public much more than a few sentences on the issue of the salience of Sereni's poetry for the post-*Bufera* production. Indeed, at the time of writing there remains much to be said regarding the flux of ideas from the younger poet to the older. There exists, more than anything else, an exigency to address in detail the question of Montale's debt to Sereni's third collection,

Gli strumenti umani, first published in the autumn of 1965 and reviewed by the future author of *Satura* in *Il Corriere della Sera* of 24 October 1965 (SMP 2748-53).¹⁵

Montale commences his review of *Gli strumenti umani*, undoubtedly amongst the most stimulating of the numerous articles he published during the Sixties, by suggesting that whilst for many decades music took its lead from poetry, in the second half of the Nineteenth century the tables were turned. In the opinion of the reviewer, leaving aside those who expressed themselves in free verse (and 1855 saw the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*), the best writers of this age tended to introduce into conventional forms the lessons learnt from musical chromaticism, i.e. from composers such as Richard Wagner, author of *Tristan und Isolde*. Later, continues the reviewer, there surfaced poets who fell under the spell of more recent music, that music in which the dominant and thematicism are eradicated (the names of Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg might spring to mind here). Montale goes on to affirm that the most sophisticated experiments in contemporary poetry tend to emulate just this type of music. There exist writers who proceed in this direction ‘in modo pazzesco, gettando le basi di una presunta poesia *altra*, cioè di una cosciente antipoesia’ (SMP 2749). Presumably, Montale has in mind here the exponents of the *neo-avanguardia* and, more specifically, writers such as Edoardo Sanguineti. (And it is worth recording that 1965, the year in which Montale was writing, witnessed the appearance of a new edition of the seminal anthology of experimental poetry *I Novissimi*, like *Gli strumenti umani* published by Einaudi.) Needless to state, Vittorio Sereni’s music is hardly that of Sanguineti and company. This, in fact, is a poet who conjures up ‘forme complesse nelle quali i significati s’intrecciano o si sovrappongono come accade in quel

dormiveglia che è la vita dell'uomo del nostro tempo, ridotto alla condizione di oggetto degli altri e di se stesso' (*SMP* 2749).

Montale proceeds to affirm – be it deliberately or not, almost duplicating a part of the blurb printed on the dust jacket of the first edition of *Gli strumenti umani* – that Sereni's third collection of verse 'non è un canzoniere né un racconto verseggiato, ma una serie di soliloqui o di appelli o di constatazioni che hanno un tema unico: la prigionia dell'uomo d'oggi e gli spiragli che si aprono in questa prigione' (*SMP* 2750).¹⁶ Sereni, then, is a poet that engages with the ills of his time, someone who in the bondage of the present-day world writes of chinks of hope. Without, however, exploiting the literary *genre* of the 'canzoniere', i.e. without using on a large scale the expedient of a second person female interlocutor, as Montale had done in *Occasioni* and *Bufera*, as the same author was doing around the time of his review of *Gli strumenti umani* with the poems of 'Xenia I' and 'Xenia II'. And in this context it is worth remarking that 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' inaugurate a phase in the older poet's writing which would certainly fit most uncomfortably under the heading of 'canzoniere'.¹⁷

At this point in his review Montale takes a step back in time to ponder upon Sereni's first two collections, *Frontiera* (1941) and *Diario d'Algeria* (1947). With regard to *Frontiera*, it is noteworthy that Montale should observe *inter alia* that in this collection, solidly rooted in the landscape of Lombardy, '[n]on [...] mancano reminiscenze, peraltro assorbite dalla personale gentilezza della modulazione' (*SMP* 2750). The reviewer might well have been thinking of the influence of one writer in particular: himself. In fact, as more than one scholar has demonstrated, *Frontiera* is – like so much of the finest Italian poetry composed in the middle years of the Twentieth century – rich in so-called

montalismi.¹⁸ Focusing his gaze on a later stretch of Sereni's poetic itinerary, Montale comments that *Diario d'Algeria*, republished by Mondadori in 1965, consists of a '[p]oesia diaristica che non si cura di adagiarsi in schemi esatti e si rifiuta di alzare la voce' (*SMP* 2750-51). Years later, in the early Seventies, when the moment arrived to formulate a title for his fifth collection, who knows whether the title of Sereni's 1947 volume somehow 'agi' in Montale's mind – to borrow a verb from 'Buffalo' (*Occasioni*)?

Montale goes on to quote several verses from 'Il male d'Africa', a long poem, included both in the second edition of *Diario d'Algeria* and in *Gli strumenti umani*, in which Sereni solicits Giansiro [Ferrata], bound for Algeria, to bring him news of the African nation that was the site of his incarceration for a period during the Second World War. At the beginning of 'Il male d'Africa' Sereni writes of a solitary motorbike passing by. An echo of this vehicle returns, the poet states, 'col borbottio della pentola familiare'.¹⁹ A lexical comparison between this verse and the below extract from the first part of 'Botta e risposta III', dating back to late 1968 / early 1969, proves intriguing:

«[...]Già la *pentola* bolliva
e a stento bolle ancora mentre scrivo.
Mi resta il clavicembalo arrivato
nuovo di zecca. Ha un suono dolce e quasi
attutisce (per poco) il *borbottio*
di quel bollore. Meglio non rispondermi». [my italics]²⁰

Judging by this verbal parallel, it would appear that Sereni's poem about Africa struck quite a chord with Montale when he set about writing his own 'Botta e risposta III', like 'Il male d'Africa' a long and winding piece addressed to a second person 'tu' and dealing

in good part with a period of time spent overseas (in Greece rather than in Algeria, just for the record).

Montale was impressed by Sereni's versification; proof of this lies in the fact that he devoted quite a sizeable paragraph to the subject in his review of *Gli strumenti umani*. Concerning the metre of *Frontiera* and *Diario d'Algeria* he asserts that 'il verso tradizionale sopravvive, anche se la libera alternanza dei vari metri e il gusto di volute ipermetrie permette al poeta di adeguarsi a quell'immagine di una poesia nata dalla prosa che è il miraggio non sempre illusorio di tutti i poeti d'oggi' (*SMP* 2751). Needless to say, the dream of a prose-poetry is something that Montale himself aspired to from the very beginning of his artistic career, something that he would pursue more assiduously than ever in *Satura*, a collection that presents, as we have seen, 'una poesia che apparentemente tende alla prosa e nello stesso tempo la rifiuta'. And with regard to that 'gusto di volute ipermetrie' identified by the reviewer, it is well worth remembering that according to Mara Barbierato, the critic who has analysed in most depth the metre of Montale's fourth collection, with *Satura* hypermetric (and hypometric) verses rise in number 'vertiginosamente'.²¹

Still, in the context of this section, centred on the importance for the Genoese poet of the reading of *Gli strumenti umani*, it is the following sentence from Montale's review that must be deemed the most interesting on the subject of versification:

•

Nel [...] maggior libro [di Sereni], *Gli strumenti umani*, sarebbe ingannevole credere che il verso sia andato distrutto; comunque l'avvicinamento alle forme del poema in prosa è dato dal fatto che il lettore deve indugiare a metter d'accordo l'occhio con l'orecchio, ponendo o inventando cesure nelle linee più lunghe; dopo di che il polimetro si rivela per quel che è: uno strumento che riesce a felpare e interiorizzare al massimo il suono senza peraltro portare al decorso totalmente orizzontale della prosa. (*SMP* 2751)

Frontiera had contained only a relatively small quantity of verses longer than a hendecasyllable (according to Andrea Pelosi, less than thirty); neither had there appeared a copious number of such verses in the successive *Diario d'Algeria*.²² It is only with *Gli strumenti umani* that verses longer than that stalwart of the Italian metrical tradition, the hendecasyllable, become extremely common. Now, one might be deceived by a very cursory glance into believing that the more lengthy lines of Sereni's third collection are substantially extraneous to any conventional form. Yet, the attentive reader, someone who makes the effort to 'metter d'accordo l'occhio con l'orecchio', will frequently discover that, by inserting a caesura that is appropriate (that is, one legitimised by syntax or rhyme), what at first sight might appear to be a 'metreless' or 'free' verse turns out to be a line consisting of two canonical measures. Let us briefly illustrate this widespread phenomenon. In 'Il tempo provvisorio' one reads 'delle mura smozzicate delle case dissestate' (a double *ottonario*), in 'Gli squali' 'Di noi che cosa fugge sul filo della corrente' (a *settenario* and an *ottonario*), in 'Una visita in fabbrica' 'Lietamente nell'aria di settembre più sibilo che grido' (a hendecasyllable and a *settenario*), in 'Il piatto piange' 'altri persi per sempre murati in un lavoro' (a double *settenario* or *alessandrino*) and in 'La spiaggia' 'su questo tratto di spiaggia mai prima visitato' (an *ottonario* and a *settenario*).

Ossi, *Occasioni* and *Bufera* do not abound with verses longer than the hendecasyllable. Basing ourselves on the calculations of Barbierato, we might observe that respectively 9.36%, 11.55% and 8.12% of the lines in these three collections exceed this measure.²³ In *Satura*, on the other hand, one encounters a relatively large quantity of verses of a length superior to that of the hendecasyllable: 28.19% for the work as a

whole, a figure much more than double that of any previous collection by the same author. Unfortunately, Barbierato provides very little precise metrical information on the individual sections of *Satura*, limiting herself to noting that hendecasyllables predominate in the older poems, making up 58.8% of 'Il tu', a striking 83.8% of 'Xenia I' and 39.4% of 'Xenia II'.²⁴ Still, a close examination of the texts of *Satura* demonstrates that, whilst 'Botta e risposta I' and 'Xenia I' are not without longer lines, it is only with the pieces contained in 'Xenia II', 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' – all penned, with the possible exception of 'La belle dame sans merci', after Montale's review of *Gli strumenti umani* – that the percentage of ultra-hendecasyllabic verses becomes particularly elevated. But there is more to be said here. For, as with *Gli strumenti umani*, in many cases these long verses may be subdivided, inserting an appropriate caesura, to yield two traditional verse units. In fact, in the words of Barbierato, there exists in Montale's fourth collection 'una presenza di unità metriche inferiori regolari, variamente combinate fra loro entro la quasi totalità dei versi lunghi'.²⁵ Let us take, for example, the *dodecasillabo*. In *Satura*, we find a major increase in the number of such verses, from 2.94%, 4.72% and 2.40% in the first three collections to 7.29%. The *dodecasillabo* of *Satura*, as Barbierato has pointed out, 'è costruito su due emistichi, un settenario e un quinario (con prevalenza dell'ordine 7+5) quasi sempre isolati dalla sintassi o da rime interne'.²⁶ Thus, in 'La morte di Dio' we encounter 'tu scivolasti vertiginosamente' (*quinario* and *settenario*), whilst in 'Lettera' we come across 'Si viveva tra eguali, troppo diversi' (*settenario* and *quinario*). Leaving the *dodecasillabo*, it ought to be pointed out that in *Satura* the percentage of double *settenari* or *alessandrini* soars from the approximately three or four per cent of the earlier collections to a frequency of 10.49% and that there also takes place a notable increase

with respect to the previous collections in verses consisting of a *settenario* and *ottonario* / *ottonario* and *settenario* – a metrical class entirely absent from *Bufera* – and in double *ottonari*. And at this point, armed with all the above statistics, the critic can deduce that those long bipartite verses in the chronologically later texts of *Satura* owe something to Montale's reading of *Gli strumenti umani*.

According to Montale, the most original pieces in *Gli strumenti umani* are '«pezzi», monologhi o squarci di meditazioni che ricalcano dall'interno il pensiero, i ribollimenti e le angosce di un uomo d'oggi, di un poeta che, come Sereni ha detto, trova sempre più insopportabile la qualifica di poeta' (*SMP* 2752). (A reference, this, to 'Il nome di poeta', an article included in *Gli immediati dintorni* that commences: 'Il nome di poeta appare sempre più una qualifica socialmente difficile da portare e da sostenere persino nel suo normale ambito letterario'.)²⁷ Sereni's poetry, that ought by rights to incline towards silence, is nonetheless obliged to speak forth: '[I]o fa con un procedimento accumulativo, inglobando e stratificando paesaggi e fatti reali, private inquietudini e minimi eventi quotidiani, senza dimenticare che nel paesaggio dell'uomo strumentalizzato l'officina e la macchina sostituiscono il già obbligatorio fondale della natura' (*SMP* 2752). For the reader of *Satura*, the latter part of the above passage proves particularly thought-provoking. The early Montale had been a grand landscape poet, evoking first the Cinque Terre, and then the region of Tuscany and beyond. Nature, in fact, stands at or near centre stage in Montale's writing all the way up until the very end of *Bufera*: the political prisoner of 'Il sogno del prigioniero', the last text in the third collection, mentions the 'zigzag degli storni sui battifredi' and the 'volo della tarma', conjures up 'iridi su orizzonti di ragnateli | e petali sui tralicci delle inferriate'. From *Satura* onwards, on the

other hand, (and this is unquestionably one of the most distinctive features of the later verse) the part played by the natural world decreases greatly in importance; mother Nature is largely sidelined, ostensibly no longer of any interest to a poet trapped in post-‘boom’ Italy.

Sereni’s language, comments Montale, is ‘dimesso, colloquiale pur consentendo parole tecniche, allitterazioni interne e rapide interiezioni intese come altrimenti inespugnabili salti d’umore. A volte un semplice Mah! ha valore di clausola musicale: è suono ed è insieme una somma di significati’ (*SMP* 2752-53). Indeed, with *Gli strumenti umani* Sereni embraces the language of everyday living to a greater extent than ever before, integrating into his verse many colloquial lexemes and expressions, e.g. ‘un giorno perdoneranno | se presto ci togliamo di mezzo’ (‘Quei bambini che giocano’), ‘Fiori che in agosto nemmeno te li sogni’ (‘Di passaggio’), ‘bella roba che sei’ (‘Ancora sulla strada di Creva’) and ‘un reparto in sfacelo che si sbraca, se ne fotte | della resa con dignità’ (‘La pietà ingiusta’).²⁸ And here there exists a further noteworthy similarity with *Satura*: in this last volume and, above all, in ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ Montale expresses himself in a language that is considerably more colloquial than anything to be found in the previous three collections. As for that ‘Mah!’, the reviewer is probably referring to a passage near the beginning of the aforementioned ‘Il male d’Africa’: ‘Nei tunnel, lungo i tristi | cavalcavia di Milano | un’anima attardata. Mah!’. For his ‘Mah!’ Sereni might conceivably owe a debt to Gozzano, the Piedmontese poet about whom he wrote his degree thesis. The interjection ‘mah’ immediately followed by an exclamation mark surfaces in two well-known poems from *I colloqui* – ‘L’amica di nonna Speranza’ (one appearance) and ‘In casa del sopravvissuto’ (two appearances) – as well as in two ‘poesie

sparse', 'L'ipotesi' (three appearances) and 'Il commesso farmacista' (one appearance). But we are not yet done with this 'Mah!'. The last line of Montale's 'Ah!' (*Altri versi*) consists of just one word accompanied by a question mark: 'Mah?'. Doubtless the decision to conclude 'Ah!' in this manner must have been due in part to the fact that the poem in question incorporates a long sequence of 'Ah!'. It is not to be excluded, moreover, that the author of 'Ah!' might have had in mind Gozzano, a poet with whom he was intimately familiar. (And, as well as poems with a series of 'Mah!', Gozzano also penned a number of pieces containing several 'Ah!'.) However, taking into account that Montale devotes an incisive passage to Sereni's 'Mah!' in his review of *Gli strumenti umani*, one might quite legitimately ask oneself whether the reading of this last work might somehow have contributed to the genesis of the monosyllabic final verse of 'Ah!'.²⁹

Montale affirms the following concerning *Gli strumenti umani*:

Siamo sempre in uno spazio e in una situazione locali, in un realismo che rompe la crosta dell'elegia, prova evidente dello scrupolo di lasciar tutto aperto, del timore di evadere dal tessuto della storia in atto. Un timore che i classici hanno ignorato o hanno vinto, non senza sentirsi tagliati fuori del tempo, pensionati di se stessi. (*SMP* 2753)

A dread of fleeing the fabric of current affairs... In the opinion of Alfredo Luzi, the author of *Gli strumenti umani* manifests '[l]a volontà di partecipazione e di comprensione del proprio tempo', carrying out 'un'analisi lucida e impietosa delle contraddizioni insite nel modello di sviluppo che l'Italia si è data a partire dai primi anni Cinquanta'.³⁰ Let us back up Luzi's intelligent observations with a few textual examples. In 'Una visita in fabbrica' Sereni decries the situation of workers 'relegati a un filo di benessere' in the 'asettici inferni' of a modern factory. Later, in 'Un sogno', he stages a polemic against

what he perceives to be an excessively politicised reality: ‘«Hai tu fatto – | ringhiava – la tua scelta ideologica?»’. In ‘Dall’Olanda’, ‘La pietà ingiusta’ and ‘Nel vero anno zero’, meanwhile, we find a discourse revolving around the importance of remembering the atrocities committed in the past by the Nazis. In the first of these three poems, for instance, certainly one of the most powerful pieces to feature in Sereni’s collection, Amsterdam ‘è sui suoi canali vertiginosa’ by virtue of the memory of Anne Frank that comes to obsess the author. The Sereni of *Gli strumenti umani* is someone who, in the words of Montale, ‘tenta di uscire dal suo isolamento’ (SMP 2752), someone who displays a greater willingness than ever before to enter with his verse into dialogue with the wider contemporary reality. The same is broadly true of the author of ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’. Whilst acknowledging the existence of poems such as ‘La primavera hitleriana’ (*Bufera*), it must be admitted that from *Ossi* to the ‘Xenia’ Montale tended to sideline the grand events of history; like the Sereni of *Frontiera*, in his verse he preferred to privilege the private sphere. But with the two sections of *Satura* cited above things alter somewhat. Indeed, ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ are characterised by the relatively ample attention that they accord to the wider contemporary reality: consider in this context ‘Fanfara’ with its mockery of various facets of modern-day ideology from Marxist historicism to the radical theology of Teilhard de Chardin or ‘Piove’ where it is raining on the ‘nulla che si fa | in queste ore di sciopero | generale’, on the ‘greppia nazionale’, on the ‘progresso | della contestazione’ and on ‘pubblica opinione’; or take perhaps ‘Botta e risposta III’ with its veiled attack against the two dominant forces in post-war Italian politics, Catholicism and Communism, or ‘Fine del ’68’ with its allusion to Apollo 8’s trailblazing journey to the Moon, not to mention ‘Un mese tra i bambini’ where ‘[c]on

nomi | da rotocalco' children, happier than ever, 'appaiono | nella réclame delle lavatrici'. The reading of *Gli strumenti umani* must have played a significant role in this thematic development, furnishing Montale, who like Sereni was anything but enamoured with the age in which he was living, with a valuable poetic stimulus to shun the 'classical' temptation of fleeing from the fabric of contemporary history and encouraging him to establish a vigorous critical dialogue with the wider world.

A final intertextual observation pertaining to the macroscopic plane, one not intimately linked to the content of Montale's review of *Gli strumenti umani*. Possibly the most immediately striking feature of Sereni's third collection is the abundant presence in it of 'other voices'. Numerous poems, in fact, incorporate passages of direct speech, e.g. 'Saba' where the Triestine poet vociferates against Italy 'Porca [...] porca', 'La poesia è una passione?' where someone following a race exclaims 'se vedremo spuntare | laggiù una certa maglia...', 'Ancora sulla strada di Creva' where there appears a long monologue by an old lady, 'Al distributore' where Dante Isella introduces himself at a petrol pump ('Non ci siamo mai visti, ma | ci conosciamo [...] sono Isella'), 'Pantomima terrestre' where there is a conversation between the 'io' and a mysterious voice and 'La spiaggia' which opens with someone babbling from the telephone: 'Sono andati via tutti [...] Non torneranno più'. (To the last of these poems we shall return shortly.) Of course, *Bufera* had not been without segments of direct speech: in 'Vento sulla Mezzaluna', for instance, a preacher had asked the subject '«Sai dov'è Dio?»', whilst in '*Nubi color magenta...*' the 'io' had exclaimed '«pedala, | angelo mio!»' and, echoing Gozzano's celebrated 'Invernale' (*I colloqui*), '«resta!»'.³¹ Still, in comparison to the earlier verse,

the 'Xenia' patently contain a greater amount of this type of discourse. 'Xenia I', 10 reads as follows:

«Pregava?». «Sì, pregava Sant'Antonio
perché fa ritrovare
gli ombrelli smarriti e altri oggetti
del guardaroba di Sant'Ermete».
«Per questo solo?». «Anche per i suoi morti
e per me».
«È sufficiente» disse il prete.

Moving on, 'Xenia II', 2 presents the words of Montale's wife regarding a lawyer from Klagenfurt, 'Xenia II', 6 a comment by the same lady on the wine known as 'Inferno', 'Xenia II', 7 a tragicomic dialogue about existence, 'Xenia II', 8 a dialogue concerning wine and heaven, and 'Xenia II', 11 the words of a conversation with the Philippine Celia: to Montale's vague statement about his defunct wife, 'Credo stia bene [...] forse meglio di prima', a confused Celia replies: 'Come, crede? | Non c'è più?'. Now, chronologically speaking, the first of the 'Xenia' to integrate direct speech is 'Xenia I', 10. This poem was composed on 8 December 1965 and therefore post-dates by approximately a month and a half Montale's review of *Gli strumenti umani*. This temporal propinquity would lend weight to any hypothesis that one of the literary experiences that spurred the author of *Satura* to include in his verse of the mid Sixties a relatively large amount of direct speech was the reading of Sereni's most recent poetry.

There can be no denying that on a generic level there exist fundamental differences between *Gli strumenti umani* and *Satura*. It is true that in Sereni's 1965 collection elements of the comic occasionally vie for room and, indeed, it would not be erroneous to perceive in this work a sort of clash between the high lyric vein that dominated Italian

verse in the Thirties and the disorientating reality of post-war Italy. But at the same time it would also be quite fair to claim that the overriding spirit of Sereni's volume belongs to the so-called 'grande stile', to that tradition of modern tragic lyricism in which one may also insert Montale's first three collections: to put it another way, *Gli strumenti umani* might almost be deemed a sort of continuation or even sequel to *Bufera*.³² The successive *Satura*, on the other hand, can hardly be ascribed to the genre of the 'grande stile'. Taken as a whole, it presents a wide variety of registers, ranging from the markedly comic and the satirical to the meditative and the lyrical. In particular, texts in 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' such as the sardonic 'Auf Wiedersehen' and the highly 'prosaic' 'A pianterreno' appear far removed from the basic mood of Sereni's third collection. In addition to all this, *Gli strumenti umani* and *Satura* diverge radically in their overall outlook on the world. The author of *Gli strumenti umani* manifests a definite sense of hope for the future; things are certainly not all doom and gloom for the Sereni of the Fifties and Sixties. Indeed, the last lines of the aforementioned 'La spiaggia', which concludes the collection in question, present the reader with an unmistakable note of optimism:

I morti non è quel che di giorno
in giorno va sprecato, ma quelle
toppe d'inesistenza, calce o cenere
pronte a farsi movimento e luce.
Non
dubitare, – m'investe della sua forza il mare –
parleranno.

Conversely, it may well be claimed that the Montale of *Satura* is more pessimistic than ever before, that this collection heralds the fading away of all of the poet's illusions concerning miracles, fabulous visiting angels like Clizia, the idea of personal salvation

and a brighter future for everyone, as he accepts with desperate melancholy that the world is, always has been and always will be, a horrendous place in which to dwell. Consider in this context the very last words of *Satura*, an eloquent allegory of man's terrible and absurd situation on planet Earth: 'Astuto il flamenco nasconde | il capo sotto l'ala e crede che il cacciatore | non lo veda' ('L'Altro'). Still, having underlined all these differences, it seems undeniable, as has been suggested above, that certain macroscopic traits of *Gli strumenti umani* exerted a notable degree of influence on Montale when he came to write *Satura* and, above all, those texts which would eventually form 'Satura I' and 'Satura II'. This collection's versification, its stance with respect to the wider contemporary reality and its utilisation of direct speech all owe something to Montale's highly involved reading of Sereni's third book of poetry.

But the salience of *Gli strumenti umani* vis-à-vis Montale was quite definitely not restricted to the macroscopic plane. Indeed, from the point of view of local influence it would not be extravagant to claim that of all the collections of verse published in Italy and abroad in the Sixties Sereni's was the most formative for the post-*Bufera* verse as a whole. Much has already been written by critics on this topic. Most notably, Francesca Ricci has very recently devoted several dense pages to this precise issue.³³ To summarise and comment appropriately on such a weighty corpus of scholarship would require a considerable amount of space and, it is felt, would not be especially useful. Rather than reiterating at length the ideas of others, the below paragraphs will concentrate on setting out some new hypotheses relating to the local influence of poems present in *Gli strumenti umani*, bestowing attention on texts from 'Satura II' but also discussing pieces in *Diari* and *Quaderno*.

Let us commence with ‘Satura II’. Guido Mazzoni has speculated that verse eight of ‘L’Arno a Rovezzano’, ‘prima di farsi vortice e rapina’, might owe something to the twelfth verse of ‘La spiaggia’: ‘pronte a farsi movimento e luce’.³⁴ Mazzoni fails, however, to delve into the implications of this perceptive observation relating to two poems both dealing with water (the Arno and the sea). Lines nine to eleven of ‘L’Arno a Rovezzano’, those immediately following the verse ‘prima di farsi vortice e rapina’, read: ‘Tanto tempo è passato, nulla è scorso | da quando ti cantavo al telefono ‘tu | che fai l’addormentata’ col triplice cachinno’. The song referred to here is Mephistopheles’ serenade for Marguerite in Act Four of Gounod’s *Faust*.³⁵ But what was it that induced Montale to mention at this point a telephone call? If it is indeed the case that he drew on ‘La spiaggia’ for his ‘prima di farsi vortice e rapina’, then the most logical response to this question would be that he recollected the memorable first strophe of the same ‘La spiaggia’: ‘Sono andati via tutti – | blaterava la voce dentro il ricevitore. | E poi, saputa: – Non torneranno più –’. This may not be the first time in which that symbol of modernity, the telephone comes up in Montale’s poetry – in ‘Xenia I’, 9 the bereaved husband had observed that ‘[i]l conto del telefono s’è ridotto a ben poco’ – but it is almost certainly the sole occasion in the post-*Bufera* verse upon which the presence of a telephone may be put down to Sereni’s writing.

In his review Montale states that the poetry of *Gli strumenti umani* ‘resta sempre attaccata al concreto e profondamente lombarda anche quando si spinge fino alle bocche del Magra’ (*SMP* 2753). The reviewer might have had in mind ‘Un sogno’ which begins: ‘Ero a passare il ponte | su un fiume che poteva essere il Magra | dove vado d’estate’. Yet, he might just as well have been thinking of ‘Gli amici’, a poem that regards ‘la bocca del

sempre forte sui remi
spuntare in soccorso il Giancarlo.

E ti sembra un miracolo.

Now compare these verses with part I of ‘Botta e risposta II’ (*Satura*), supposedly the transcription of a letter from another holiday resort, Ascona, unlike Bocca di Magra not located by the sea but on a large lake:

«Il solipsismo non è il tuo forte, come si dice.
Se fosse vero saresti qui, insabbiato
in questa Capri nordica dove il rombo
dei motoscafi impedisce il sonno
fino dalla primalba. Sono passati i tempi
di Monte Verità, dei suoi nudisti,
dei kulturali jerofanti alquanto
ambivalenti o peggio. Eppure, inorridisci,
non so che sia, ma qui qualcosa regge».³⁹

The affinities between ‘Gli amici’, one of several poems in *Gli strumenti umani* in which the theme of friendship comes up, and part I of ‘Botta e risposta II’ are certainly quite impressive. Leaving aside the presence in both poems of the second person ‘tu’ form, typical of both Montale and Sereni, as well as the matter of direct speech (characteristically of Sereni’s third collection, ‘Gli amici’ incorporates fragments of speech whilst Montale’s ‘botta’ is entirely enclosed between speech marks), it will be observed that in both poems a person remarks on the noise of motorboats: ‘Che tempi – mormori – sempre più confusi | che trambusto di scafi e di motori’ / ‘il rombo | dei motoscafi impedisce il sonno’. (Montale merges Sereni’s ‘scafi e [...] motori’ into ‘motoscafi’ – a hapax within *L’opera in versi*.) Furthermore, both texts, like indeed so many of the pieces included in *Gli strumenti umani* and *Satura*, found their discourse on a tension between past and present: in Sereni’s poem there is evident nostalgia for the

early Fifties when Giuliana and Giancarlo were at Bocca di Magra, in Montale's 'botta' the 'io' states that the 'tempi | di Monte Verità', with its naturists and its 'kulturali jerofanti', are no more (typically of the Montale of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' and unlike the Sereni of *Gli strumenti umani*, the past is treated here with a strong dose of humour). Finally, both pieces end on a rather unexpected note of optimism (or, in the case of Montale, something not too far from the same). Hence, in 'Gli amici' the materialisation of Giancarlo appears to the 'tu', that person who was on the point of yelling '[n]on lasciatemi qui solo', to be a 'miracolo', whilst the first part of 'Botta e risposta II' terminates: 'Eppure, inorridisci, | non so che sia, ma qui qualcosa regge', thus providing if not a miracle – something which, unlike in Montale's previous collections, is extremely rare in the later verse of *Satura* –, then at least a reassuring sense of stability in an apparently ever madder world. To assert that Montale somehow 'modelled' part I of 'Botta e risposta II' on 'Gli amici' would be to overstate the intensity of the intertextual relationship between the two poems. What one can claim with a high degree of certitude is that the Genoese poet's memory of 'Gli amici', a piece that with its sudden epiphany of hope at the end stands in its essence a long way away from the prevailing atmosphere of *Satura*, enacted no small role in the compositional process behind the first part of the poem from 'Satura II'.

As for the motive behind Montale's presumed utilisation of Sereni's text, most probably the memory of 'Gli amici' was spurred to the forefront of the poet's mind as a result of the fact that the nascent 'botta' centred geographically on Ascona: Montale, it would seem, mentally associated this Swiss town on the banks of Lake Maggiore with the seaside resort of Bocca di Magra. A comparison between part II of 'Botta e risposta II',

where the author narrates the story of a visit to the Ascona area, and 'Il ritorno' (a text that, we might note, bears the sub-heading '*Bocca di Magra*') supplies concrete textual evidence of the existence of such a mnemonic nexus. The former, in fact, incorporates more than one 'quotation' from the latter. In the long 'risposta' of 'Botta e risposta II' Montale mentions 'policromi | estivanti' (vaguely reminiscent, perhaps, of Sereni's 'assortita fauna sul mare'), before concluding: 'Sto attento a tutto. Se occorre, | spire di zampironi tentano di salvarmi | dalle zanzare che pinzano, tanto più sveglie di me'. Similarly, in the much earlier 'Il ritorno' the poet had written of 'un gelo policromo d'ogive', before ending: 'ecco il tuo morso | oscuro di tarantola: son pronto'.

For his *Diari* Montale undoubtedly owes more than a negligible debt to the poetry of Sereni. Lonardi has already brought to light the fact that the ending to '*Non sa più nulla, è alto sulle ali*', the best known of all the texts in *Diario d'Algeria*, is echoed in the final verses of 'La mia Musa'.⁴⁰ Elsewhere, Mengaldo has remarked on the affinities between 'Corso Lodi' (*Gli strumenti umani*) and 'Lettera a Malvolio'.⁴¹ To the scholarship published to date on the relationship between Sereni and the Montale of *Diari* we might append several other intertextual notes. Firstly, let us contemplate side by side 'Il tempo provvisorio' (*Gli strumenti umani*) and Montale's 'I primi di luglio':

Qui il tarlo nei legni,
una sete che oscena si rinnova
e dove fu amore la lebbra
delle mura smozzicate delle case

[dissestate:
un diretto orizzonte di città.
Perché non vengono i saldatori
perché ritardano gli aggiustatori?
Ma non è disservizio cittadino,
è morto tempo da spalare al più presto.
E tu, quanti anni per capirlo:

Siamo ai primi di luglio e già il pensiero
è entrato in moratoria.
Drammi non se ne vedono,
se mai disfunzioni.

Che il ritmo della mente si dislenti,
questo inspiegabilmente crea serie preoccupazioni.
Meglio si affronta il tempo quando è folto,
mezza giornata basta a sbaraccarlo.
Ma ora ai primi di luglio ogni secondo sgoccia
e l'idraulico è in ferie.

troppi per esserne certo.

The close affinities between these two poems are immediately evident. Sereni writes of the absence of repairmen in a disintegrating city and the pressing need to shovel ‘dead time’. Similarly, Montale observes that currently time is passing at a snail’s pace, ‘ogni secondo sgoccia’, and that the plumber is off on holiday. The ‘disfunzioni’ of ‘I primi di luglio’ represent a reverberation of Sereni’s ‘disservizio’ and the notion of time as something to ‘sbaraccare’ derives from the ‘tempo da spalare’ of ‘Il tempo provvisorio’. In general, the whole sluggish and ill-functioning reality conjured up by Montale’s short poem strongly calls to mind the atmosphere of the equally short text from *Gli strumenti umani*. Quite typically, however, Montale cannot resist adding several dryly humorous touches to his poem – e.g. ‘il pensiero | è entrato in moratoria’ – and these same touches serve to render the general spirit of ‘I primi di luglio’ rather different from that of ‘Il tempo provvisorio’, where a more sombre mood prevails.

Yet, on the subject of ‘Il tempo provvisorio’ we might easily go somewhat further. In fact, it is very likely that Sereni’s memorable text left traces of itself in several other poems in the post-*Bufera* verse. These traces might not be so immediately evident as those highlighted above with regard to ‘I primi di luglio’ but they are nonetheless relatively easy to detect once one deliberately sets out to track them down. By way of example, let us take ‘Nel silenzio’, one of those poems at the very end of *Satura* that already seem to point to the style of the later *Diari*. Here Montale – just like Sereni in ‘Il tempo provvisorio’, probably writing about Milan – describes a general strike where ‘[n]ella strada non passa nessuno’, spring is late in coming, people have realised that the postal service is useless and there is a ‘ritardo delle funzioni normali’. Aside from the

overall atmosphere of disintegration that clearly links ‘Il tempo provvisorio’ and ‘Nel silenzio’, one may discover at least two noteworthy lexical correspondences between the respective texts: in Sereni we have ‘mura’ and ‘disservizio’, in Montale a single ‘muro’ (‘Solo una radiolina dall’altra parte del muro’) and the noun ‘servizio’ (‘Si sono accorti ch’è inutile il servizio postale’). Moreover, both ‘Il tempo provvisorio’ and ‘Nel silenzio’ end with the unexpected appearance in the very last verses of a ‘tu’: in the case of Sereni the mysterious ‘tu’ that appears again and again in *Gli strumenti umani*, in the case of Montale that easily identifiable female ‘tu’ that dominates the scene throughout *Satura*, the defunct and yet incredibly alive Mosca: ‘Tu stai sotto una lapide. Risvegliarti non vale | perché sei sempre desta. Anche oggi ch’è sonno | universale’.

A further case of intertextual influence concerning ‘Il tempo provvisorio’ and the later Montalean verse surfaces through a detailed glance at a second poem in *Diari*, ‘Retrocedendo’, composed just a few weeks before the above-mentioned ‘I primi di luglio’. Analogously to Sereni’s text, ‘Retrocedendo’ concerns destruction or, limiting ourselves to the content of the opening lines of this poem, a woodworm that the author believes is busy boring away inside a cabinet that he has rescued from ‘sgombri e inondazioni’ (a reference, perhaps, to the flood in Florence alluded to previously in ‘Xenia II’, 14). Given the fact that ‘Il tempo provvisorio’ demonstrably inspired Montale elsewhere, it would surely be quite legitimate to wonder whether the woodworm that appears in the very first line of ‘Retrocedendo’ – ‘Il tarlo è nato, credo, dentro uno stipo’ – might be a descendant of that woodworm mentioned in the opening verse of Sereni’s poem: ‘Qui il tarlo nei legni’.

In his review of *Gli strumenti umani* Montale comments on one of those poems that best illustrate the interest of the later Sereni towards the wider contemporary reality, ‘Una visita in fabbrica’, noting that in this long poem divided into five parts ‘si coglie sapientemente intarsiata anche una citazione leopardiana’ (SMP 2752). An allusion, this, to the last sentence of part IV of ‘Una visita in fabbrica’, where the poet has a factory worker jump up and, to the amusement and annoyance of his colleagues, quote from ‘A Silvia’: ‘*E di me si spendea la miglior parte*’ [author’s italics].⁴² At the very beginning of part V of the same poem Sereni muses over the words of the writer from Recanati, affirming: ‘La parte migliore? Non esiste’. In all likelihood the sequence that links parts IV and V of ‘Una visita in fabbrica’ – quotation from a classic Italian author, question about a segment of this quotation, affirmation – functioned as a sort of template for the opening to Montale’s ‘La danzatrice stanca’ (*Diari*). In fact, the latter poem, a playful ode to the beauty of Carla Fracci, commences: ‘Torna a fiorir la rosa | che pur dianzi languia... || Dianzi? Vuol dir dapprima, poco fa’. A quotation (‘Torna a fiorir la rosa | che pur dianzi languia’ – the first two lines of Parini’s ‘La educazione (*Per la guarigione di Carlo Imbonati*)’), a query about one of the words in this quotation (‘Dianzi?’) and then a statement (‘Vuol dir dapprima, poco fa’). As regards the motivation behind Montale’s decision to quote the above passage by the author of *Il Giorno*, a glance at part II of ‘Una visita in fabbrica’ proves stimulating. There, we come across the verse ‘e persino fiorirvi, cuore estivo, può superba la rosa’.

To conclude our section on Sereni, let us compare ‘Nella neve’, a poem dated ‘Mendrisio, ’48’ pertaining to the opening section of *Gli strumenti umani*, and ‘Dopopioggia’ (*Quaderno*), a text that once again conjures up the memory of Leopardi,

not the Leopardi of 'A Silvia' this time but, rather, the Leopardi of 'La ginestra, o il fiore del deserto':

Edere? stelle imperfette? cuori obliqui?
Dove portavano, quali messaggi
accennavano, lievi?
Non tanto banali quei segni.
E fosse pure uno zampettio di galline –
se chiaro cantava l'invito
di una bava celeste nel giorno fioco.
Ma già pioveva sulla neve,
duro si rifaceva il caro enigma.
Per una traccia certa e confortevole
sbandavo, tradivo ancora una volta.

Sulla rena bagnata appaiono ideogrammi
a zampa di gallina. Guardo addietro
ma non vedo rifugi o asili di volatili.
Sarà passata un'anatra stanca, forse azzoppata.
Non saprei decrittare quel linguaggio
se anche fossi cinese. Basterà un soffio
di vento a scancellarlo. Non è vero
che la Natura sia muta. Parla a vanvera
e la sola speranza è che non si occupi
troppo di noi.

'Nella neve' describes a situation in which the natural world is in the act of disclosing a meaningful message; a scenario that calls to mind certain texts belonging to the first phase of Montale's verse production, e.g. 'Quasi una fantasia' (*Ossi*). Furthermore, Sereni's 'zampettio' may, as Luca Lenzini has implied, take its origin from 'Nella serra' (*Bufera*): 'S'empì d'uno zampettio | di talpe la limonaia' (and notice the close correspondence between the titles of the two poems).⁴³ Yet, if 'Nella neve', like so much of Sereni's verse, proves to be reminiscent of Montale's writing, then it seems incontrovertible that this same poem represented an intertext for the above-quoted lines from *Quaderno*. In 'Nella neve' 'uno zampettio di galline', i.e. footprints left in the snow by hens, might hold a significant message for the 'io'. Not dissimilarly, in 'Dopopioggia' there appear on the moist sand 'ideogrammi | a zampa di gallina' (note the choice of words!), a code made up of marks resulting in all likelihood from the passage of an 'anatra stanca, forse azzoppata'. The subject of 'Nella neve' does not attempt, it would seem, to discover the sense of the hen prints, preferring to take the easy way out and

pursue a ‘traccia certa e confortevole’. Montale, in his turn, admits to being wholly incapable of unravelling the mystery of the duck-induced signs he views on the sand: ‘Non saprei decrittare quel linguaggio | se anche fossi cinese’. Lastly, in both poems the fate of the bird marks is to be eradicated as a result of meteorological conditions, be it rain (‘Ma già pioveva sulla neve, | duro si rifaceva il caro enigma’) or wind (‘Basterà un soffio | di vento a scancellarlo [quel linguaggio]’). In brief, it is almost as if Montale assembled the skeleton of his ‘Dopopioggia’ out of the bones of ‘Nella neve’, constructing not a pale imitation of Sereni’s poem but a quite different work, a piece not in the ‘grande stile’ but, instead, in that distinctive tragicomic vein that predominates in the final collections.⁴⁴

‘Satura I’, ‘Satura II’ and Satirical Verse

Montale as a youth showed a certain interest in satirical poetry. In a diary entry from 1917, for example, he wrote: ‘Forse una gran poesia *satirica* potrebbe ancora, e più di tutto, reggersi?’ [author’s italics] (*SMAMS* 1285). Yet, in the verse prior to ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ the satirical is, if not completely absent, then certainly extremely thin on the ground in a poetry that essentially pertains to that high lyric manner so predominant in Italian literature from the Twenties to the Forties. We might recall in this context that in a 1946 ‘variazione’ Montale observed that the genre of satire has scarce hope of success in Italy, claiming that if young Italian poets were to peruse the satirical pieces included in a then recent anthology of English verse compiled by Margaret and Ronald Bottrall, these

same poets ‘dubiterebbero forte che esse [le composizioni satiriche] siano autentica poesia’ (*SMAMS* 195). More interestingly, over a decade later, in ‘Parliamo della poesia’ (1957), Montale responded to Margherita Guidacci, who had recently stated that it was necessary to leave behind any ‘pregiudizio lirico’ and take account of the fact that there exist other types of poetry such as the epic and the satirical, by asserting that ‘[i]l verso è oggi tollerabile solo come espressione di sentimenti lirici’ (*SMP* 2110). He affirmed, furthermore, that neither epic nor satire have ever perished; they may be found ‘nella prosa, nella narrativa e magari nell’alto *reportage*’ (*SMP* 2110). And, in fact, during the Fifties and Sixties Montale used his regular articles in *Il Corriere della Sera*, i.e. ‘[l]’alto *reportage*’, as the platform from which to launch a potent polemic against the contemporary world.⁴⁵ *Auto da fé*, a book which gathers together a large quantity of these articles, published just two years before the dramatic eruption in 1968 of the irony and invective of the latter part of *Satura*, might well be considered Montale’s first satirical volume.⁴⁶

Yet, by the mid Sixties the Genoese writer showed himself to be considerably more enthusiastic about the idea of a satirical verse. Thus, in ‘Si parla poco dei poeti’ (7 February 1965), in an overview of the most recent poetry, a poetry that shies away from those thematic elements deemed lyrical *par excellence*, Montale asserted that ‘[n]on manca la satira, che è l’elemento più persuasivo’, before wishing: ‘magari sorgesse un moderno Giovenale’ (*SMAMS* 337). However, at least on a public plane, the fundamental extra-poetic document for the satirical discourse of the fourth collection is the short article ‘Resta la vena della satira’, printed in the edition of *Il Corriere della Sera* of 29 June 1969. Discussing so-called ‘civil’ poetry, Montale wittily notes: ‘Ai giorni nostri

non sento risuonare la lira patriottica, ma piuttosto la lira economica' (*SMP* 2927). He does not manifest esteem for the numerous contemporary poets who inveigh against neo-capitalist civilisation, claiming that their texts, supposedly composed for the masses, are incomprehensible to all but a select few (surely a further jibe at that *neo-avanguardia* which had held centre stage for a good part of the Sixties). In the context of this section 'Resta la vena della satira' is primarily significant for its penultimate paragraph. There, having undermined the validity of current 'engaged' poetry, Montale sets out the following declaration: 'Resta invece largo spazio per la poesia satirica. Ma abbiamo non pochi esempi e qualche buon modello. Io stesso mi sono provato in questa direzione' (*SMP* 2927). What follows will examine some of the 'buon[i] modell[i]' for the polemical-moralistic-ironic vein that runs through 'Satura I' and 'Satura II', investigating a number of works that stimulated Montale to set aside those reserves that he had expressed in 'Parliamo della poesia' and encouraged him to attempt to realise a satirical verse.

(i) Christian Morgenstern, *Canti grotteschi*

Whilst the principal focus of this study is literature written by persons contemporaneous to *Satura* and the later collections, in a discussion of the stimuli behind Montale's passage to a satirical mode it is indeed hard to resist the allure of devoting at least a few lines to a considerably earlier writer: the Nineteenth-century German author Christian Morgenstern. *Canti grotteschi*, a remarkably ingenious translation by Anselmo Turazza

of the poetry of this same, was published in 1961 and reviewed by Montale for *Il Corriere della Sera* the following year (SMP 2440).⁴⁷ There can exist little doubt as to the Genoese poet's evaluative judgement of this work. *Canti grotteschi* is 'un'opera poetica che è indispensabile conoscere'; it would be 'poco onorevole per la nostra cultura se un libro simile dovesse passare inosservato'. In the course of his review Montale describes the translator Turazza as 'forse il solo poeta satirico e grottesco oggi esistente in Italia' and Morgenstern himself as a 'poeta non solo comico ma metafisico, uomo coltissimo che nei suoi versi pieni di bisticci e di scioglilingua ha posto in ridicolo l'ottimismo e lo scientismo democratico dei suoi tempi'. These words cannot but strike a chord with the attentive reader of the fourth collection.⁴⁸ In fact, the name of Christian Morgenstern is one that should be inserted *de rigueur* into any ideal catalogue of the founding fathers of Montale's satirical verse in 'Satura I' and 'Satura II', of those spirited word games to be found in poems such as 'Déconfiture non vuol dire che la crème caramel...' and 'Auf Wiedersehen', of that derision of the current atmosphere of optimism (in 'Il raschino': 'Credi che il pessimismo | sia davvero esistito? Se mi guardo | d'attorno non ne è traccia') and of that mockery of the scientific community (in 'Fanfara' we read of 'l'eternità tascabile | economica' governed by 'scienziati | responsabili e bene | controllati').

Let us consider in greater detail Montale's intertextual dialogue with *Canti grotteschi*. In the section of this collection entitled 'Palma Conocchia (Palma Kunkel)' there appear adjacent to each other a pair of poems, 'Quesito' and 'Risposta (p. inc.)'. Although Montale's review of Turazza's anthology was published on 13 February 1962, he may well have consulted *Canti grotteschi* at a prior moment, presumably at the earliest some time in August 1961 (the date of printing given at the end of this volume). 1961 is, of

course, also the year of the composition of the first of the three ‘Botta e risposta’ poems.⁴⁹ A pure and simple coincidence? Probably not. There is no manifest indication that Morgenstern’s ‘Quesito’ is, analogously to Montale’s ‘botta’ in ‘Botta e risposta I’, supposed to be a letter. The ‘Risposta (p. inc.)’, on the other hand, would feign be just that: it closes, in fact, with the words ‘metto anch’io fine alla mia lettera. | Saluti e grazie! Sua X’. And at this juncture, with not one but two distinct points of convergence, it would be quite rational to conjecture that Montale did indeed avail himself of ‘Quesito’ and ‘Risposta (p. inc.)’ in the protracted creative process that eventually led to ‘Botta e risposta I’.

Staying with *Canti grotteschi*, the following six couplets constitute the final two sentences of ‘Palma Conocchia (imitazione)’ (the two ‘loro’ below refer to previously mentioned ‘orde | ognor di sangue lorde’):

Quanto più, infatti, schiuma,
eversor di ogni legge,

il lor furore e rugge:
tanto minor di piuma,

in peso, più non regge
il loro senno e fugge.

Ancor lungo sentiero
deve correr davvero

l’umanità immatura
per emendar l’impura

sua natura ferina
con la Grazia Divina.

These twelve rhyming *settenari* could well have been the driving force behind the composition of ‘Il furore’ (*Quaderno*):

Il furore è antico quanto l'uomo
 ma credeva di avere un obiettivo.
 Ora basta a se stesso. È un passo avanti
 ma non è sufficiente. L'uomo deve
 pure restando un bipede mutarsi
 in un altro animale. Solo allora
 sarà come le belve a quattro zampe innocuo
 se non sia aggredito. Ci vorrà
 un po' d'anni o millenni. È un batter d'occhio.

Both poets write of man's 'furore', of the absurdity of this fury ('Quanto più, infatti, schiuma [...] il lor furore [...] tanto minor di piuma, || in peso, più non regge | il loro senno e fugge' / 'Il furore è antico quanto l'uomo | ma credeva di avere un obiettivo. | Ora basta a se stesso') and the fact that considerable time – in Turazza's version a 'lungo sentiero', in 'Il furore' 'un po' d'anni o millenni' – will have to drift by before man's temperament develops into something less aggressive.

Now, with our brief excursus concerning Morgenstern's poetry completed, we might be tempted to discourse on several other older works that conceivably spurred Montale on in his itinerary towards the satirical and the comic. For instance, we might discuss the enlarged 1956 edition of Ernesto Ragazzoni's *Poesie* (1927), a volume full of irony containing pieces such as 'Ballata', 'De Africa', 'Laude dei pacifici lapponi', 'Poesia della rottura delle scatole' and 'Omaggio al 606', reviewed by Montale in the year of its publication (*SMP* 1973-74).⁵⁰ Or we might turn our attention to the early writing of W. H. Auden, that immensely sophisticated virtuoso capable of constructing dazzling poems on any subject and in any style. Montale, in fact, penned more than one article about Auden's verse of the Thirties and Forties, defining the English author's poetry in 1952 as 'gnomica, satirica, discorsiva, eloquente, e assai spesso, perché non dirlo?, prosastica'

(SMP 1413). Still, our aim here is to examine rather more recent literature and, in particular, texts first published in the Sixties. Let us, then, return to this decade.

(ii) *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi*

In the Italy of the mid Sixties there abounded satire, understood here in the broadest sense of the word as an essentially polemical discourse directed against persons, institutions, ideas and so on. Limiting ourselves to naming just three of the works of fiction Montale himself reviewed in this time frame, these are the years of Goffredo Parise's *Il padrone*, Maria Corti's *Il ballo dei sapienti* and Enrico Emanuelli's *Un gran bel viaggio*.⁵¹ These are also the years of Giambattista Vicari's *Il Caffè*, an important periodical that actively sought to encourage *vituperatio*. (Interestingly, the sole issue of this journal housed in the Fondo Montale, one dated June 1968 and therefore pertaining to the months that immediately preceded the grand flowering of Montale's satire, opens with an article signed 'G.[ianni] C.[elati]' regarding the nature of satirical writing.)⁵² It is also worth remembering here that 1966 witnessed the appearance of Franco Fortini's *L'ospite ingrato: Testi e note per versi ironici* (again, present in the Fondo Montale), a book made up of prose and verse pieces, very many of which might legitimately be assigned to the category of satire.⁵³ Below it will be argued that two satirical volumes from the mid Sixties proved especially salient for the style of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II': the anthology *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* (1964) and Nelo Risi's *Dentro la sostanza* (1965). Let us deal first with the earlier volume.

In an article entitled 'Poesia inclusiva' (21 June 1964) Montale endeavours to explain the nature of so-called 'poesia inclusiva', a type of poetry that, he believes, has become widespread in recent times (*SMP* 2631-33). In no part of this article does he declare that there exists a satirical vein in contemporary verse. After a relatively short lapse of time, however, in the aforementioned 'Si parla poco dei poeti', Montale states: 'I nuovi poeti sono «inclusivi», «proiettivi», sono quel che sono, ma si trovano d'accordo nel rifiutare quei contenuti lirici per eccellenza. [...] Non manca la satira, che è l'elemento più persuasivo' (*SMAMS* 336-37). As Mazzoni has conjectured:

Se il 3 gennaio 1965, in *Si parla poco dei poeti*, egli [Montale] distingueva nella poesia contemporanea una corrente satirica, mentre sei mesi prima [in 'Poesia inclusiva'] non ne aveva riconosciuto il valore di tendenza autonoma, è probabile che il cambiamento sia dovuto alla lettura, nella seconda metà del 1964, dell'antologia, curata da Cesare Vivaldi, *Poesia satirica dell'Italia d'oggi* [*sic*], che uscì nel marzo di quell'anno.⁵⁴

The fact that four texts by Montale appeared in *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* – 'La trota nera', 'Sul Llobregat', 'Botta e risposta I' and 'Ventaglio per S. F.' – obviously increases considerably the likelihood that he was familiar with this volume, as does the fact that it was published by a major publishing house (Guanda).

At the beginning of his thought-provoking introduction to *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* Vivaldi quotes extensively from his own preface to a 1962 translation of Martial's epigrams. 'Marziale [...] può tornare pienamente d'attualità soltanto oggi', affirmed Vivaldi back in 1962, because after centuries 'oggi in Italia è possibile una poesia satirica'.⁵⁵ In the same preface from 1962 Vivaldi also wrote:

Il paese, nonostante tutto, vive liberamente e respira una cultura moderna; il progresso economico e sociale è in vigorosa crescita, lo svecchiarsi del costume continuo e

irreversibile. E naturalmente, come in tutte le epoche contraddistinte da una vigorosa dialettica tra il vecchio e il nuovo, tra l'instaurarsi di una morale *diversa* e il corrompersi di quella dei padri e dei nonni, tutti i lati negativi della vita vengono, almeno in certi ambienti, in piena luce: l'affarismo, la venalità, il carrierismo, la deboscia [...]. [...] La commedia di grandi e piccole vanità che si svolge quotidianamente e che tocca largamente l'ambiente artistico e letterario, per non parlare di quello del cinema, e quindi coinvolge di persona il poeta e lo scrittore, sollecita addirittura chi ne abbia il temperamento e le possibilità a usare le armi della satira, dell'epigramma, della critica di costume.⁵⁶

In the new part of his introduction to *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* Vivaldi asserts that whilst the lyric must be considered the axial poetic genre of the Italian Twentieth century, it would be wrong to neglect a heterogeneous satirical vein coursing through the last few decades of home-grown poetry all the way up until the present day. Indeed, for Vivaldi, recent years have seen a veritable blossoming in high-quality satirical verse: 'sono convinto che il nostro è tempo di fioritura per la poesia satirica, i cui antecedenti immediati, anche se autorevolissimi e di grande qualità, non possono starle a pari sul piano della quantità e su quello della libertà di contenuto e di espressione'.⁵⁷ The texts of people such as Mino Maccari, Antonio Delfini, Ennio Flaiano, Roberto Morsucci, Nelo Risi, Gaio Fratini, Luciano Erba, Saverio Vollaro and Tito Balestra taken as a whole 'compongono un panorama coerente e unitario, che rende legittimo parlare di una poesia satirica italiana contemporanea'.⁵⁸ In his anthology Vivaldi sets out to put on display the richness and variety of the contemporary satirical scene, offering a selection of poetry by sixty different writers penned (or, at least, published) between the end of the Second World War and 1964. The editor cedes a great deal of space to younger poets but at the same time does not ignore older writers such as Saba, Palazzeschi and Folgore.

Apart from provoking the author of *Ossi* to meditate on the feasibility of transferring into verse a particular ironic-polemical disposition that up until then had been mostly

restricted to journalistic articles, the major importance of *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* for Montale, as Mazzoni has pointed out, stemmed from the fact that it furnished a vibrant model of the 'impiego, su argomenti attuali, di schemi 'archetipici' della satira'.⁵⁹ For example, Mazzoni suggests that the volume's anaphoric sequences (e.g. Flaiano's 'Lettera d'autunno' and Alberto Arbasino's 'L'apprendista Tebaide') and its quatrains in ABAB or ABCB, in which irony springs from the rhyming scheme (e.g. 'Due cose' by Ennio Flaiano and 'Cineclub' by Giovanni Giudici), might have affected the composition of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II'.⁶⁰ (But in his section on the anaphoric sequences in *Satura* perhaps Mazzoni would have done well to point out how there exist noteworthy structural analogies between the fifth strophe of Soldati's 'Il figliol prodigo' and the fifth strophe from 'Fanfara':

Lo accusano di egoismo,	la morte
di snobismo,	del buon selvaggio
di masochismo,	delle opinioni
di onanismo,	delle incerte certezze
di gesuitismo,	delle epifanie
di colpevole follia,	delle carestie
di megalomania	dell'individuo non funzionale
	del prete dello stregone
	dell'intellettuale

Mazzoni could have then remarked that in the sixth strophe of 'Fanfara' Montale, possibly spurred on by Soldati's 'gesuitismo', opts to polemicize with the much talked about Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: 'senza il trucco | della crosta in ammollo | nella noosfera'.)

One especially striking intertextual parallel presented by Mazzoni in the course of his discussion of *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* regards a poem by the Florentine writer Corrado Pavolini and 'Botta e risposta II'. Pavolini's 'Epigramma fiorentino' reads:

Il correggere bozze
mi fa simile a Dio:
ma che revisore sbadato!
dico non io, Lui.

This epigram resurfaces in the following lines from the second part of 'Botta e risposta II': 'noi siamo due prove, | due bozze scorrette che il Proto [i.e. God] | non degnò d'uno sguardo'. Furthermore, Mazzoni argues that verse by Alberico Sala and word games by Eugenio Miccini might have appealed to Montale's sensibility (and the critic highlights several noteworthy affinities between a part of Miccini's 'Divertimenti sulla grammatica' and 'Gerarchie', the text that opens 'Satura I').

Mazzoni's discussion of *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* in relation to the texts of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II', whilst not being especially lengthy, is nonetheless quite thorough. However, the scholar abstains from enquiring in depth into the possible significance of Vivaldi's anthology for the verse posterior to *Satura*, confining himself to a very few fleeting mentions of poems from the later collections. And yet, as we shall see, it would appear almost certain that *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi*, a sort of stepping-stone in the long pathway leading to the diatribe and sarcasm of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II', also left clear traces in the successive poetry.

Below appears the text of 'In una città del nord', a poem from *Quaderno* that alludes to Montale's 1975 visit to Sweden to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature:

Come copia dell'Eden primigenio
 manca il confronto con l'originale.
 Certo vale qualcosa. Gli scoiattoli
 saltano su trapezi di rami alti.
 Rari i bambini, ognuno di più padri o madri.
 Anche se non fa freddo c'è aria di ghiacciaia.
 A primavera si dovrà difendersi
 dalle volpi o da altre bestie da pelliccia.
 Così mi riferisce il mio autista
 navarrese o gallego portato qui dal caso.
 Non gli va giù la democrazia. Tale
 e quale il Marqués de Villanova.
 Io guardo e penso o fingo. Si paga a caro prezzo
 un'anima moderna. Potrei anche provarmici.

'In una città del nord' can be considered a Shakespearean sonnet, albeit only in the loosest sense of this term. In fact, the text, consisting of fourteen verses, may easily be divided up into three quatrains (verses 1-4, 5-8, 9-12) and one couplet (the last two verses). Before proceeding to a discussion of the first and second quatrains of the above poem – those that are of particular interest with respect to the verse contained in *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi* – it is worth taking a moment to comment briefly on the third quatrain of this little-studied piece.

The Spanish chauffeur mentioned goes by the name of José. In *Con Montale a Stoccolma* Porzio offers an amusing portrait of this man, someone who claims that in Sweden after taxes he is better off financially as a chauffeur than as an engineer, someone who, when he speaks, combines picturesquely Italian with his native tongue.⁶¹ As for the 'Marqués de Villanova', a glance at an article by Montale published in *Il Corriere della Sera* of 27 March 1974, i.e. not a long time prior to the composition of 'In una città del nord', proves to be enlightening. There, Montale tells of Rafael Lasso de la Vega, Marquis of Villanova (1890-1959), an eccentric Spanish poet and painter who spent much time in Florence during the Thirties. He points out that in the aristocratic Spaniard

‘non prevalevano certo i sentimenti democratici’ (PR 1147) and recalls that the Marquis used to commingle different languages in his speech. Clearly, then, there exists a whole series of reasons for which José reminded Montale of Rafael Lasso de la Vega.

It is now necessary to cast a careful eye over one of the texts in *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi*: ‘Un nido d’aquila’. The piece in question was written by the Umbrian poet Gaio Fratini and included in this writer’s collection *La signora Freud*, published the same year as Vivaldi’s anthology.⁶² Following a short epigraph (a quotation from article 527 of the Italian penal code, that article which sets out the penalty for a person who performs obscene acts in a public place), the ‘io’ of ‘Un nido d’aquila’ speaks of a secluded spot on high, a place off the beaten track where, he hopes, his loved one will give herself to him. It is declared that a ‘nido d’aquila’ in a wooded area, a *locus* which to be reached requires that the amorous couple surmount various obstacles, cannot be deemed a public place. The second, third and fourth strophes of Fratini’s poem, as transcribed in *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi*, are quoted below:

Forse un’amaca e in tasca un apriscatole,
 succhi di frutta, riviste d’accampamento,
 al tramonto un trapezio per scoiattoli
 da appendere ai picchi rocciosi,
 e la scimmia portatile che scaglia
 pietre sul video dell’estremo rifugio.

E che brividi, che sessuali languori di sesto grado,
 che servizievole scimmia a guidarci
 tra i dirupi verso il nido promesso!

Chiodo scaccerà chiodo
 sulla liscia parete,
 un revolver nella tua borsetta
 perché salti il capino delle invidiose vipere,
 io un coltello tra i denti per difendere
 dalle belve fameliche l’onore dei tuoi spasimi.

It is the contention here that these verses by Fratini represent a noteworthy intertext for 'In una città del nord'. With respect to Montale's squirrels on trapezia of high branches, near the beginning of the above extract one finds 'un trapezio per scoiattoli | da appendere ai picchi rocciosi'. But the similarities between the two poems do not end here. The first person subject of 'Un nido d'aquila' states that he is prepared to defend the honour of his loved one from animals: 'io un coltello tra i denti per difendere | dalle belve fameliche l'onore dei tuoi spasimi'. It will be recalled that the idea of defending oneself from animals appears in the second quatrain of 'In una città del nord': 'A primavera si dovrà difendersi | dalle volpi o da altre bestie da pelliccia'.⁶³ Now, taken individually, these two hypotheses of influence are interesting but, admittedly, not entirely convincing. This is true above all if one accords due regard to Montale's previous output in verse. Consider 'Proda di Versilia' (*Bufera*), where from the degraded Versilian coastline of the mid Forties the subject thinks back to his youth and 'il volo da trapezio | dei topi familiari da una palma | all'altra'. Or take the tenth of the 'Mottetti' (*Occasioni*), where the reader will find both a 'scoiattolo' and, several verses later, the verb 'difendere' in the reflexive.⁶⁴ However, when the two above hypotheses of influence are taken *together*, it is a very different story: then each effectively corroborates the other.

In the opening sentence of 'In una città del nord' Montale mentions the primigenial garden of Eden. Perhaps the thought of this primal sanctuary, according to some located high on a mountain, caused him to remember 'Un nido d'aquila'. There, in fact, Fratini writes of a journey to an elevated haven, to 'il nido promesso' (a syntagma that suggests both the primigenial, 'nido', and the biblical, i.e. the Promised Land). Whatever the initial mnemonic stimulus might have been, it seems extremely likely that Montale was aware

of Fratini's 'Un nido d'aquila' when he came to compose his poem *in memoriam* of an extraordinary Scandinavian adventure.

Let us now leave Gaio Fratini and look at the work of another contemporary poet present in *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi*. Mazzoni speculates that amongst the verse in Vivaldi's anthology Montale might have appreciated the ending to Alberico Sala's 'Ora il numero'.⁶⁵ On the same page as 'Ora il numero' we find a second work by Sala: 'Anche il tuono'. In the first sentence of this epigram, previously published in *Sempre più difficile* (1960), the author asserts that even thunder gets lost in the din of the 'città inumana'. The second and final sentence of 'Anche il tuono' takes the form of a question: 'Quando verrà l'ora del giudizio | chi saprà distinguere le trombe | celesti dai clacksons della terra?'. In other words, the roar of the modern *urbs* is such that one day it may be hard to detect the last Trump.

The four epigrams that come under the heading of 'Motivi' in *Altri versi* are all undated. Still, judging from their style, it would seem extremely likely that they were composed in or very near to the Seventies. The last of these four pieces reads as follows:

Quando il fischio del pipistrello
sarà la tromba del Giudizio
chi ne darà notizia agli invischiati
nel Grande Affare?
Saremo a corto di comunicazioni,
in dubbio se malvivi vivi o morti.

The idea that the whistle of a bat will one day be the trumpet blast of the Last Judgement may well remind the veteran reader of Montale's verse of 'Le ore della sera', a poem in *Quaderno* that comes just a few pages after the above-mentioned 'In una città del nord'.⁶⁶

In 'Le ore della sera', dating back to early 1976, Montale affirms that a long stretch of

time will be necessary before ‘la cronaca’ camouflages itself as ‘storia’: only after this lag, he writes, will ‘il fischietto del pipistrello’ seem to be ‘la trombetta del dies irae’. Of course, given that it is not certain when ‘Quando il fischio del pipistrello...’ was composed, it is impossible to know whether ‘Le ore della sera’ pre- or post-dates this same and, thence, venture any opinion regarding the influence of the one poem on the other.

Anyway, it is not the link between ‘Le ore della sera’ and ‘Quando il fischio del pipistrello...’ that concerns us principally here but, instead, the possible tie between the latter text and ‘Anche il tuono’. Both ‘Anche il tuono’ and ‘Quando il fischio del pipistrello...’ suggest the unusual idea that when the last Trump sounds, people may not be able to make it out. For Sala, the racket of car horns will compete with this noise. For Montale, on the other hand, the fateful sound will be transmitted in such a subtle and unexpected format, coming, as it will, in the guise of a bat’s whistle, that perhaps nobody will be able to recognise it: the world, all those people ‘invischiati | nel Grande Affare’, might well remain wholly oblivious. And the affinities between the two texts do not terminate here. The reader must have spotted that the sentences mentioning the last Trump in ‘Anche il tuono’ and ‘Quando il fischio del pipistrello...’ are each built around a ‘Quando... chi...?’ structure: ‘*Quando* verrà l’ora del giudizio | *chi* saprà distinguere le trombe | celesti dai clacksons della terra?’ / ‘*Quando* il fischio del pipistrello | sarà la tromba del Giudizio | *chi* ne darà notizia agli invischiati | nel Grande Affare?’ [my italics]. It might be observed, finally, that in both texts ‘giudizio’ / ‘Giudizio’ appears as the last word in a verse, immediately followed at the beginning of the next line by the interrogative ‘chi’.

(iii) The Poetry of Nelo Risi

As Glauco Cambon records in a diary kept during the summer of 1977 and published in the proceedings of a 1982 conference, in the later years of his life one of the younger poets that Montale appreciated was Nelo Risi.⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, several critics have put forward the name of Risi as a possible influence on the post-*Bufera* Montale. For instance, Mengaldo in his seminal anthology of Twentieth-century Italian poetry *Poeti italiani del Novecento* concludes an introductory note to the verse of Risi as follows: ‘Lo stilismo dell’usuale di Risi [...] ha largamente alimentato le esperienze di molta poesia del dopoguerra [...]: dallo stesso Fortini a Giudici a molti più giovani come Raboni, Bandini, Majorino ecc. (e perché no anche un «vecchio» come l’ultimo Montale?)’.⁶⁸ Elsewhere, Martelli has devoted a dense paragraph to Montale and *Polso teso* and, more recently, Mazzoni has written several perceptive pages concerning the importance of Risi for the satire of ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’.⁶⁹ Yet, as things currently stand, there is still much that needs to be said about the significance of the younger poet for the older: the nexus Risi-Montale will be the subject of the final part of this section.

Montale first discussed Nelo Risi in 1957, reviewing briefly *Polso teso*, Risi’s first major work of verse, conceived in Paris in 1952 and published in 1956. If Risi were to write in French, declares the reviewer, he would be accorded a distinguished position amongst those poets of eccentric humour that in France have a long tradition, still kept alive today by Jacques Prévert, that hugely successful author once defined by Montale as

‘senza problemi, innamorato della vita, semplice, sensuale, diretto, puramente e quasi scioccamente artista’ (*SMP* 1266). Montale goes on to affirm that Risi has few antecedents, mentioning amongst Italian writers only Bertolucci (a name, this, that is anything but a critical commonplace with respect to the verse of the Milanese poet, more usually linked to the so-called ‘linea lombarda’). In Risi, ‘l’accidia è vinta dalla gioia di cantare o meglio di inquadrare in espressivi «montaggi» i ricordi, i residui delle sue molte esperienze di vita’ (*SMP* 2051). The reviewer alludes in these lines to Risi’s career as a film maker, as well as to the very first volume of verse by the same, a work relating to the author’s time in Russia, Switzerland and his native Italy entitled *L’esperienza*. Risi, states Montale, ‘ha una capacità espressiva sua che ancora non tenta grandi imprese, ma si fa riconoscere e amare fra tante altre’ (*SMP* 2052). Thus, the Genoese writer expresses, if nothing like the same admiration as that which he will later manifest for Sereni, nonetheless a definite appreciation for a budding poet who, at the time of the review of *Polso teso*, had not yet even reached the age of forty.

In a note at the end of *Il rovescio della poesia* Martelli investigates the possible significance of the reading of *Polso teso* for the post-*Bufera* poetry.⁷⁰ The critic muses as to whether Risi’s poems about Greece – ‘Ellade’, ‘Delfi’ and ‘Dappertutto, in Grecia’ – might have inspired Montale (presumably thinking, at least in part, about an influence on ‘Botta e risposta III’), before presenting extracts from ‘Tu vieni dal piú vecchio continente’, ‘L’altra faccia’, ‘Secondo i piani’, ‘La pelle di zigrino’, ‘Omelia’ and ‘La settimana del poeta’ which he obviously deems akin to the later Montalean poetry. It must be acknowledged that Martelli’s suggestion in the same endnote that ‘ma non si era | tanto ricchi da dirci hic manebimus’ (‘Sorapis, 40 anni fa’, *Diari*) might have come from

‘La Ville’ – ‘Ogni giorno l’ultimo venuto [...] spazia e decide: Qui staremo ottimamente’ – does not really stand up to serious critical analysis. In fact, almost certainly both Risi’s ‘Qui staremo ottimamente’ and Montale’s ‘hic manebimus’ derive directly from the same source, the widely known Latin expression ‘hic optime manebimus’, a phrase from Livy assimilated into the so-called ‘memoria dei poeti’. (And it might be recalled, meanwhile, that in *Quaderno*, published the same year as Martelli’s *Il rovescio della poesia*, there figures a poem, ‘Al mare (o quasi)’, that contains the same ‘hic manebimus’, as well as the adverb ‘ottimamente’: ‘Hic manebimus se vi piace non proprio | ottimamente’.)

From the point of view of an intertextual inquiry Risi’s *Pensieri elementari* (1961) and, above all, *Dentro la sostanza* (1965), the focal point of an article by Montale published in *Il Corriere della Sera* of 6 February 1966, reveal themselves to be far more fertile than the earlier *Polso teso*.⁷¹ It ought to be observed right away that Montale’s review of Risi’s 1965 collection, entitled ‘L’enorme anonimato in cui tutti viviamo’, represents something of an anomaly with respect to the other reviews of this period penned by the same critic. Habitually, when discussing a poetry collection, Montale does not quote a very great deal, preferring to dedicate the lion’s share of his piece to setting down his ideas on poetry in general and on the specific work under review. However, unusually, in ‘L’enorme anonimato in cui tutti viviamo’ Montale quotes most extensively, reproducing over forty verses pertaining to five different poems. The work of an uninterested reviewer, eager to fill up his column in the easiest possible way? Or, rather, a case of an artist who, deeply impressed by the writing of another, desired to appropriate this same writing, to take possession of it almost materially by integrating it *verbatim* into a piece of his own? Judging from the laudatory comments that Montale

makes in the course of his review, the second hypothesis would appear to be the most convincing.

Montale justly remarks in 'L'enorme anonimato in cui tutti viviamo' that Risi's poetry 'aspira alla tensione, alla semplificazione del mezzo espressivo e alla nuda sostanza di un sentimento che non è mai distaccato dalla riflessione' (*SMP* 2770). Risi, states the reviewer (someone who, as is widely known, set enormous store by a proper deference to the European cultural tradition), 'non rifiuta affatto la sua natura e la sua formazione di uomo colto' (*SMP* 2770). (And a glance at 'Arte poetica' (*Dentro la sostanza*), where there are mentions of Dante, Parini, Beethoven, Homer, Zeno and Goethe, should suffice to illustrate just how firmly attached to the classic Western canon Risi really is.) Montale continues his review:

[Risi] fa i conti con un tempo arido, con una stagione in cui tutto sembra detto; fa i conti con l'enorme anonimato in cui tutti viviamo, con la condizione storica dell'uomo-formica che sembra la tragica novità di oggi e di domani e forse è antica quanto l'uomo, contraddetta solo da pochi secoli di «progresso» che nulla fa credere univoco e inarrestabile. (*SMP* 2770-71)

In the opinion of the author of *Ossi* Risi's writing would not fit comfortably under the heading of socially engaged writing: 'non direi che Risi sia un poeta *engagé* nell'accezione ordinaria del termine' (*SMP* 2771). No doubt, if the poetry of *Dentro la sostanza* with its denunciation of today's world in all its horrendous anonymity had been more overtly 'political', it would have appealed considerably less to that person who once informed Giuliano Dego: 'In *Satura*, se c'è dell'ironia, è contro i poeti che scrivono propaganda'.⁷² Montale proceeds to furnish his readers with samples of the verse contained in *Dentro la sostanza*, transcribing either in part or in full 'La questione

meridionale', 'Dopo', the fourth part of 'Segni dei tempi' – a piece in which 'la riflessione punta sulla tristezza dell'uomo solo immerso nella mostruosa totalità dell'animale umano in progresso' (SMP 2771) –, 'L'uomo decentrato' and, finally, the fifth part of 'Segni dei tempi' (this last text will be discussed in detail later). The poetry of Risi, concludes Montale:

[i]mpegnata è di certo, ma non a senso unico; e non saremo certo noi a contestare la verità e l'urgenza della cosa «vitalmente esatta» che urge nella sua coscienza e viene sempre ricacciata in fondo «senza la minima eco» [two quotations from the above-mentioned 'L'uomo decentrato']. Se si aggiunge che il senso di simile carenza è probabilmente il solo tema possibile della poesia contemporanea non resta da dire che la quasi poesia di Risi somiglia stranamente a quella che fu e forse resta la poesia di sempre. Non so se gli faccio un elogio: è probabile che per la crescente legione dei poeti «altri» egli sia già un fossile. (SMP 2772)

In *Dentro la sostanza* – the title might almost represent a homage to Luzi's then recent *Nel magma*, a work itself not without a satirical edge – Risi, with a sapient mix of the ironic and the aphoristic, denounces the malfeasance of *homo homini lupus* and endeavours to educate atomic humanity towards a more humane way of living. It may well be said that deep down Risi is essentially a love poet; a love poet in the sense that he feels for the woes of mankind, that he cares about its incessant suffering and sincerely desires to alleviate its pain.⁷³ The Milanese writer, a sort of modern literary descendant of Parini, affirms in the 'Avvertenza' at the beginning of the second section of *Dentro la sostanza* ('Minime massime'): 'Sono per una poesia civile fatta da un uomo pubblico in un tempo reale, sono per un linguaggio tutto teso che sia di per sé azione; voglio parlare di quello che ci offende, scrivere di quello che ci indigna'. Risi was important for the Montale of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' firstly because he furnished an attractive demonstration of how a critical discourse on 'l'enorme anonimato in cui tutti viviamo',

on 'la condizione storica dell'uomo-formica', on the 'tristezza dell'uomo solo immerso nella mostruosa totalità dell'animale umano in progresso' could be convincingly voiced in verse, without abandoning the great Western cultural tradition or producing something resembling that 'poésie engagée' so alien to Montale's artistic sensibility. '[L]e raccolte di Risi', states Mazzoni, 'rivelavano l'attualità di un registro, dimostravano che era possibile mettere in versi – senza far «poesia *autre*» e «tabula rasa della cultura» – temi che fino a quel momento Montale aveva trattato solo nei suoi articoli di giornale'.⁷⁴ Thus, the author of *Pensieri elementari* and *Dentro la sostanza* discusses modern communications ('Telegiornale'), middle-class rebellion ('Il ribelle borghese'), the population explosion ('Pensieri elementari', 14) and the overproduction of poetry ('Scienza delle comunicazioni').⁷⁵

In his article '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento' Mazzoni focuses in particular on this last poem, feeling that Montale would have identified especially well with the ideas set out in it. And, in fact, the content of 'Incespicare' (*Satura*) rather resembles that of the piece from *Dentro la sostanza*:

Non basta più una lingua
non bastano i dialetti
tutti i poeti sono tradotti,
scambi e codici e messaggi
aggreiscono il mondo.

Non c'è più tempo di leggere
l'Iliade, non c'è più spazio
per l'affresco (mecenati
faraoni e papi rientrano
nell'ordine della natura).

Domina l'informazione
e il poeta torna cieco.

Incespicare, incepparsi
è necessario
per destare la lingua
dal suo torpore.
Ma la balbuzie non basta
e se anche fa meno rumore
è guasta lei pure. Così
bisogna rassegnarsi
a un mezzo parlare. Una volta
qualcuno parlò per intero
e fu incomprensibile. Certo
credeva di essere l'ultimo
parlante. Invece è accaduto
che tutti ancora parlano
e il mondo
da allora è muto.⁷⁶

Risi regularly incorporates into his satirical texts lexemes pertaining to contemporary sectorial languages. For example, in the fourth part of ‘Segni dei tempi’, quoted in its entirety by Montale, we read of ‘un’epoca | di cibernetica’ and ‘[la] scienza del comportamento’. In ‘Tecnica dell’annuncio economico’, meanwhile, Risi, inveighing against today’s world in all its repulsive violence (the strophe on man’s treatment of lambs is truly unforgettable), adopts the language of modern sales and marketing, e.g. ‘prezzi economici’, ‘AAAffarone’, ‘standista’ and ‘acquisto impulsivo’, as well as phrases usually associated with Twentieth-century science (e.g. ‘scorie di uranio’) and politics (e.g. ‘Stato Totalitario’). Although in the course of ‘L’enorme anonimato in cui tutti viviamo’ Montale does not make explicit reference to Risi’s use of lexis in *Dentro la sostanza*, it would not be unreasonable to presume that the younger writer’s skilful manipulation of current-day language to further his polemic against the contemporary world was influential on Montale when this same came to compose ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the more satirical poems in these two sections are characterised by their extreme receptivity to contemporary language in all its variety.

Just like *Poesia satirica nell’Italia d’oggi* the poetry of Risi served as a useful *exemplum* of the structural organisation of satirical verse.⁷⁷ In both *Pensieri elementari* and *Dentro la sostanza* we observe time and again Risi’s passion for the rhetorical device of *repetitio*. Mazzoni suggests that the Milanese poet’s use of anaphora may have played some role in the creation of ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’. In particular, ‘*Si andava...*’, consisting of eight short strophes all commencing ‘Si andava’ and, in four cases, containing at the beginning of the second verse the conjunction ‘e’, noticeably resembles

the apocalyptic ‘I nuovi fioretti’ (*Dentro la sostanza*), in which each of the five strophes opens with a subject and verb (‘Io dico’) followed, at the beginning of the ensuing verse, by an ‘e’:

Io dico, è il lampo
e m’ac cieco per sempre.

Io dico, è il tuono
e lo conto sui geiger.

Io dico, è la pioggia
e non sento che bagna.

Io dico, è l’acqua
e la bevo corrotta.

Io dico, è il sonno
e non penso al risveglio.⁷⁸

As well as venturing the idea that Risi’s compositions might have helped Montale to transport from his journalism to his verse the remark on an opinion or a stock phrase and encouraged him to structure a text around a quotation, Mazzoni points out that in both Risi and the later Montale at the beginning of poems apodictic expressions in a colloquial vein, sometimes incorporating a cliché and usually divided into two verses, are widespread. Compare the openings of parts thirteen, fourteen and sixteen of ‘Pensieri elementari’ (*Pensieri elementari*) and part V of ‘Il contromemorale’ (*Pensieri elementari*) – ‘Impegnarsi poco | può anche essere un affare –’, ‘Insidiosamente | avvengono le mutazioni –’, ‘Ha fatto il suo tempo l’assioma | che la tortura degrada il boia –’, ‘La memoria giova | nei momenti peggiori’ – with the openings of ‘La morte di Dio’, part I of ‘La poesia’, ‘A tarda notte’, ‘È ridicolo credere’ and ‘Il genio’ (all in either ‘Satura I’ or ‘Satura II’): ‘Tutte le religioni del Dio unico | sono una sola [...]’,

‘L’angosciante questione | se sia a freddo o a caldo l’ispirazione | non appartiene alla scienza termica’, ‘Il colloquio con le ombre | non si fa per telefono’, ‘È ridicolo credere | che gli uomini di domani | possano essere uomini [...]’, ‘Il genio purtroppo non parla | per bocca sua’.⁷⁹

To Martelli’s and Mazzoni’s comments on the salience of *Polso teso*, *Pensieri elementari* and *Dentro la sostanza* for single poems in *Satura* it is hard to append a great deal of original observations. Some striking new discoveries can be made, however, through an investigation into the importance of the verse contained in *Dentro la sostanza* and Risi’s two successive collections, *Di certe cose che dette in versi suonano meglio che in prosa* and *Amica mia nemica*, for the post-*Satura* writing. It would seem, in fact, that individual texts in Montale’s final collections and, above all, in *Quaderno* were notably enriched by the ideas of the Milanese poet.

It is not known precisely when ‘Il sabià’ (*Quaderno*) was composed. The section ‘Varianti e autocommenti’ of *L’opera in versi* registers the existence, in a dossier conserved by Marco Forti, of a typescript of this poem ‘in bellacopia’ dated ‘2 nov. 74’ (in the typescript the day and month have been crossed out). The *Quaderno* Isella, meanwhile, contains a photocopy of the above-mentioned typescript with the following date added: ‘3-I-74’. Finally, the index to the *Quaderno* Isella furnishes a third date of composition: ‘9/I/74’.⁸⁰ ‘Il sabià’ is transcribed below:

Il sabià canta a terra, non sugli alberi,
così disse una volta un poeta senz’ali,
e anticipò la fine di ogni vegetale.
Esiste poi chi non canta né sopra né sotto
e ignoro se è uccello o uomo o altro animale.
Esiste, forse esisteva, oggi è ridotto
a nulla o quasi. È già troppo per quel che vale.

‘Il sabià’ is rich in musical effects: one is especially struck by the large quantity of end rhymes ([‘ALi’] : ‘vegetALE’ : ‘animALE’ : ‘vALE’ and ‘sOTTO’ : ‘ridOTTO’) and the assonance throughout the text of the phoneme /a/, a constant echo of that lexeme that figures in the title and in the first verse of this piece: ‘sabià’. And it is this ‘sabià’ that probably most excites the curiosity of the average reader. Where, we might wonder, did Montale unearth this esoteric word? Before embarking on a discussion of Risi’s verse in relation to ‘Il sabià’, it is well worth taking a moment to endeavour to respond to this question.

In 1946 Giuseppe Ungaretti, who had lived in Brazil from 1937 to 1942, published in the periodical *Poesia* a translation of ‘Canção do exílio’ by António Gonçalves Dias.⁸¹ In this celebrated poem Gonçalves Dias, at the time of writing in ‘exílio’ in Portugal, declares the superiority of his native Brazil compared to the place where he currently finds himself. The first strophe of Ungaretti’s version of ‘Canção do exílio’ reads:

La mia terra ha la palmiera
D’onde canta il sabià;
Trillano anche qui gli uccelli,
Ma il gorgheggio è un altro là.⁸²

In one of his footnotes to this text Ungaretti offers the reader a superb explanation of the word ‘sabià’, an explanation that, one might venture, only a poet who had been profoundly moved by the song of this bird could have written. ‘*Sabià*’, affirms Ungaretti, ‘è il comune nome delle quattordici varietà d’uccelli della famiglia dei tordi viventi in Brasile. Sono i flautisti del bosco. Quando migrano si tengono uniti nello stormo con un trillo corale. Passati, si sente il silenzio delle cose. Non si sente più altro’.⁸³

Yet, Ungaretti was by no means the sole Italian poet prior to Montale to mention in a verse text this enchanting bird. In a recent study Franco Contorbia recalls that in 1959, thirteen years after the first publication of Ungaretti's version of the 'Canção do exílio', there appeared *Un uccello che si chiama Sabià* by Mauro Musciacchio.⁸⁴ The last composition in this volume bears the title 'Un uccello che si chiama Sabià (fantasia)'. This was, according to Contorbia, the first time in Italy that the 'sabià' surfaced in the title of a poem and of a book. In the same study the scholar reproduces a poem by Sandro Sinigaglia, 'Inviando a D. «Corpo di Ballo». Sul rovescio della coperta' (*La Camena gurgandina*), that includes the lexeme 'sabià': 'ti volgi di contropalla [...] al fistulare | del sabià aranciato'.⁸⁵ It should be underlined that, unlike the lexeme by Musciacchio highlighted by Contorbia, the first letter of Sinigaglia's 'sabià' is in lower case and, dissimilarly to Ungaretti's 'sabià', its 'i' is not crowned with an umlaut. In short, this word is identical to that employed by Montale in the above-quoted poem from *Quaderno*. Contorbia reveals that Sinigaglia and Musciacchio once met, before wondering if the 'sabià' ever came up in their discussions.⁸⁶ However, the critic does not feel that it is at all likely that Montale's 'Il sabià' owes anything to 'Inviando a D. «Corpo di Ballo». Sul rovescio della coperta' (or vice versa), stating: 'tra i due testi non si dà corto circuito. Sinigaglia e Montale (ne prendo atto con vivo rammarico) li elaborano l'uno all'insaputa dell'altro'.⁸⁷ As for Musciacchio, Contorbia does not make the slightest suggestion that this intellectual might have influenced Montale's verse production.

In fact, the principal source for Montale's 'sabià' is not the work of Ungaretti, Musciacchio or Sinigaglia but, instead, an article by Cesare Segre, 'La *Canção do exílio* di Gonçalves Dias ovvero le strutture nel tempo', printed in the October 1973 issue of

Strumenti critici (that periodical in which almost all of the texts of ‘Xenia II’ appeared).⁸⁸

In a brief study, published the year of the Genoese poet’s centenary, Segre remembers that he brought Montale an offprint of his article on ‘Canção do exílio’ ‘ai primi del 1974’.⁸⁹ (The *Quaderno* Isella, it has been stated, suggests that ‘Il sabià’ was composed in the early days of January 1974.) Some time later, ‘La *Canção do exílio* di Gonçalves Dias ovvero le strutture nel tempo’ became a chapter of *Le strutture e il tempo*.⁹⁰ The ‘finito di stampare’ of this volume is 28 September 1974, i.e. a few weeks before the date of composition for ‘Il sabià’ to be found in the above-mentioned dossier conserved by Forti. The Italian translation of ‘Canção do exílio’ that appears in ‘La *Canção do exílio* di Gonçalves Dias ovvero le strutture nel tempo’ – in particular, the verses ‘La mia terra ha palme, | Dove canta il Sabiá’ – was, as Segre himself proposes, vital for the genesis of ‘Il sabià’.⁹¹ (Although it ought to be stressed that Segre’s ‘sabiá’, unlike that of Ungaretti, Musciacchio, Sinigaglia and Montale, has an acute accent on the second ‘a’.) Yet, ‘Il sabià’ is not indebted to Segre’s piece exclusively for its opening (‘Il sabià canta’). In the above-cited article from 1996 Segre recalls that in footnote six of ‘La *Canção do exílio* di Gonçalves Dias ovvero le strutture nel tempo’ he remarks that Gonçalves Dias ‘pone il Sabiá sulle *palmeiras*, nonostante il fatto che il Sabiá che sta sulle palme sia proprio l’unico a non cantare, mentre quello che canta, il «sabiá-piranga», sta sugli aranci’ [author’s italics]. He proceeds to suggest that ‘lo schema dell’opposizione’ to be found in the first verse of ‘Il sabià’, ‘a terra, non sugli alberi’, was inspired by his own ‘sugli aranci [...] non sulle palme’.⁹² In summary, the reading of Segre’s translation of ‘Canção do exílio’ by Gonçalves Dias (‘un poeta senz’ali’, as a less than impressed Montale wrote in ‘Il sabià’), as well as at least one of Segre’s observations concerning this same text,

were most stimulating for Montale. However, there exists another major source for 'Il sabià', one that has not yet been identified by any critic. The time is ripe to return to Nelo Risi and his *Dentro la sostanza*.

The fifth part of 'Segni dei tempi' (*Dentro la sostanza*), reproduced in Montale's 'L'enorme anonimato in cui tutti viviamo', reads as follows:

Socrate che amava la città piena di gente
disse una volta che le piante
non gli insegnavano più niente
decretando la morte della filosofia naturale.

Così nacque l'etica e a giudicare
da come abbattono da come estirpano
con zelo il verde nelle città italiane
non c'è un paese più morale.

Evidently, the above text by Risi, a 'piccolo scherzo gnomico' (SMP 2772), an example of 'virile pessimismo esistenziale' (SMP 2772), played a vital role in the genesis of 'Il sabià'. In the first sentence of part five of 'Segni dei tempi' Risi affirms that Socrates 'disse una volta' (second verse) that plants no longer taught him anything, announcing the death of natural philosophy. In the first sentence of 'Il sabià', meantime, Montale declares that a wingless poet 'disse una volta' (second verse) that the 'sabià' sings on the ground rather than in the trees and thus prefigured not the end of the study of nature but, far more drastically, the end of the entire plant kingdom. Needless to say, Montale was inspired to write of the 'fine di ogni vegetale' principally by the second strophe of Risi's 'piccolo scherzo gnomico'. There, in fact, the Milanese poet reflects on the destruction of the 'verde' zealously perpetrated in Italian cities. And, taking into account all of the above, it might seem far from coincidental that both part five of 'Segni dei tempi' and 'Il

sabià' contain a series of end rhymes in 'ALE': respectively, 'naturALE' : ['giudicArE'] : ['itALianE'] : 'morALE' and ['ALi'] : 'vegetALE' : 'animALE' : 'vALE'.

Let us now broaden our gaze to embrace the two collections by Risi immediately posterior to *Dentro la sostanza*, bearing in mind that, as the words of Cambon confirm, Montale was a staunch admirer of Risi's writing and, therefore, would quite possibly have made the effort to get to know these volumes. *Di certe cose che dette in versi suonano meglio che in prosa*, winner of the 1970 Premio Viareggio for poetry, may be found in the Fondo Montale. It is '*Quelli venuti prima l'avevano pur detto*', part five of the first section of this volume, that interests us here and, in particular, the following three verses: 'preferisci ritirarti sotto il fico | a contemplare il bello | Tutto un passato di discorsi in frigo'. These lines might conceivably have affected the composition of 'Le ore della sera', already mentioned in association with Sala's 'Anche il tuono'. Observe the ensuing three verses from Montale's poem: 'e bisogna cacciarli [i baccalaureandi] tutti in qualche buco | per scacciarneli poi se verrà il bello. | Purtroppo il bello (o brutto) è in frigorifero'. Apart from the similarities between the final words in all the verses ('fico' and 'buco' in the first verses are phonically not far apart, the concluding two words of each of the second verses are identical and the last word in the third verse of the extract from Risi's poem – 'frigo' – represents a colloquial abbreviation of its counterpart in 'Le ore della sera'), the two excerpts resemble each other in as much as in the third verse of each abstract entities, whether it be discourses or the beautiful / the ugly, sit on ice: 'Tutto un passato di discorsi in frigo' / 'Purtroppo il bello (o brutto) è in frigorifero'. Remaining a moment longer with *Di certe cose che dette in versi suonano meglio che in prosa*, it ought to be pointed out that 'Attesa là' could feasibly have contributed to the formation

of 'In un giardino 'italiano'' (*Diari*), composed approximately two years after the appearance of Risi's fourth major collection. In the first text we encounter 'geometrie di rondini', in the second 'geometrie di trifogli'.⁹³

To round off our panorama of the salience of Risi's poetry for Montale, let us take a look at 'Ribaltamento', an epigram from *Quaderno*:

La vasca è un grande cerchio, vi si vedono
ninfee e pesciolini rosa pallido.
Mi sporgo e vi cado dentro ma dà l'allarme
un bimbo della mia età.
Chissà se c'è ancora acqua. Curvo il braccio
e tocco il pavimento della mia stanza.⁹⁴

So, the 'io', not a precocious Narcissus in as much as he would appear more interested in the aquatic flora and fauna than in his own reflection, topples over into a pond and is succoured by a child of his own age. The same 'io' then touches the floor of his room, evidently desirous of making sure of the divide between the *hic et nunc* and a traumatic event that seemingly belongs to another time, if not to another reality.

What experience lies behind Montale's 'Ribaltamento'? In the search to come up with a valid answer to this question the starting point cannot but be an interview conducted by Porzio entitled 'Montale secondo Montale'. There, in fact, the aged poet offers a brief gloss to 'Ribaltamento', claiming that the text in question presents 'il ricordo di un pauroso sogno (lui che cadeva nella vasca del giardino e poi salvato dal cuginetto) fatto a poco più di due anni'.⁹⁵ Going by the words of Montale, then, in the case of the first four verses of 'Ribaltamento' we have in essence a literary rendering of a distant oneiric experience.

Yet, can we take as gospel such a peremptory declaration by the author of the work under study? Perhaps we can. But in the meantime let us not forget Montale's love of putting his critics on the wrong scent: '*I critici ripetono, | da me depistati, | che il mio tu è un istituto*' [author's italics], reads the first sentence of '*I critici ripetono...*' (*Satura*). To illustrate Montale's love of 'depistaggio' with just one example, it might be recalled that in a conversation with Arshi Pipa the former asserted that Clizia was Greek and the daughter of a Francoist general!⁹⁶ Here, mistrusting *non sine causa* as to the exactness of Montale's words to Porzio, we will propose a new source for 'Ribaltamento', not an 'autobiographical' source but, rather, a literary one.

By the time of the publication of Risi's *Amica mia nemica* (1976), the author of 'Ribaltamento' had almost completely ceased working as a journalist.⁹⁷ In those very few articles that came out between 1976 and 1979 there appears no reference to the above-mentioned collection. Nonetheless, it is likely that Montale came to see it, even without setting foot just once inside any bookshop: Risi, in fact, as with all his collections of poetry, made sure that Montale received a copy.⁹⁸ Let us hone in on the most interesting section of *Amica mia nemica*, the third, 'Suite a ritroso'. After the biting satire of *Pensieri elementari*, *Dentro la sostanza* and *Di certe cose che dette in versi suonano meglio che in prosa*, with this articulated 'suite' the writer cedes ample space to his childhood memories, evoking his Milanese youth, his relatives and his old friends. Mengaldo justly describes 'Suite a ritroso' as 'forse la più bella sequenza di Risi e una delle più affascinanti anamnesi poetiche dell'infanzia della nostra letteratura contemporanea'.⁹⁹ What concerns us the most here is the second piece in 'Suite a ritroso', '*Affascinato dai*

pesci rossi', a text that recounts the story of two incidents relating to water that almost ended up as major tragedies. Below appears the first near disaster:

Affascinato dai pesci rossi
mio fratello a tre anni cadde nella vasca
in poche spanne d'acqua
dalla sua bocca come da una cannuccia
uscivano le bolle
e il gorgoglio creò qualche scompiglio
tra quegli ornamentali così pacifici.
Nostra sorella
di dieci mesi più grande (c'era la guerra
e papà tra una licenza e l'altra
non perdette tempo) senza gridare
senza scomporsi
lo salvò da sorte certa.

Obviously, this is not the most appropriate place to embark upon a detailed reading of the thirteen verses quoted above. Nonetheless, it might at the very least be noted that the child that many years ago ran the risk of losing his life by drowning was Dino Risi, Nelo's older brother and the director of films considered today of fundamental importance for the history of Italian cinema such as *La marcia su Roma* and *Il sorpasso*. But, rather than focusing our attention exclusively on '*Affascinato dai pesci rossi*', let us briefly highlight the manifold points of convergence between the first part of Risi's poem and '*Ribaltamento*'. First of all, at the beginning of both texts one reads of a 'vasca' populated with coloured fish: in Risi there appear 'pesci rossi', in Montale 'pesciolini rosa pallido'. Secondly, in both the excerpt from '*Affascinato dai pesci rossi*' and '*Ribaltamento*' a child, the very young Dino or the 'bimbo' Eugenio, falls into a pond (and it is worth pointing out that the verb 'cadere' is utilised in both pieces). Thirdly, in both narratives the child in danger is saved by a person of the same age (and of the same family): in the first case by a sister who is a few months older, in the second by 'un

bimbo della mia età' that, we discover by way of the above-quoted interview, was a 'cuginetto'. Finally, taking advantage once more of the author's comment printed in 'Montale secondo Montale' (which, if overall seems to contradict the intertextual hypothesis at the heart of this discourse, in some of its particulars actually serves to corroborate this same hypothesis), it ought to be underlined that the protagonist of 'Ribaltamento' was 'poco più di due anni' at the time of his bad dream, whilst the child of the first part of *'Affascinato dai pesci rossi'* is three.

At this point, all things considered, the reader cannot help but seriously wonder whether with the first four lines of 'Ribaltamento' he finds himself not before a verse transcription of a childhood nightmare but, instead, in the presence of a noteworthy 'reworking' of a segment of another author's writing. Or, to paint the state of affairs in a more imaginative than scientific light, faced with such an abundance of correspondences, it is hard to shun the temptation of asking oneself whether the Montale of 'Ribaltamento' might have wished to put himself in the shoes of Dino Risi.

The moment has arrived to specify the dates, frequently so decisive in cases of presumed influence. A consultation of the colophon of *Amica mia nemica* reveals that the volume in question was printed in January 1976. It might, therefore, be conjectured that Risi's collection entered into circulation in the course of the first quarter of this same year. As for 'Ribaltamento', the apparatus criticus to *L'opera in versi* furnishes a sole date of composition: 16 April 1976. And, upon discovering the temporal propinquity between the publication of the first text and the composition of the second, it becomes truly arduous to convince oneself that the intertextual analogies highlighted above are merely casual. In short, it would appear all but certain that for his 'Ribaltamento'

Montale availed himself of various elements in the first half of '*Affascinato dai pesci rossi*'.

What should be underlined, however, at this juncture is that Montale's poem from *Quaderno* is certainly no dull and unimaginative duplicate of Risi's text. The Genoese writer reworked and elaborated on components of '*Affascinato dai pesci rossi*' in accordance with his own poetic imagination, so that, for example, when it comes to describing the 'vasca' we are provided not with factual data about its depth, as in Risi ('in poche spanne d'acqua'), but, instead, information about its shape ('un grande cerchio'), whilst with regard to the content of the pond Montale mentions not red fish but little rose-coloured fish and adds in there for good measure some water lilies. Meanwhile, the memorable coda to 'Ribaltamento', where the 'io' reaches out in order to ascertain whether there is still water, manifests scarce affinities with anything to be found in the above-mentioned poem by Risi. In general – and this is quite uncommon in Montale's appropriation of another's text – the resulting new poem is characterised by a significantly lesser rather than stronger sense of humour vis-à-vis its intertext: there is, in fact, little of the overtly comic about 'Ribaltamento', whereas '*Affascinato dai pesci rossi*' is marked by a definite streak of comedy (e.g. the parenthetical phrase regarding the sexual prowess of Nelo's father: 'c'era la guerra | e papà tra una licenza e l'altra | non perdette tempo').

As for the issue of Montale's words to Porzio, if the poet was fully aware at the time of speaking that he had utilised Risi's piece as a sort of template for his own text, then we have here, to put it bluntly, an instance of deliberate 'depistaggio' (anything of a rarity when it comes to Montalean self-comment, as has already been highlighted in the above

example regarding the real-life identity of Clizia). If, on the other hand, the poet at the moment of his comment to Porzio had forgotten that some time previously he had availed himself of '*Affascinato dai pesci rossi*' or, alternatively, if he was never aware of having drawn on Risi's poem, i.e. we are dealing with an instance of involuntary intertextuality, then, whilst not discounting the obvious possibility that Montale simply made something up to satisfy his interviewer's curiosity, one might put forward another, more elaborate theory: somewhere along the line Montale ended up convincing himself that he really did once go through the experience represented in the first four verses of '*Ribaltamento*'. In other words, an incident buried in the distant past voyaged from Risi's memory to a poem in *Amica mia nemica* and subsequently from this poem to Montale's literary memory only to then become ingrained in this last's memory of his childhood in a complex but far from impossible mnemonic transfusion.¹⁰⁰

History and Karl Löwith's *Critica dell'esistenza storica*

In 1968, the year of the birth of '*Satura I*' and '*Satura II*', Montale published nineteen articles. The connections between the pieces printed in *Il Corriere della Sera* from 10 August to 30 November and the contemporaneous verse have already been exhaustively investigated by Alberto Casadei and others.¹⁰¹ There remains, however, much still to be said about the series of reviews published by Montale in the Milanese daily immediately prior to this period.

On 20 April the poet reviewed Antonio Barolini's *L'ultima contessa di famiglia*. As will be seen later, the reading of this collection of short stories almost certainly had repercussions for the successive poetry or, to be more precise, for 'Soliloquio' (*Quaderno*). Then, on 1 June, Montale discussed Andrea Zanzotto's *La Beltà*, a volume that was destined to enact no small part in the genesis of the style and content of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II'. (Zanzotto's collection will be the focus of the next section.) On 18 June Montale praised Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's vast novel *Cancer Ward*, inserting it into a tradition 'in cui l'ironia, spinta fino al sarcasmo, è sempre temperata da un senso di autentica e profondissima *pietas*' (SMP 2898). Words, these, that might just as well be applied to much of the verse contained in the fourth collection. Finally, on 19 July the Genoese writer reviewed Karl Löwith's *Critica dell'esistenza storica*.¹⁰² This was, it ought to be stressed, the last prose Montale published before the appearance of 'Refrain del Professore-Onorevole', that piece that marked the commencement of the period of fervid activity from late 1968 to 1970 that would witness the composition of very nearly all of the pieces contained in 'Satura I' and 'Satura II'.

Montale officially retired from his position as a journalist at *Il Corriere della Sera* in 1973. In his last decade working for this newspaper he tended for the most part not to discuss texts of a partially or wholly philosophical nature. There are, however, several exceptions. Thus, in 1963 he wrote on Vigorelli's *Il gesuita proibito: Teilhard de Chardin* (SMP 2558-63), Kahler's *La torre e l'abisso: La trasformazione dell'uomo* (SMAMS 301-03), Anders' *L'uomo è antiquato: Considerazioni sull'anima nell'era della seconda rivoluzione industriale* (SMAMS 308-09) and Alberoni's *L'élite senza potere. Ricerca sociologica sul divismo* (SMAMS 325-26); in 1964 on Dorner's *Il superamento*

dell'«arte» (SMAMS 291-93), Quinzio's *Giudizio sulla storia* (SMAMS 355-57) and Eco's *Apocalittici e integrati: Comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa* (SMAMS 298-300) (a book to which we will return further on in this study); and in 1969 on Kahn's and Wiener's *L'anno 2000* (SMP 2913-14). Furthermore, it might be pointed out that Montale's articles from this period contain on occasions references to issues of predominantly philosophical periodicals such as *Aut aut* (SMAMS 361-63) and *Rivista di studi crociani* (PR 610 and SMP 2903-04).

Now, although in public Montale only rarely mentioned his reading of philosophy, it is certain that philosophical texts contributed to the creation of several of the poems in the latter half of *Satura*.¹⁰³ In a series of letters to Silvio Guarnieri, crucial documents for the study of *L'opera in versi*, Montale comments that 'Nell'attesa' was inspired by an article of Sergio Quinzio in 'una rivista escatologica' (SMAMS 1524-25) and that 'Cielo e terra' '[p]rende spunto dalla rivista crociana, per polemizzare con l'idealismo inteso quale immanentismo assoluto' (SMAMS 1525). By 'rivista crociana' Montale obviously means *Rivista di studi crociani* and, indeed, it is possible that this very periodical was responsible for the poet's reading of the above-mentioned *Critica dell'esistenza storica*. In a 1968 issue of *Rivista di studi crociani* there appeared a letter by Giorgio Cabibbe to Montale and the poet's short reply.¹⁰⁴ The same issue also carried a much less than enthusiastic review by Raffaello Franchini of *Critica dell'esistenza storica*, a review cited by Montale at the end of his own article on Löwith's book (SMP 2903-04).¹⁰⁵

Critica dell'esistenza storica, a translation of Karl Löwith's *Gesammelte Abhandlungen: Zur Kritik der geschichtlichen Existenz*, contains seven essays, first published between 1932 and 1960. A substantial part of *Critica dell'esistenza storica* is

devoted to a discussion of the philosophies of other German thinkers. This aspect of the volume may have appealed to Montale, who once wrote: ‘Piuttosto che le opere dei filosofi io leggo libri *sui* filosofi e non è esattamente la stessa cosa’ (*SMAMS* 212). Although the essays in *Critica dell’esistenza storica* range over a broad variety of topics, the focus of the volume is a radical critique of the notion of historicism, above all in its German idealist garb. Löwith polemicizes with the philosophies of Hegel, Marx and Heidegger, asserting that their historicism is the result of their dependence on the Christian tradition. The German philosopher proposes a return to the ancient Greek idea of the cosmos, believing that man’s conception of his being should not be rooted in any idealist historicism but rather in that nature to which he is inextricably anchored.

‘L’esistenza e la storia’, Montale’s review of *Critica dell’esistenza storica*, is divided into three sections. It largely consists of a long theoretical discourse on historicism and teleology, a discourse that, despite appearances, is intimately linked to the reading of Löwith’s book and, especially, to the fourth essay in this volume, ‘Uomo e storia’ (*CES* 201-38). In the ensuing discussion of ‘L’esistenza e la storia’ on all those occasions upon which the reviewer’s disquisition would appear to have been stimulated by a segment of *Critica dell’esistenza storica* the relevant page(s) of this volume will be indicated in brackets.

‘L’esistenza e la storia’ begins:

Il dispiegamento dello Spirito in quelle sue forme sensibili che l’indotto definisce come Natura – questa è la filosofia che gli italiani della mia generazione hanno appreso sui banchi scolastici. Tale dispiegamento non era un’infusione ma un’identità «totalizzante», un processo irreversibile e univoco; il traguardo (ch’è d’obbligo dire *telos*) era quella sempre crescente autocoscienza storica che permetteva di fare della storiografia la sola vera e possibile filosofia. (*SMP* 2900)

Above all, Montale is referring here to Hegel, that philosopher who had declared that the Spirit, the universal principal of the world in its totality, evolves within historical time (see *CES* 222). The reviewer continues: 'Pareva dunque assicurata la conoscenza del razionale-reale nel suo lungo sviluppo storico; né sembrava restare spazio per eventuali margini di contraddizioni o di *décalages* in simile sviluppo' (*SMP* 2900). Again, the reference is to Hegel, he who had famously affirmed that what is real is rational. According to the German philosopher, reason is the force behind history and history is an unerring progression towards freedom (see *CES* 224). The ancient Greeks, notes Montale, held a very different view of history compared to that of modern man (see *CES* 205-06). The reviewer goes on to observe, paraphrasing Löwith (see *CES* 278), that 'l'uomo è verosimilmente l'unico animale che ponga in questione se stesso, che faccia addirittura un problema del fatto di essere al mondo' (*SMP* 2901). The final sentences of the first part of 'L'esistenza e la storia' echo the content of the last section of the essay 'Uomo e storia':

[C]he cosa può pensare l'*homo faber*, l'uomo condannato all'infelicità del lavoro, di una teoria che spiega la storia come un processo univoco e provvidenziale, che commette errori, è vero, ma errori accettabili in quanto la storia ha astuzie tutte sue e l'immenso bagaglio del suo peggio non è che una fase necessaria alla maturazione del suo meglio [the philosophy of Hegel: see *CES* 222-28]? Ho parlato dell'uomo fabbro perché quando la filosofia dello Spirito si definì come una pragmatica (l'ha detto il suo autore) [the philosophy of Marx: see *CES* 228-32 and also *CES* 356)] o quando cominciarono a farsi strada le nullificanti filosofie dell'angoscia e dello «scacco» [the philosophy of Heidegger: see *CES* 233-38] i dubbi dei superstiti metafisici di vecchio stampo e persino di molti uomini di scienza si moltiplicarono. Non era solo lo Spirito a dichiarare *forfait*. Erano poste in dubbio ben altre certezze. (*SMP* 2901-02)

In the second section of 'L'esistenza e la storia' Montale remarks that many students of the humanities, and, in particular, historians, continue to be attracted by the idea of

causality. He suggests that these intellectuals would do better to adhere to ‘leggi di probabilità, che non saranno mai assolutamente vere neppure se confermate dai fatti’ (SMP 2902). Montale describes Marx, one of the major targets of the polemic in *Critica dell’esistenza storica*, as the greatest of all historians of the future, before dryly observing: ‘Alcune delle sue previsioni non si sono però avverate. E non parliamo della previsione ultima, trionfalistico-escatologica. Si ha in ogni modo l’impressione che del suo insegnamento solo una parte, e non la più viva, sia stata utilizzata *ad usum delphini*’ (SMP 2902-03).

In the third and final section of ‘L’esistenza e la storia’ Montale at last gets round to mentioning *Critica dell’esistenza storica*. In a single paragraph he attempts to summarise the main thrust of Löwith’s argument concerning historicism. But the very brief synopsis provided is somewhat confused and would seem to be as much about Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* as about the original theories expressed in *Critica dell’esistenza storica*. (In reality, it is in the earlier part of his review that Montale, without referring directly to *Critica dell’esistenza storica*, offers his most intelligent comments on Löwith’s ideas. As has been demonstrated, in fact, the core of the first section of ‘L’esistenza e la storia’ is an animated dialogue with the German philosopher.) Montale concludes his summary of the basic philosophy set out in *Critica dell’esistenza storica* with a definite lack of appreciation: ‘È tutto quello che posso dire di questa ed altre simili filosofie, al di fuori delle loro varie e divergenti macchinazioni teoretiche’ (SMAMS 2093). All the same, the review of Löwith’s volume draws to a close on a distinctly positive note:

Limitiamoci ad osservare quanto sia stimolante il pensiero di chi ha posto a confronto le idee di Marx con quelle di Max Weber – è il primo saggio del libro – ; di chi pur

distruggendo il mito del Superuomo ha saputo descrivere con tanta pietà le ultime giornate del grande folle che si definì il giullare dell'Eternità [Nietzsche]. (SMP 2904)

It is apparent from the content of 'L'esistenza e la storia', especially the first section, that Montale was set thinking by the *pars destruens* of Löwith's philosophy and, more than anything else, by his critique of Hegel's and Marx's conception of history as an essentially logical, providential process. Needless to say, Montale's misgivings regarding idealist historicism do not originate from his reading of *Critica dell'esistenza storica*: his scepticism *à propos* may be traced back much further, possibly to his reading of Schopenhauer.¹⁰⁶ However, in the summer of 1968, when historicism, particularly in its Marxist formulation, was one of the key points of discussion in a fervid political debate, *Critica dell'esistenza storica* was, to use the language of Montale himself, 'stimolante'. Just how stimulating Löwith's volume really was is evident from the fact that the poems Montale composed in the weeks and months following his reading of *Critica dell'esistenza storica*, i.e. the texts of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II', comprise a number of attacks directed against historicism. A few examples should suffice. Montale refutes the myth that history is a logical system: 'La storia è un *marché aux puces*, non un sistema' ('Dialogo'). There is no interlocking chain of events: 'La storia non si snoda | come una catena | di anelli ininterrotta' ('La storia'). Indeed, time is plural: 'Non c'è un unico tempo: ci sono molti nastri | che paralleli slittano | spesso in senso contrario' ('Tempo e tempi'). Montale satirises the idea of providence: '«Dunque è provvidenziale | anche la pestilenza»' ('Dialogo') (perhaps an ironic allusion to the events leading up to the reunion of Renzo and Lucia in Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*). He firmly repudiates the notion that history progresses (or regresses): 'La storia | non si fa strada [...] non procede | né recede, si sposta di binario' ('La storia'). Meanwhile, numerous poems from the same

period mock, in a more or less subtle fashion, the notion of dialectics that underpins Hegelian and Marxist historicism.¹⁰⁷ Take the first strophe of 'Fanfara', for instance:

lo storicismo dialettico
 materialista
 autofago
 progressivo
 immanente
 irreversibile
 sempre dentro
 mai fuori
 mai fallibile
 fatto da noi
 non da estranei
 propalatori
 di fanfaluche credibili
 solo da pazzi

The reading of *Critica dell'esistenza storica*, then, encouraged Montale to meditate deeply on the nature of history: the texts of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' are surely indebted to this meditation. Yet, the significance of *Critica dell'esistenza storica* for the second half of *Satura* does not stop at such a general level. Let us take a glance now at three poems from 'Satura I' and 'Satura II', all penned at the most within ten months of 'L'esistenza e la storia'.

Unusually, the Fondo Montale contains two copies of *Critica dell'esistenza storica*.¹⁰⁸ Even more unusually, seeing that almost all of the books in the Milanese Fondo are without any form of annotation whatsoever, one of these two copies has a series of vertical lines in its margins. (There is, however, no hand-written text that might lend weight to the inevitable hypothesis that Montale himself was responsible for the insertion of these lines.) Page 250 of the annotated copy of *Critica dell'esistenza storica* is one of those pages that contains a line running down part of its margin. The highlighted text

comprises the following phrase: ‘la storia non può mai insegnarci che cosa sia vero e che cosa sia falso’. Spurred on by the existence of this annotation, we might venture to suggest tentatively that the first part of ‘La storia’ and, more precisely, that sentence which reads ‘La storia non è magistra | di niente che ci riguardi’ could owe a debt to the above-quoted phrase from *Critica dell’esistenza storica*.¹⁰⁹

In ‘Il decisionismo occasionale di C. Schmitt’ (CES 113-61) Löwith polemicizes with his compatriot Carl Schmitt, someone whom he considers to be essentially a warmongering, anti-Semitic opportunist. Löwith writes the following lines concerning Schmitt’s ideas on the tie between the state and the individual:

Insieme col problema dell’ordinamento della vita pubblica scompare anche necessariamente il problema connesso del rapporto fra la πόλις e il *singolo*. Lo Schmitt evita di affrontare il problema della totalità dell’individuo considerando quest’ultimo, per ragioni polemiche, *homo privatus*: perciò la sua pretesa di raggiungere una effettuale totalità si nega da sé. Il suo concetto totale dell’essere politico paradossalmente non comprende né l’ordinamento delle cose umane in una πόλις, né la costituzione dell’individuo in se stesso; ma totalizza tutto ciò che è in riferimento al caso di emergenza, che è il possibile annullamento, o anche l’affermazione della nuda esistenza dello Stato e dell’individuo. (CES 136-37)

‘Gerarchie’, composed in October 1968 (that is to say, around three months after Montale’s review of *Critica dell’esistenza storica*), manifests notable similarities with this passage:

La polis è più importante delle sue parti.
La parte è più importante d’ogni sua parte.
Il predicato lo è più del predicante
e l’arrestato lo è meno dell’arrestante.

Il tempo s’infiltra nel totale,
il totale è il cascame del totalizzante,
l’avvento è l’improbabile nell’avvenibile,
il pulsante una pulce nel pulsabile.

The first verse of 'Gerarchie' ('La polis è più importante delle sue parti') seems to echo loosely the themes of the above-quoted extract from Löwith.¹¹⁰ But that is not all. The lines from *Critica dell'esistenza storica* contain a series of lexemes all deriving from the same etymon: 'totalità [...] totalità [...] totale [...] totalizza'. The verses of 'Gerarchie' almost appear to be mimicking this sequence: 'totale [...] totale [...] totalizzante'. And note, furthermore, that the same poem includes several other etymological *divertissements*: 'predicato [...] predicante', 'arrestato [...] arrestante', 'avvento [...] avvenibile', and, finally, the memorable 'il pulsante una pulce nel pulsabile'.

Moving on, in the annotated copy of *Critica dell'esistenza storica* present in the Fondo Montale a line may be found in the margin alongside part of the first paragraph on page 248. The highlighted text reads:

Che la natura con l'uomo abbia fatto sorgere ed esistere un essere vivente che si può emancipare da ogni natura e porre di fronte e contro di essa, non è certamente meno enigmatico del paradosso teologico, per cui Dio ha potuto creare di fronte a sé una creatura che ha la libertà di porsi contro il suo creatore e di allontanarsi da lui. Che tuttavia un «essere» non essente abbia «fatto emergere» l'Esserci dell'uomo e «abbia bisogno», per aprirsi, del nostro Esserci troppo umano, non è né un paradosso credibile né un enigma conoscibile, ma una mera «congettura», tanto più problematica dal momento che essa regge tutto quanto viene detto sull'essere dell'Esserci.

In this discussion of the relationship between the ultimate divinity and man, one in which Löwith avails himself of the language of existentialism and, in particular, that of Heidegger ('Esserci' is the standard Italian translation for the German lexeme 'Dasein' in its Heideggerian usage), we come across the syntagma '«essere» non essente', employed to denote God. Montale might have recalled this syntagma when he came to compose the final strophe of 'Divinità in incognito': 'eppure | se una divinità, anche d'infimo grado, |

mi ha sfiorato', muses the poet, 'quel brivido m'ha detto tutto e intanto | l'agnizione mancava e il non essente | essere dileguava'. The 'divinità' is described as a 'non essente | essere', a chiasmus of Löwith's '«essere» non essente'.

Remaining in the realm of the theological, it might be recalled that in 'Il linguaggio nella sua funzione mediatrice tra uomo e mondo' (CES 287-316) Löwith observes that, given his relatively lowly status, man must always find himself in acute difficulties in his efforts to decipher the Word of God. Löwith writes, in fact:

E se Dio, attraverso l'uomo-Dio [i.e. Jesus Christ], parla la lingua dell'uomo, come si dovrebbe poter ancora distinguere in maniera univoca quanto, in questa lingua di duplice provenienza, è parola divina e quanto parola umana? Come distinguere quello che noi udendo comprendiamo, con il significato che ad esso attribuiamo, da quello che Dio ha realmente asserito parlando? (CES 290)

'La lingua di Dio' – and with this poem we leave behind for a moment *Satura* and progress to the successive *Diari* – commences in the following manner:

Se dio è il linguaggio, l'Uno che ne creò tanti altri
per poi confonderli
come faremo a interpellarlo e come
credere che ha parlato e parlerà
per sempre indecifrabile e questo è
meglio che nulla. [author's italics]

In a text that, analogously to Löwith's, refers to the problems of a hermeneutics of the divine Word, Montale adopts a very similar syntactic structure to that of the German philosopher: 'se [...] come [...] come [...]'. One significant divergence between the two extracts set out here is that whilst Löwith discusses the possibility that God, through Jesus, might speak the language of man, Montale hypothesises that God might *be* 'il

linguaggio'. However, this divergence is all but absent in the first draft of 'La lingua di Dio', which commences: 'Se dio si esprime nelle nostre lingue | come qualcuno afferma'.¹¹¹ Clearly, the earlier version functions as an excellent corroboration for the supposition that Montale had *Critica dell'esistenza storica* in mind when he composed 'La lingua di Dio'.

In his review of *Critica dell'esistenza storica* Montale praises Löwith's ideas on Nietzsche as 'tra le più illuminanti che io abbia letto' (*SMP* 2903). He admired, it will be remembered, the manner in which Löwith described Nietzsche's insanity: 'Limitiamoci ad osservare quanto sia stimolante il pensiero [...] di chi pur distruggendo il mito del Superuomo ha saputo descrivere con tanta pietà le ultime giornate del grande folle che si definì il giullare dell'Eternità'. Now, in *Critica dell'esistenza storica* Löwith does not himself recount in great detail the story of Nietzsche's insanity, preferring to quote extensively from the letters of F. Overbeck to P. Gast written during the philosopher's madness (*CES* 191-97) and from other material by Overbeck (*CES* 197-98). All the same, Löwith does pose himself the following question:

La circostanza che uomini, che hanno perso l'equilibrio mentale, in alcuni casi giungono a scorgere abissi più oscuri e altezze più luminose che non l'uomo medio normale, dimostra forse che soltanto gli esaltati e i folli hanno il privilegio di conoscere la vera struttura del mondo? (*CES* 188)

Mindful of all this, let us turn our attention to 'L'educazione intellettuale', a miniature autobiographical *Bildungsroman* located at the beginning of *Quaderno*. There, Montale briefly recalls Nietzsche's tragic end:

[...] e il princeps

dei folli, quello che ha baciato il muso
di un cavallo da stanga e fu da allora l'ospite
di un luminoso buio.

Nietzsche collapsed in Turin's Piazza Carlo Alberto on 3 January 1889. The great man, object of a huge amount of interest in Italy during the Sixties and Seventies, embraced the neck of a horse that was being whipped and then passed out. Upon regaining consciousness, he was insane.¹¹² The oxymoronic syntagma 'un luminoso buio' evidently alludes to this insanity. Surely, given his stated appreciation for Löwith's ideas on Nietzsche, it may reasonably be conjectured that when Montale wrote that the 'buio' of the Nineteenth-century philosopher's madness was 'luminoso', he had the above-quoted passage somewhere in mind. One phrase in particular might have embedded itself in the memory of the author of 'L'educazione intellettuale': 'altezze più luminose'.

'Satura I', 'Satura II' and Andrea Zanzotto's *La Beltà*

Evidence that Montale knew and appreciated Andrea Zanzotto's writing is certainly not thin on the ground. We should recall first of all that the former served on the jury of at least two literary prizes won by Zanzotto: the San Babila and the Cino Del Duca. (As a prize for winning the first of these two competitions, in 1951 Zanzotto's *Dietro il paesaggio* was published. And, seeing that the opening piece in this collection, 'Arse il motore', begins 'Arse il motore a lungo sulla via | il suo sangue selvaggio ed atterrì | fanciulli', it is well worth remarking that the second strophe of 'Anniversario' (*Bufera*) – a piece probably dating from around the time of the San Babila victory – commences:

‘Arse a lungo una vampa; sul tuo tetto, | sul mio, vidi l’orrore traboccare’.)¹¹³ Secondly, in the *Catalogo del fondo Montale* there feature almost all of the collections of poetry published by Zanzotto prior to Montale’s decease in 1981: *Dietro il paesaggio*, *Elegia e altri versi*, *Vocativo*, *La Beltà*, *Pasque*, *Filò* and *Il Galateo in Bosco*, not to mention Stefano Agosti’s anthology *Poesie (1938-1972)* and Feldman and Swann’s *Selected Poetry of Andrea Zanzotto*. Indeed, if we exclude the 1970 book of juvenilia *A che valse?*, only *IX Ecloghe* and *Gli Sguardi i Fatti e Senhal* are missing from the catalogue. Thirdly, it should be remembered that upon more than one occasion Montale voiced admiration for the poet from Pieve di Soligo. Thus, in a 1968 interview with Achille Millo he included the name of Zanzotto in a list of ‘poeti [...] molto importanti’ (*SMAMS* 1681), whilst in 1975 the same person informed Porzio: ‘Tra quindici anni potrà magari vincer[e] [il Nobel] Andrea Zanzotto: è bravo, è intelligente ed è difficile’.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Cambon records in a diary that Montale ‘non ha certo ignorato i poeti delle leve successive alla sua; per esempio apprezza Giorgio Orelli, Nelo Risi, Maria Luisa Spaziani, Andrea Zanzotto – lo Zanzotto dei primi libri, se non altro’.¹¹⁵

However, the most important evidence in support of the thesis that Montale esteemed Zanzotto’s writing lies within the journalistic production of the former. As far back as 1955, in fact, Montale furnished the readers of *Il Corriere della Sera* with a few enthusiastic lines about Zanzotto in the course of a paragraph promoting Sereni’s ‘Quaderni di poesia’:

Ed ora la collezione [‘Quaderni di poesia’] si arricchisce con le trenta pagine di *Elegia e altri versi* di Andrea Zanzotto, già noto per un precedente libro *Dietro il paesaggio* pubblicato nello «Specchio» di Mondadori. Zanzotto, veneto, vive infatti immerso nel suo paesaggio, ma non è semplicemente pittorico e descrittivo; i suoi fiumi, il suo piccolo Soligo «imbavagliato nudo e senza parola» [see ‘Storie dell’arsura’], le sue

acque di Dolle, il suo «freddo Montello» [see 'Partenza per il Vaud'] fan parte di una geografia poetica, d'anima, che non si dimentica una volta che si è conosciuta. (SMP 1794)

Thirteen years after these two sentences, there appeared 'La poesia di Zanzotto', an article regarding one of the most original collections to have come out of Italy during the Sixties: *La Beltà*.¹¹⁶

'La poesia di Zanzotto', printed in *Il Corriere della Sera* of 1 June 1968 (SMP 2891-95), is the last great review of a collection of contemporary verse published by Montale and undoubtedly amongst the most accomplished works of literary criticism to have sprung from the vivacious imagination of the Genoese poet. After 'La poesia di Zanzotto' Montale would publish extremely little on recent verse. In 1969 there appeared a presentation of Beppe Bongi's *Amo l'estate* (SMP 2908-10), together with an article regarding the *Poesie complete* of Jorge Guillén and *Eccó 'a morte?* by Albino Pierro (SMP 2924-26). Then, in the following decade or so, no further reviews of contemporaneous poetry and only the scarcest of references to current verse production. Mario Luzi's *Su fondamenti invisibili* (1971), Aldo Palazzeschi's *Via delle Cento Stelle* (1972), Giorgio Caproni's *Il muro della terra* (1975), Giorgio Orelli's *Sinopie* (1977) and numerous other works meritorious of detailed investigation were destined to go without any mention by Montale in the pages of *Il Corriere della Sera* or, indeed, in any other publication.

And it is with the question of criticism on contemporary poetry that Montale's review of *La Beltà* starts out: 'Di fronte alla poesia moderna, così abbondante ma anche tanto rara, il critico non può che ammutolire. Egli si trova non già nella situazione del giudice estraneo ai lavori ma in quella di complice (e qualcuno suggerisce «di utente»)' (SMP

2891-92). 'C'è di peggio', continues the reviewer, 'si è giunti a supporre che il vero autore dell'opera in esame, colui che le attribuisce un significato e stabilisce qual è il suo «posto nel mondo», nell'ipotetico mondo della poesia, sia il critico stesso' (SMP 2892). Submerged by a deluge of poetry, frustrated by what he perceives to be an aberration in the role assigned to the critic – that is, instead of being essentially just another reader, this same becomes the force that decides the meaning and future of the poetic work –, Montale rebels by remaining in silence throughout the Seventies.

As things stand, proceeds the reviewer, the only way to approach judiciously a poetic text is through the use of metaphor. Before moving on to an appraisal of *La Beltà*, Montale supplies two examples of how imagery can enrich our reading of a text, quoting first a comment by Osip Mandelstam, according to whom Chèbnikov buries into his language like a mole (the source here is Mandelstam's *La Quarta Prosa*), and then referring to the French writer André Pieyre de Mandiargues, who once claimed that in Montale's verses the image is like 'il nodo nel legno' (SMP 2892).¹¹⁷ The fact that Montale cites in 'La poesia di Zanzotto' a critical notion pertaining to his poetry is most interesting, given that several months later the same author was to compose '*I critici ripetono...*', a quite unprecedented epigram concerning what the critics have to say about his writing.

Claiming that to come up with just one image capable of defining in a flash *La Beltà* would be 'un vero terno al lotto' (SMP 2892), in 'La poesia di Zanzotto' Montale offers his reader a whole series of striking figurative descriptions. The poet from Pieve di Soligo puts on display an uninterrupted veil of 'immagini-simbolo' (SMP 2892). His poetry is a liquid that springs forth from the depths of his consciousness and from nature itself.

Zanzotto '[è] un poeta percussivo ma non rumoroso: il suo metronomo è forse il batticuore' (SMP 2893); his writing is a 'liquore (liquame?)' (SMP 2893) – a wordplay that recalls the rhetoric of *La Beltà* – that eschews any sort of chemical analysis, a merchandise that is sold with the marking 'fragile' on it, a poetry that acts like a drug on the reader's intelligence. Elsewhere in his review Montale affirms: 'Quand'egli [Zanzotto] scrive: «Cercare meglio il piano di clivaggio per lavorare il diamante» [see the last strophe of 'Ampolla (cisti) e fuori'] l'offerta è lusinghiera; ma purtroppo la materia su cui Zanzotto lavora non è affatto dura, diamantina, anche se infinitamente sfaccettata' (SMP 2892). A passage, this, that seems to preannounce vaguely 'Diamantina' (*Diari*), where we come across 'la tua immagine [...] libera e sfaccettata | fino all'estremo limite'.¹¹⁸

Of course, *La Beltà* differs in many respects from Montale's poetry, be it the texts of *Satura* or, indeed, those of any of the other collections by the same author. For instance, unlike the verse of Zanzotto's fifth collection, Montale's writing could virtually never be described as 'un'acqua che scaturisce dal sottofondo della coscienza' (SMP 2892). (And in his review the Genoese poet, observing quite correctly that Zanzotto is someone well informed with regard to psychoanalysis, hints at his dislike for this science with its 'varie e alquanto sospette ramificazioni' (SMP 2895).) Yet, the poetry of the two Northern Italian writers certainly does not stand at opposite poles of the literary spectrum. When Montale says of Zanzotto that 'la sua mobilità è insieme fisica e meta-fisica' (SMP 2892) and that 'l'inserimento del poeta nel mondo resta altamente problematico e non è nemmeno desiderato' (SMP 2892), we cannot help recollecting that years previously the same person famously collocated the origins of his verse in 'una corrente di poesia non

realistica, non romantica e nemmeno strettamente decadente, che molto all'ingrosso si può dire metafisica' (*SMAMS* 1604). We might note, furthermore, that Zanzotto's poetry is, just like that of Montale, 'coltissima' (*SMP* 2893). And, if Vivienne Hand affirms that '[b]roadly speaking, what Zanzotto has done is to set traditionalism against experimentalism', then can we not legitimately claim that exactly the same is true for Montale?¹¹⁹ Indeed, taking into account the metaphysical tensions, the fine balance between tradition and innovation, the focus on the natural world and the subtle vein of irony to be found in *La Beltà*, it is little wonder that, as Mengaldo records, Montale deemed Zanzotto to be one of his 'heirs'.¹²⁰

What probably intrigued Montale the most about Zanzotto and *La Beltà* was the use of language. In a poem from *Diario postumo* that mentions Zanzotto's promotion to an Olympus (of great poets), 'L'investitura', the emphasis falls on this aspect of the younger poet's art: 'E le parole [di Zanzotto] rimbalzavan tra noi | aligere faville sfuggite dal profondo | bruno color della pietra focaia'. In his review of *La Beltà*, meanwhile, aptly described by Luperini as a 'document[o] prezios[o] della formazione di una nuova poetica', Montale had the following to say about Zanzotto's language¹²¹:

La sua sfiducia nella parola è tanta che si risolve in una felice commistione lessicale. A lui tutto serve: le parole rare e quelle dell'uso e del disuso; l'intarsio della citazione erudita e il perpetuo ribollimento del calderone delle streghe. Sullo sfondo, poi, può esserci tanto il fatto del giorno quanto il sottile richiamo mitologico. È una poesia coltissima, la sua, un vero tuffo in quella pre-espressione che precede la parola articolata e che poi si accontenta di sinonimi in filastrocca, di parole che si raggruppano per sole affinità foniche, di balbettamenti, interiezioni e soprattutto iterazioni. (*SMP* 2893)

At the core of Zanzotto's long poetic itinerary, anything but concluded at the time of writing, there lies a quest for a verbal language through which the subject may give

authentic expression to himself and to the world in which he operates. As is well known, *La Beltà* is the collection in which the tie between signifier and signified is ruptured: in the words of Agosti, with this work '[i]l significante non è più collegato a un significato, o a molteplici significati possibili, ma si istituisce esso stesso come depositario e produttore di senso'.¹²² One might analyse in this context the ensuing verses belonging to the celebrated 'La perfezione della neve': 'E poi astrazioni astrificazioni formulazione d'astri | assideramento, attraverso sidera e coelos | assideramenti assimilazioni' – from 'astrazioni', originating from Zanzotto's slightly earlier 'perfezioni' and 'aggiunge', to the paronomastic neologism 'astrificazioni', where the influence of the signifier 'perfezioni' is felt still more, to the semantic breaking down of 'astrificazioni' into 'formulazione d'astri', then 'assideramento', deriving from the Latin word 'sidus' but of course in its current meaning in Italian having nothing to do with 'astri', then the Latin 'sidera' meaning 'constellations' or 'stars' which suggests to the poet another Latin word connected to the celestial ('coelos'), followed by the plural of 'assideramento', inspired in its number by the previous plurals 'sidera e coelos', and, lastly, a similar-sounding term to 'assideramenti', 'assimilazioni'. Importantly, on an ideological level we do not find ourselves with *La Beltà* in an area identical to that occupied by the *neo-avanguardia*. The author of this collection, in fact, does not set out so much to denounce the mendacity of the language of an increasingly grotesque reality as, rather, to explore adventurously the infinite possibilities of the verbal medium. If, notes Agosti, in its most coherent formulation the avant-garde text presents itself as a-semantic, in Zanzotto we encounter, on the other hand, 'la strenua costituzione d'un senso che assume, nell'assenza d'un fondamento che lo assimili alle strutture canoniche della lingua, tutta la drammatica,

violenta autenticità della liberazione – dentro la storia e il linguaggio – d'un'origine sepolta e tuttavia straordinariamente vitale'.¹²³

Rhetorical figures of derivation or, to be more exact, those polyptota and strings of words linked by a common etymology so diffuse in *La Beltà* and alluded to by Montale himself in the above extract from 'La poesia di Zanzotto', are what concern us principally here. Observe the title of the first poem in *La Beltà*, 'Oltranza oltraggio', as well as the following passage from the third piece in the same collection ('Sì, ancora la neve'): 'incomunicante scomunicato tutti scomunicati' (where 'incomunicante' and 'scomunicato' possess an identical etymological root and 'scomunicati' is a polyptoton of 'scomunicato'). But, rather than halting with 'Oltranza oltraggio' and 'Sì, ancora la neve', it is worthwhile taking a moment to illustrate in some depth the above-mentioned figures of speech, launching ourselves headlong into that richly vegetated and variegated verbal jungle that is *La Beltà*. 'Già fu beato, là fu beato, | grande beatitudine', we read in 'Alla stagione'. Then, in the long poem 'Possibili prefazi o riprese o conclusioni': 'scritto circoscritto descritto trascritto | non scritto' (I); 'i frutti, che frutti, fruttame', 'quiete-inquietudine', 'Perfidia, perfido, perfidamente' (II); 'E io arrossisco e tutti arrossiscono' (X). See also 'Ampolla (cisti) e fuori' ('tu te tibi a te per te', 'ledeva illesa'), 'Al mondo' – quoted in its entirety by Montale in 'La poesia di Zanzotto' – ('male fantasticante | male fantasticato', '«santo» e «santificato»', 'note e ignote'), 'Retorica su: lo sbandamento, il principio «resistenza»' ('L'uomo avviene e viene', 'l'arma che arma', 'Ardeva il fascino e la realtà [...] horeb ardevi tutto d'arbusti | tutto arbusto horeb il mondo ardeva'), 'Esautorazioni' ('Come lo risolverò? | E il mondo è risolto? | Risolto non è dissolto?') and 'L'elegia in petèl' ('raccogliersi per bene accogliere in oro radure', 'Non spezzo

nulla se non spezzato ma subito riattato, | spezzo pochissimo'). And, finally, consider the following extracts from the 'poemetto' 'Profezie o memorie o giornali murali': 'sempre più profonde | le profondità' (III); 'convinte stanchezze | e senza mai stanchezza' (VII); 'insegna e disinsegna', 'l'ikebana si ikebanizza' (VIII); 'in che trapungere, in che trapunto di omega', 'effabile in effabilità' (IX); 'scorrere nello scorrimento' (XIII); 'arde a noi, pro e contra, l'ardimento' (XIV); 'il più sintomo tra noi | tutti bisbiglianti sintomi', 'ogni animante animato vegetale minerale' (XVI); 'degradarsi e digradare', 'atterrare, interrarsi' (XVII); 'Il paesaggio ha tutto confessato, essudato, | il paesaggio è in confessione, in sudore', 'Soffioni soffiati' (XVIII).

Now, 'Xenia I' and 'Xenia II' and, indeed, Montale's poems prior to *Satura* in general certainly do not abound with strings of etymologically related words and polyptota. This is not the case, however, with 'Satura I' and 'Satura II'. We have already looked at the text that opens 'Satura I', 'Gerarchie', with its 'predicato [...] predicante', 'arrestato [...] arrestante', 'totale [...] totale [...] totalizzante', 'avvento [...] avvenibile', and 'pulsante una pulce nel pulsabile'. But rhetorical figures of derivation surface in numerous other texts pertaining to the latter half of Montale's fourth collection. For instance: 'non procede | né recede' ('La storia'), 'i cuochi e le cotture' ('La morte di Dio'), 'in partibus | (non importa la parte | purché disabitata)' ('Intercettazione telefonica'), 'un'eco poco attendibile. | Attendo' ('Nell'attesa'), 'il senso | del nonsenso' ('Che mastice tiene insieme...'), 'un accadimento non è mai accaduto' ('Auf Wiedersehen'),

I bambini giocano
nuovissimi giuochi,
noiose astruse propaggini
del giuoco dell'Oca. ('Un mese tra i bambini'),

‘l’inerme | lubrifica le sue armi’ (‘Botta e risposta III’), ‘difforme | e multiforme, eguale | e ineguale’ (‘L’angelo nero’), ‘il tangibile è quanto basta. | Basterebbe un tangente’ (‘Annaspando’), ‘Probabilmente | non sei più chi sei stata | ed è giusto che così sia’ (‘Gli uomini che si voltano’), ‘nell’illusione che ormai più non piova | o pioverà forse altrove, chissà dove’ (‘Le stagioni’), ‘un benservito. | Servire’ (‘Il repertorio’), ‘profeti e profezie’ (‘Laggiù’), ‘[il] minuscolo dio a cui ti affidi, | d’ora in ora diverso, e ne diffidi’ and ‘pigramente indisposta | al disponibile’ (‘Il primo gennaio’), ‘Mi chiedo che ne sarà della produzione. | La primavera stessa tarda alquanto a prodursi’ and ‘È d’obbligo che qualche ingranaggio non ingrani’ (‘Nel silenzio’).¹²⁴

In his study of *Satura* and the poetry of the second half of the Twentieth century Mazzoni devotes just a short paragraph to the possible salience of *La Beltà* for the fourth collection. According to Mazzoni, it is likely that ‘quando Montale in *Satura* paròdia l’uso che la poesia italiana di quegli anni faceva dei metaplasmi, egli abbia in mente soprattutto *La Beltà*, in cui l’*annominatio* è una delle figure dominanti’.¹²⁵ That derivational figures are widespread in *La Beltà* and ‘Satura I’ / ‘Satura II’ is beyond doubt, as the above paragraphs have demonstrated in detail. However, if by the verb ‘parody’ we are to understand something along the lines of ‘to imitate with comic ends’, then, it is felt, Mazzoni’s remark cannot be unreservedly accepted. Why would Montale have wished to mock a collection that he evidently admired immensely? Rather, it may be argued reasonably that the meditation on Zanzotto’s poetry, a poetry that ‘suggestiona potentemente e agisce come una droga sull’intelletto giudicante del lettore’ (*SMP* 2894), purely and simply encouraged Montale to integrate into ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ on a massive scale rhetorical figures of derivation.¹²⁶

All the same, it ought to be stressed that the motivation behind the etymological strings and polyptota in *Satura* is not identical to that of *La Beltà*. In ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ such rhetorical figures tend to be employed exclusively to further the ‘comic’ and satirical message of the author. By way of example, consider the opening verses of ‘Dialogo’ in ‘Satura I’:

«Se l’uomo è nella storia non è niente.
La storia è un *marché aux puces*, non un sistema».
«Provvidenza e sistema sono tutt’uno
e il Provvidente è l’uomo».
«Dunque è provvidenziale
anche la pestilenza».

The second speaker claims confidently that Providence and system are the same thing and that ‘il Provvidente è l’uomo’, expressing his unimpressive ideas with a rhetoric that is so contrived as to sound vaguely comic. At this point, the other speaker in ‘Dialogo’, easily identifiable as the mouthpiece of the authorial point of view, takes over to mock the previous speaker, picking up on the language of his ideological opponent and throwing it back at him in a clearly ironic context: ‘Dunque è provvidenziale | anche la pestilenza’. For another example of this phenomenon, one might turn to ‘Divinità in incognito’, located in ‘Satura II’. Here too Montale uses etymological word games to satirise the ideas of other people. He claims that he has often caught sight of, amongst others, ‘deità in fustagno e tascapane’ and ‘numinose fantasime non irreali, tangibili, | toccate mai’ or, reading into these images, that he has perceived the existence of another, higher dimension to the universe. ‘They’, on the other hand, with whom Montale evidently does not sympathise, say that ‘il fondatore non fonda perché nessuno | l’ha mai fondato o fonduto’ (the ‘fondatore’ being the demiurge and/or the ultimate deity). In these verses

Montale derides other people's dismissive attitude towards the possibility that there might exist a metaphysical dimension to reality by having these same people speak a ridiculously convoluted language.

Turning to *La Beltà*, on the other hand, whilst there are quite definitely traces of the ludic and the humorous in Zanzotto's etymological fireworks, the same phenomenon belongs essentially to an elaborate and wide-ranging investigation into the very depths of language, a verbal odyssey which is quiet alien to the poetry of *Satura*. What we perceive behind those etymological chains and polyptota in *La Beltà* is an at once highly imaginative and original poet experimenting profoundly with his linguistic reality, almost letting himself be carried away – but never without a dose of irony – by the richness and variety of the Italian language and its tradition. Let us look together at a segment from the first part of 'Possibili prefazi o riprese o conclusioni':

E vivanda, da vivere.
«È l'olio vivo, è una fibra viva».
Là è il vivente. Ma non è ancora ristoro (restauro),
nulla è la sede, nullo
l'invivimento l'invivarsi.

Zanzotto commences this passage with 'vivanda', meaning in English 'food'. He then follows this word with a sort of etymological translation of 'vivanda', which derives, in fact, from the gerundive of the Latin verb 'vivere'. In the following verse, which in a note the author glosses as being a variation on two advertising slogans, Zanzotto fuses together the previous themes of food and life in his 'olio vivo' and then, staying with the subject of life, places the feminine form of the adjective 'vivo' alongside 'fibra' (and note that in Italian 'fibra' may also mean 'vigour' or 'life', as in the expression 'non avere

fibra'). There then appears another word deriving from 'vivere', 'vivente', followed by another term connected to the sphere of food 'ristoro' or in English 'refreshment' (and here again Zanzotto proceeds to indicate the etymological root of his lexeme, for 'ristoro' originates from the Latin verb 'restaurare'). Leaving aside the 'nulla' / 'nullo' of the fourth verse (with respect to gender, a chiasmus of the previous 'vivo' / 'viva'), there ensue two extraordinary neologisms (of which *La Beltà* is full) stemming, once more, from 'vivere': 'invivimento' and 'invivarsi'. The first word is a substantive, the second an infinitive that rather calls to mind the 'parasintetici' of Dante's *Paradiso*, e.g. the famous 'indiarsi' of Canto IV. A veritable linguistic *tour de force* all starting off from the word 'vivanda' and a passage that in its complexity and extreme linguistic experimentalism, in its dazzling 'commistione lessicale' – to quote again from Montale's review of *La Beltà* – would have seemed drastically out of place in *Satura* or, indeed, any of the other collections by the Genoese poet.

In Mazzoni's judgement, on just one occasion can we perceive an 'influsso puntuale' of Zanzotto's writing on Montale, in 'Non è ancora provato che i morti...' (*Quaderno*), where the phrase 'un ectoplasma | che fu chiamato vita' imitates the verse 'L'anancasma che si chiama vita' of 'Epilogo. Appunti per un'Ecloga' (*IX Ecloghe*).¹²⁷ In reality, however, local echoes from Zanzotto and, above all, from *La Beltà* are much more frequent in Montale's verse.

But before returning to *La Beltà*, let us remain a while longer with the 1962 collection that immediately preceded it, *IX Ecloghe*. Compare 'Così siamo', in which the 'tu' refers to the author's then recently deceased father Giovanni, with 'Xenia I', 14:

Dicevano, a Padova, «anch'io»

Dicono che la mia

gli amici «l'ho conosciuto».
 E c'era il romorio d'un'acqua sporca
 prossima, e d'una sporca fabbrica:
 stupende nel silenzio.
 Perché era notte. «Anch'io
 l'ho conosciuto.»
 Vitalmente ho pensato
 a te che ora
 non sei né soggetto né oggetto
 né lingua usuale né gergo
 né quiete né movimento
 neppure il né che negava
 e che per quanto s'affondino
 gli occhi miei dentro la sua cruna
 mai ti nega abbastanza.

E così sia: ma io
 credo con altrettanta
 forza in tutto il mio nulla,
 perciò non ti ho perduto
 o, più ti perdo e più ti perdi,
 più mi sei simile, più m'avvicini.

sia una poesia d'inappartenenza.
 Ma s'era tua era di qualcuno:
 di te che non sei più forma, ma essenza.
 Dicono che la poesia al suo culmine
 magnifica il Tutto in fuga,
 negano che la testuggine
 sia più veloce del fulmine.
 Tu sola sapevi che il moto
 non è diverso dalla stasi,
 che il vuoto è il pieno e il sereno
 è la più diffusa delle nubi.
 Così meglio intendo il tuo lungo viaggio
 imprigionata tra le bende e i gessi.
 Eppure non mi dà riposo
 sapere che in uno o in due noi siamo una
 [sola cosa.¹²⁸

Even a quite cursory glance instantly reveals that 'Xenia I', 14 is largely woven out of the fabric of 'Così siamo'. Both pieces commence with a third person plural form of the verb 'dire', in Zanzotto in the imperfect tense, in Montale in the present: 'Dicevano' / 'Dicono'. The passage 'a te che ora | non sei né soggetto né oggetto' in 'Così siamo' resurfaces in Montale's 'di te che non sei più forma, ma essenza', where the choice of the last word was probably determined by the author's desire to create an end rhyme with the previous 'inappartenenza'. The poem from *IX Ecloghe* presents in a single sentence a series of words that might well be conceived as opposites: 'soggetto' / 'oggetto', 'lingua usuale' / 'gergo', 'quiete' / 'movimento'. Likewise, in 'Xenia I', 14: 'il moto' / '[la] stasi', 'il vuoto' / 'il pieno', 'il sereno' / 'la più diffusa delle nubi'. Moreover, it should be noted that the verb 'negare', which in 'Così siamo' appears twice, is also to be found in 'Xenia I', 14 and that the 'Così' that opens Montale's penultimate sentence might

conceivably owe something to the beginning of Zanzotto's last strophe: 'E così sia' (a phrase itself reminiscent of that '...ma così sia' which opens the last and most memorable 'motet' in *Occasioni*). As for the closing sentence of 'Xenia I', 14, perhaps Ricci is right to mention *à propos* the ensuing two verses from Luzi's 'Né tregua' (*Primizie del deserto*): 'quando si sia come noi siamo | l'essere morti non ci dà riposo'.¹²⁹

Of course, it is hardly difficult to imagine the intellectual itinerary which led Montale to 'borrow', be it consciously or unconsciously, from 'Così siamo'. Musing over his dead wife and perhaps the possibility of writing a new poem about her, it would surely not have taken a great mental leap for the poet's thoughts to drift in the direction of Zanzotto's poem, seeing that this same text patently concerns the death of someone. What is, however, especially impressive about the intertextual relationship between 'Così siamo' and 'Xenia I', 14 is just how incredibly potent the influence of Zanzotto's elegy was on Montale, as outlined above. In fact, the attraction that the 'philosophical' 'Così siamo' came to exert on Montale was so great as to lead him into penning a text which, quite frankly, strikes the reader as being somewhat incongruous within the wider context of the 'Xenia' as a whole. For, no doubt about it, if individually 'Xenia I', 14 works extremely well and certainly possesses many distinctive and original features with respect to Zanzotto's piece, then, nonetheless, with its high proportion of abstract theorising, evidently inspired in large part by 'Così siamo', this poem sits uneasily amongst its immediate neighbours, appearing somewhat removed from the rest of the uxorial sequence.

Now let us shift forward in time to *La Beltà* and to the verse of 'Satura II'. Two of the most striking and memorable moments in 'Esautorazioni' are the sentence where the

subject states ‘Resto | – Arlecchino – e me ne vado, vado’ and the sentence, coming a few verses later, where we read ‘Ma ci concilieremo | o me e mio fato estremo’. Bearing closely in mind the lexis of these verses, consider the following lines in which Montale, from a holiday resort, addresses himself to the author of a letter from Ascona:

Se potessi vedermi tu diresti
che nulla è di roccioso in questo butterato
sabbiume di policromi
estivanti ed io in mezzo, più *arlecchino*
degli altri. Ma la sera poi sorviene
e *riconcilìa* e chiude. [...] [my italics]

These verses are taken from part II of ‘Botta e risposta II’, a text which, judging from the data supplied in the apparatus criticus to *L’opera in versi*, was almost certainly penned in Versilia during the summer of 1968.¹³⁰ In this context it is anything but incongruous to recollect that the first edition of *La Beltà* was printed in April 1968 and that Montale’s review of Zanzotto’s collection came out in June of the same year.

Admittedly, the case of intertextuality argued for above is not in itself especially interesting. If the author of *Satura* was influenced here by *La Beltà*, then what probably happened was that thanks to the reading of ‘Esautorazioni’ a nexus was established in his memory between two not entirely commonplace words so that when he came to write ‘Botta e risposta II’ the use of ‘arlecchino’ triggered in his mind the verb ‘conciliare’ or vice versa, depending on the precise order in which the poem was created. Still, what *is* quite definitely interesting about this presumed instance of intertextuality and, indeed, the examples of local influence to follow in this section (presuming, of course, that some or all of them are sound), is that they prove that even collections of poetry which differed vastly from Montale’s own style – and in its radical experimentalism *La Beltà* is a far cry

from anything Montale was writing in the Sixties – could nonetheless affect the poet to the point of leaving identifiable local traces in his verse. Even in his twilight years, Montale, it would appear, was far from closed to the most cutting-edge literary trends and, indeed, manifested an extraordinary receptivity to what was going on around him. And, at least in the opinion of the author of the present study, this receptivity to such an eclectic variety of experiences is one of the most fascinating and intellectually stimulating sides to the later Montale.

‘Profezie o memorie o giornali murali’, the second of the two grand ‘poemetti’ in *La Beltà*, divided into eighteen parts, would seem to have been especially influential on the material present in ‘Satura II’. In a recent interview Zanzotto himself suggested that part XIII of this work, which includes a caricature of that stalwart of the Italian poetry anthology ‘La pioggia nel pineto’, may have spurred Montale on to compose ‘Piove’.¹³¹ Two further observations connected to ‘Profezie o memorie o giornali murali’ ought to be adjoined to this comment.

Let us examine the long sentence that brings Montale’s ‘Divinità in incognito’ to a close:

Dicono
che gli dèi non discendono quaggiù,
che il creatore non cala col paracadute,
che il fondatore non fonda perché nessuno
l’ha mai fondato o fonduto
e noi siamo solo disguidi
del suo nullificante magistero;

eppure
se una divinità, anche d’infimo grado,
mi ha sfiorato
quel brivido m’ha detto tutto e intanto
l’agnizione mancava e il non essente
essere dileguava.

More than likely, the key intertext for the opening three verses of the above extract ('Dicono | che gli dèi non discendono quaggiù, | che il creatore non cala col paracadute [...]'), was Carlo Izzo's *Poesie di W. H. Auden*, reviewed by Montale when it first came out in 1952 (*SMP* 1410-16) and again when it was reprinted in 1961 (*SMP* 2425-26). There, Izzo translates a segment of Auden's '*O for doors to be open and an invite with gilded edges*' as follows: 'E vi fosse un buco nel pavimento del cielo, e Pietro e Paolo | E ogni impeccabile santo sorpreso scendessero come paracadute [...]'.¹³² For the paradoxical syntagma 'il non essente | essere', meanwhile, we need look no further than the previous section of this thesis, that concerning Karl Löwith's *Critica dell'esistenza storica*. But what about Montale's 'divinità, anche d'infimo grado'? In part XVII of 'Profezie o memorie o giornali murali' Zanzotto, that poet whose mobility is – in the words of Montale – 'insieme fisica e meta-fisica', includes in a list of 'persone che s'aggirano | appunto qui e là là e qui' 'eoni d'infimo grado'. Now, in Gnosticism an 'aeon' is a being emanating from God; Jesus Christ was often deemed to be the most perfect aeon. Given all this, surely it is quite reasonable to conjecture that, as well as Auden and Löwith, Montale had Zanzotto somewhere in the back of his mind when he composed the ending to 'Divinità in incognito'? In summary, it would seem most probable that in a characteristically fertile fusion between creative imagination and literary memory, Montale managed to enrich the final part of 'Divinità in incognito' with not one but three contemporary texts whilst at the same time producing a sentence that fitted seamlessly into its poetic context.

Proceeding to our final presumed case of literary influence regarding *La Beltà* and ‘Satura II’, the verbless sentence that concludes the second part of ‘Dopo una fuga’ reads: ‘Il sonno di un acquario’. In the opinion of Ricci, for his ‘sonno di un acquario’ Montale might have contracted a debt with Luzi’s ‘Bureau’ (*Nel magma*), where we find the words ‘luce d’acquario’.¹³³ Still, if there does indeed exist a single textual source for Montale’s ‘sonno di un acquario’, it is most probably not ‘Bureau’ but, instead, the same part XVII of ‘Profezie o memorie o giornali murali’. There, in fact, we encounter the verse ‘certi sospesi sonni dell’acqua e dei cieli’. True, the second part of ‘Dopo una fuga’ has the slumber of an ‘acquario’ rather than that of ‘acqua’ but, then, it might profitably be recalled that earlier on in part XVII there figures a triplet of substantives terminating in ‘ario’: ‘Ecco raso terra un ossario, no, un lieve erbario | di proteste-ossequi, anzi vivario’. And, at the risk of stating the obvious, one might add that the latter substantive is not just phonically but also semantically extremely close to Montale’s ‘acquario’. Certainly, the author of *La Beltà* associated ‘vivario’ with ‘acquario’, as a glance at the opening to part VII of ‘Possibili prefazi o riprese o conclusioni’ should serve to prove:

Più e meno che oniricamente
dal versante del voi-vero dell’io-forse,
più o meno, a fondo e di striscio,
riallaccio e preservò faseggiare e atteggiare:
non sta il punto di equilibrio mai là: non apporsi accingersi
a te bella, beltà,
vivario acquario dei verdi dei vivi [...].

Beyond 'Satura I' and 'Satura II'

With our discourse on Montale and *La Beltà* terminated, our inquiry into the significance of the literature of the Sixties for the overall form and content of *Satura* may also be deemed concluded. At this precise juncture, however, there surfaces a successive question: leaving aside *Diario postumo*, which incorporates verse composed in a period corresponding both to the composition of *Satura* and to that of the successive three collections, what of the salience of contemporary writing for the general style of the poetry between *Diari* and *Altri versi*?

Quite recently, De Rosa has argued that Montale's post-*Bufera* verse may be divided into two distinct parts, the first constituted by the texts of *Satura* and *Diari*, the second by the pieces gathered together in *Altri versi* (*Quaderno* would stand somewhere between these two parts).¹³⁴ De Rosa suggests several differences between the texts of the two phases, most importantly observing in the latter 'una rinnovata capacità mitopoietica' (see, above all, that memorable sequence of poems regarding Clizia and Annetta at the end of the second section of *Altri versi*).¹³⁵ Yet, if the formal and thematic developments in the post-*Satura* verse highlighted by De Rosa are certainly not of negligible interest, it is nonetheless felt that the most authoritative 'montalisti', amongst which the likes of Martelli and Luperini, are right to consider *Diari*, *Quaderno* and *Altri versi* as essentially a most homogeneous literary corpus.¹³⁶ In fact, these three collections, whilst each having its own set of distinctive features, patently move in an extremely similar poetic direction. Given the veracity of this observation, the above question might be reformulated in the following terms: do there exist divergences between the Montale of *Satura* and that of the

ensuing three volumes and, if so, are these divergences sufficiently radical to demand an extensive intertextual investigation such as that devoted earlier to the 'Xenia' and to 'Satura I' and 'Satura II'?

Certainly, the last three volumes of verse do diverge in part from *Satura*; most obviously, on a structural level. Thus, if the latter, analogously to Montale's previous collections, had manifested a complex and intricate structure, in *Diari* the pieces are simply organised into two chronological sections, 'Diario del '71' and 'Diario del '72', whilst in *Quaderno* there exist no internal divisions whatsoever. (The bipartite thematic structure of *Altri versi* is to be attributed to the editors of *L'opera in versi*.)¹³⁷ It ought to be stressed, furthermore, that in his last collections Montale's previous satirical voice and, above all, his polemic against the modern world, is notably attenuated: as the interested party informed Giuliano Deگو in April 1973, '[n]elle poesie piú recenti [i.e. the future texts of *Diari*] [...] non c'è nessuna polemica. Solo la vita di un uomo chiuso nella sua stanza. Il mondo penetra ancora coi suoi echi, ma da lontano'.¹³⁸ Thematically speaking, Montale's final poems tend to consist either of philosophical speculation on topics such as time, space and being or recollections of the past. The wider world has a lesser presence than ever before; only rarely does the author offer a panorama of the contemporary reality beyond his flat on via Bigli and the courtyard below.¹³⁹ In general, the texts become more prosaic than ever before (although, predictably enough, Montale's music never dies out completely).¹⁴⁰ For example, the following quotation represents, without the original line breaks, the first strophe of 'La caccia' (*Diari*): 'Si dice che il poeta debba andare a caccia dei suoi contenuti. E si afferma altresì che le sue prede debbono corrispondere a ciò che avviene nel mondo, anzi a quel che sarebbe un mondo

che fosse migliore'. A person reading these two sentences without any knowledge of their origin might well come to the conclusion that they derive from a literary essay or similar. He or she would almost certainly be taken aback at the discovery that they form the first five verses of a poem.

Having stated all this, it must be admitted that *Diari*, *Quaderno* and *Altri versi*, as Luperini asserts, 'indubbiamente si collocano nel solco di *Satura*'.¹⁴¹ One can seriously argue, as has been done in the course of this study, that there exists a broad gap between *Bufera* / 'Botta e risposta I' and the succeeding 'Xenia'. One can also claim quite legitimately that 'Satura I' and 'Satura II' differ fundamentally from Montale's anterior verse. However, the distance between 'Satura I' / 'Satura II' and the chronologically later poems, all composed within a relatively brief temporal arc (approximately ten years in total), is surely not especially vast. No paradigm shift takes place between the 'quarto' and the 'quinto' Montale: more than anything else, the final poems seem to constitute a continuation and development of 'Satura II' (and, in particular, certain poems in the conclusive pages of this section such as 'Luci e colori' and 'L'Altro'). (An idea, this last, that Montale himself apparently sanctioned, once affirming: 'In *Satura* ci sono già delle poesie che fanno parte di questo *Diario* [del '71 e del '72] diciamo, e altre no [...] ma le ultime fanno già presagire quello che sarà poi questo *Diario*'.)¹⁴² In short, the reader of the post-*Satura* verse does not sense that he has before him a fundamentally new poetic manner.

All the above goes to explain why this study will not incorporate a detailed analysis of the salience of the literature of the Sixties for the overall style of the post-*Satura* collections: the absence of radical formal or thematic innovations in the move from the

‘quarto’ to the ‘quinto’ Montale renders such an analysis superfluous. There lingers, however, an exigency to discuss those texts from the Sixties that were not of major import for the stylistic shift from *Bufera* to the ‘Xenia’ or from the ‘Xenia’ to ‘Satura I’ / ‘Satura II’ but were most likely of significance for the composition of particular passages in *Satura* and the succeeding collections. This will be the critical terrain of the final part of our study.

¹ Grignani, ‘«Satura»: da miscellanea a libro’, p. 120.

² [Eugenio Montale], ‘Per Angelo Jacomuzzi. Lettera inedita (1969)’, *Sigma*, XX, 3 (January-June 1995), 5-8 (p. 6).

³ Flavia Ravazzoli, ‘Figure etimologiche, tautologie e altri contagi in “Satura” di Eugenio Montale’, in *Il testo perpetuo: studi sui movimenti retorici del linguaggio* (Milan: Bompiani, 1991), pp. 37-67 (p. 50). For Fortini, meanwhile, the ‘Xenia’ are ‘relativamente autonom[i] [...] e quasi separabil[i] dal resto dell’opera’ (‘«Satura» nel 1971’, p. 114). And, as Luperini has noted, a provisional title for the fourth collection was, in fact, *Xenia e Satura* (*Storia di Montale*, p. 206).

⁴ Contributions to the debate on the novelty of ‘Satura I’ and ‘Satura II’ published in the last few years include Angelo Marchese, ‘La novità di «Satura»’, in *Amico dell’invisibile: La personalità e la poesia di Eugenio Montale* (Turin: SEI, 1996), pp. 222-48; De Rosa, ‘Profilo di Satura’ and, by the same critic, ‘Introduction à Satura’, *Chroniques italiennes*, 62 (2000), 55-77.

⁵ For a similar distinction, see Aldo Rossi, 'Il punto su Montale dopo il quarto libro, "Satura"', *L'approdo letterario*, XVII, 53 (March 1971), 3-20 (p. 8) and Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 207.

⁶ Macrí, 'Analisi del quarto libro', p. 392.

⁷ In fact, given the proportion of texts dedicated to her, *Satura* may well be considered Mosca's book (see De Rosa, 'Profilo di Satura', p. 118).

⁸ See Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 207.

⁹ For confirmation that this satirical discourse represents a major novelty in Montale's poetry, see Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 207, where one reads 'la satira in versi rappresenta l'aspetto più innovativo della quarta raccolta', as well as De Rosa, 'Profilo di Satura', p. 125.

¹⁰ De Rosa, 'Profilo di Satura', p. 125. Corti, meanwhile, has observed that 'Montale asporta spesso nella prassi satirica vocaboli dal lussureggiante lessico della civiltà dei consumi e li inserisce nella lingua montaliana, dove la loro estraneità li rende efficacemente mostruosi' ('Un nuovo messaggio di Montale: *Satura*', p. 233).

¹¹ Corti, 'Un nuovo messaggio di Montale: *Satura*', p. 234.

¹² Corti, 'Un nuovo messaggio di Montale: *Satura*', p. 235. On Montale's rhetoric in *Satura*, see also Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, pp. 203-04 and, above all, Ravazzoli, 'Figure etimologiche, tautologie e altri contagi in "Satura" di Eugenio Montale'.

¹³ Montale affirmed: 'Vorrei tanto che anche Vittorio Sereni vincesse il Nobel. Ma chissà quando ci sarà un nuovo turno per l'Italia; e poi, forse, il prossimo lo daranno a un narratore'. See Porzio, *Con Montale a Stoccolma*, p. 70.

¹⁴ Gilberto Lonardi, 'Di certe assenze in Sereni', in *La poesia di Vittorio Sereni: Atti del Convegno* (Milan: Librex, 1985), pp. 106-18 (p. 111). On Sereni and the later poetry of Montale, see also Fortini, '«Satura» nel 1971', p. 117; Dante Isella, 'La lingua poetica di Sereni', in *La poesia di Vittorio Sereni*, pp. 21-32 (p. 31); Gilberto Lonardi, 'L'altra Madre', in *La poesia di Eugenio Montale: Atti del Convegno Internazionale: Milano – 12 / 13 / 14 settembre: Genova – 15 settembre: 1982*, pp. 263-79 (pp. 272-73); Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, p. 201; Macrí, 'L'«improprietà» tra sublimità e satira nella poesia di Montale (con un'appendice sul questionario Guarnieri)', p. 362; Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', pp. 188-89; Ricci, *Il prisma di Arsenio*, pp. 151-67.

¹⁵ Vittorio Sereni, *Gli strumenti umani* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965).

¹⁶ The back page of the jacket to the 1965 edition of *Gli strumenti umani* carries the following sentence: 'Non una raccolta di versi ma, tra il '45 e il '65, *un libro* articolato e compatto, chiuso e aperto: non un «canzoniere» e tanto meno un «discorso in versi», ma una progressione di riepiloghi parziali, di proposte in divenire'.

¹⁷ Moving in a similar direction, Lonardi states in 'Di certe assenze in Sereni': 'l'assenza di una anche imperfetta forma di canzoniere [in Sereni] comporta l'estraneità [...] a un dialogo continuo, fondante, ontologico con e per il Femminile. C'è un tu femminile, ma non gli spettano diritti maggiori che ai vari *tu* [...]. Questo vuole l'apetrarchismo di ogni assetto "a diario", e questo forse ha appreso o riappreso da Sereni il Montale ultimo' (pp. 110-11).

¹⁸ See, for example, Isella, 'La lingua poetica di Sereni', pp. 27-28 and numerous passages in Ricci, *Il prisma di Arsenio*.

¹⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Sereni's poetry here are taken from Vittorio Sereni, *Poesie*, ed. by D. Isella (Milan: Mondadori, 1995).

²⁰ See Ricci, *Il prisma di Arsenio*, p. 158. On Montale and 'Il male d'Africa', see also footnote 17 on the same page and, in the same volume, p. 161.

²¹ Barbierato, 'Tradizione e rinnovamento nella versificazione di «Satura»', p. 92.

²² Andrea Pelosi, 'La metrica scalare del primo Sereni', *Studi novecenteschi*, XV, 35 (June 1988), 143-53 (p. 145).

²³ For these and the other statistics presented here relating to the frequency of types of verse from *Ossi* to *Satura*, see the table in Barbierato, 'Tradizione e rinnovamento nella versificazione di «Satura»', pp. 69-70.

²⁴ Barbierato, 'Tradizione e rinnovamento nella versificazione di «Satura»', p. 76-77.

²⁵ Barbierato, 'Tradizione e rinnovamento nella versificazione di «Satura»', p. 69.

²⁶ Barbierato, 'Tradizione e rinnovamento nella versificazione di «Satura»', p. 79.

²⁷ Vittorio Sereni, 'Il nome di poeta', in *Gli immediati dintorni* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1962), pp. 86-89 (p. 86).

²⁸ On the language of Sereni, see Isella, 'La lingua poetica di Sereni' and Antonio Girardi, 'Sereni, il parlato, la «terza generazione»', *Studi novecenteschi*, XIV, 33 (June 1987), 127-39.

²⁹ On Montale's review of *Gli strumenti umani* and 'Ah!', see Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, p. 201.

³⁰ Alfredo Luzi, *Introduzione a Sereni* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1990), p. 105.

³¹ In 'Gozzano, dopo trent'anni' (*SMP* 1270-80), an article which first appeared the year after the composition of '*Nubi color magenta...*', Montale quotes the first half of the second strophe of 'Invernale': '«Resta!» Ella chiuse il mio braccio conserto, | le sue dita intrecciò, vivi legami, | alle mie dita. «Resta, se tu m'ami!»'.

³² Regarding the 'grande stile', see Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'Grande stile e lirica moderna. Appunti tipologici', in *La tradizione del Novecento: nuova serie* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1987), pp. 7-24. On the difference between *Gli strumenti umani* and *Satura*, see Girardi, 'Sereni, il parlato, la «terza generazione»', pp. 134-35 and Guido Mazzoni, 'Verifica dei valori. Saggio su *Gli strumenti umani*', *Allegoria*, VI, 18 (1994), 45-81 (pp. 79-80).

³³ In *Il prisma di Arsenio Ricci* suggests a Serenian echo in Montale as far back as *Le occasioni* (p. 156). Yet, the bulk of her conjectures of local influence pertain to the poetry from the fourth collection onwards. According to Ricci, it is possible to isolate 'filoni privilegiati che [...] sembrano avere spinto con una certa sistematicità la scrittura tardomontaliana in territori già battuti da quella del più giovane e stimato poeta lombardo' (p. 161). The two most important 'filoni' revolve around: (i) 'la volontà [...] di una ridefinizione delle coordinate teorico-pratiche dell'agire poetico, così come la necessità di una presa di posizione rispetto alle questioni più urgenti (prima fra tutte, quella dell'*engagement*) poste all'intellettuale dalla complessa realtà sociale e culturale degli anni Sessanta-Settanta' (p. 162) (Ricci mentions in this context passages from 'Lettera a Malvolio', 'L'angelo nero' and 'p.p.c.');

(ii) '[la] vita come sonno, dormiveglia, premorte' (p. 164) (and here she quotes from 'Xenia I', 4, 'La vita oscilla...',

‘Hamburger steak’ and ‘Annetta’). Finally, Ricci points out several other possible cases of intertextual echoes which do not relate closely to either of the above thematic fields (pp. 166-67).

³⁴ Mazzoni, ‘*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento’, p. 188. For a reading of Montale’s poem, see Claudio Varese, ‘L’Arno a Rovezzano’, in *Lettture Montaliane in occasione dell’80° compleanno del Poeta* (Genoa: Bozzi, 1977), pp. 323-31.

³⁵ See Laura Barile’s notes to ‘L’Arno a Rovezzano’ in *Antologia della poesia italiana*, ed. by C. Segre and C. Ossola (Turin: Einaudi-Gallimard, vol. 1, 1997; vol. 2, 1998; vol. 3, 1999), vol. 3, pp. 1111-12 (p. 1112).

³⁶ ‘Il ritorno’ does not describe exclusively Bocca di Magra. In ‘La Riviera di Ciceri (e la mia)’ (1970) Montale wrote of Monterosso: ‘Sono ancora in piedi [...] villette di tipo coloniale, di colore appena caramellato e spesso vi si notano *bow-windows* e inutili torrette. Una di queste torrette, con vetri policromi e scala a chiocciola interna, si alzava dalla nostra villa e l’ho trasferita pari pari, in una mia poesia [‘Il ritorno’], a Bocca di Magra’ (*SMAMS* 1457).

³⁷ See the notes by Luca Lenzini to ‘Gli amici’ in Vittorio Sereni, *Il grande amico: Poesie 1935-1981* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1990), pp. 225-26 (p. 226).

³⁸ Vittorio Sereni, ‘Il ritorno’, in *Lettture Montaliane in occasione dell’80° compleanno del Poeta*, pp. 191-95 (p. 194).

³⁹ For a discussion of ‘Botta e risposta II’, see Franco Croce, ‘*Satura*’, in *La poesia di Eugenio Montale: Atti del Convegno Internazionale: Milano – 12/13/14 settembre:*

Genova – 15 settembre: 1982, pp. 353-80 (pp. 363-68) and Ó Ceallacháin, *Eugenio Montale*, pp. 88-90.

⁴⁰ Lonardi, 'L'altra Madre', pp. 272-73. Incidentally, it is not inconceivable that for the title of this poem Montale might have been influenced by Angiolo Silvio Novaro's *Il cuore nascosto* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1920). This volume, mentioned by Montale in an article from 1927 (*SMP* 3101), includes a poem entitled 'La musa mia'. On 'La musa mia' and Montale's early verse, see Stefano Verdino, 'Angiolo Silvio Novaro, Il poeta perduto', *Poesia*, XV, 164 (September 2002), 21 (this article does not contain any reference to 'La mia Musa').

⁴¹ Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'La "Lettera a Malvolio"', in *Profilo di un autore*, pp. 134-67 (p. 164). On Sereni and 'Lettera a Malvolio', see also Ricci, *Il prisma di Arsenio*, pp. 162-63.

⁴² I quote here from the original 1965 edition of *Gli strumenti umani*. In Dante Isella's 1995 edition of Sereni's poetry, on the other hand, one finds: '*E di me splendea la miglior parte*'.

⁴³ See Sereni, *Il grande amico*, p. 215.

⁴⁴ Zollino, on the other hand, finds in 'Dopopioggia' a 'versione parodica' of 'alcune tipiche immagini ricorrenti in *Alcyone*'. See Zollino, 'Il riferimento dannunziano nell'ultimo Montale (da *Satura* ad *Altri versi*)', pp. 458-59 (p. 458).

⁴⁵ See Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 192.

⁴⁶ *Auto da fé* may now be found in *SMAMS* 5-380.

⁴⁷ Christian Morgenstern, *Canti grotteschi: Galgenlieder. Palmstroem. Palma Kunkel*, trans. by A. Turazza (Milan-Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1961).

⁴⁸ See Taffon, 'Su Montale critico e i poeti italiani del Novecento', p. 101.

⁴⁹ See Casadei, 'Nella stagione di «Satura»', p. 88.

⁵⁰ Ernesto Ragazzoni, *Poesie*, ed. by A. Cajumi (Milan: Martello, 1956).

⁵¹ Goffredo Parise, *Il padrone* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1965); Maria Corti, *Il ballo dei sapienti* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966); Enrico Emanuelli, *Un gran bel viaggio* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1967).

⁵² See Gianni Celati, 'Si comincia con Swift: Per recuperare quel «più»', *Il Caffè letterario e satirico*, XV, 3 (June 1968), 3-6 (pp. 3-4).

⁵³ Franco Fortini, *L'ospite ingrato: Testi e note per versi ironici* (Bari: De Donato, 1966). Incidentally, it would seem quite likely that two poems from Fortini's 1963 collection *Una volta per sempre*, 'Seconda lettera da Babilonia' and 'La gronda', are echoed in 'Satura II' or, to be more precise, in 'Nel silenzio' and 'Vedo un uccello fermo sulla grondaia...'. See Pellini, 'L'ultimo Montale: donne miracoli treni telefoni sciopero generale', pp. 314-24.

⁵⁴ Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 193.

⁵⁵ Cesare Vivaldi, 'Introduzione', in *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi*, ed. by C. Vivaldi (Parma: Guanda, 1964), pp. ix-xxix (p. ix).

⁵⁶ Vivaldi, 'Introduzione', pp. ix-x.

⁵⁷ Vivaldi, 'Introduzione', p. xxvii.

⁵⁸ Vivaldi, 'Introduzione', p. xxvi.

⁵⁹ Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 194.

⁶⁰ Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', pp. 194-95.

⁶¹ Porzio, *Con Montale a Stoccolma*, pp. 46-47.

⁶² It might be noted that the name of Gaio Fratini has already been mentioned in connection with the later poetry of Montale, albeit extremely briefly, by Oreste Macrí. In the course of a discussion of Montale's satire this critic asserts: 'Sul terreno preparatorio del declassamento privato-ironico, bisognerebbe tener conto, nell'ambito della Roma di Flaiano e Sinisgalli, d'altri poeti, come Gaio Fratini e Saverio Völlaro' ('L'«improprietas» tra sublimità e satira nella poesia di Montale (con un'appendice sul questionario Guarnieri)', p. 362).

⁶³ In the context of a discussion of 'In una città del nord', it is worth recalling the following sentences by Nascimbeni regarding Montale: 'Stoccolma gli fece subito l'incanto. Dopo un pranzo all'ambasciata italiana, continuava a parlare di un parco dove – gli era stato detto – vivevano in libertà le volpi. Quelle volpi, immaginate tra la neve e gli alberi, sembravano interessarlo più della conferenza stampa che doveva tenere'. See Giulio Nascimbeni, *Montale: Biografia di un poeta* (Milan: Longanesi, 1986), pp. 147-48. One might also recall here a segment of *Con Montale a Stoccolma* about the wife of the Italian ambassador to Sweden: 'L'Ambasciatrice è entusiasta della Svezia, della natura e del paesaggio svedesi e, soprattutto, del parco e del bosco che attorniano l'Ambasciata. Racconta degli scoiattoli e delle volpi innumerevoli qui attorno fino a destare qualche preoccupazione: d'estate gli scoiattoli, con disinvoltura sfacciata, non solo spogliano tutti gli alberi da frutta, meli e peri, ma entrano in casa dalle porte-finestre

e si è costretti a rincorrerli e a scacciarli perché rosicchiano e danneggiano i tappeti' (p. 44).

⁶⁴ The text commences: 'Perché tardi? Nel pino lo scoiattolo | batte la coda a torcia sulla scorza'. The first sentence of the second and final quatrain of this 'motet' reads: 'A un soffio il pigro fumo trasalisce, | si difende nel punto che ti chiude'.

⁶⁵ Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 196.

⁶⁶ On 'Le ore della sera', see Benedetto Marzullo, 'Un inedito di Montale', *Nuova antologia*, 112, 530, 2118-2120 (June-August 1977), 206-08 and Riccardo Scrivano, 'Varianti montaliane: «Le ore della sera»', in *Metafore e miti di Eugenio Montale* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1997), pp. 143-54.

⁶⁷ Glauco Cambon, 'Montale sull'ultima spiaggia. Pagine di diario', in *La poesia di Eugenio Montale: Atti del Convegno Internazionale tenuto a Genova dal 25 al 28 novembre 1982*, pp. 335-56 (p. 342).

⁶⁸ Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'Nelo Risi', in *Poeti italiani del Novecento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1978), pp. 853-57 (p. 857).

⁶⁹ Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia*, pp. 194-95 and Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', pp. 198-207.

⁷⁰ Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia*, pp. 194-95.

⁷¹ Nelo Risi, *Pensieri elementari* (Milan: Mondadori, 1961) and *Dentro la sostanza* (Milan: Mondadori, 1965).

⁷² Eugenio Montale, *Il bulldog di legno: Intervista di Giuliano Dego a Eugenio Montale* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1985), p. 42.

⁷³ See Giovanni Raboni, 'Introduzione', in Nelo Risi, *Poesie scelte (1943-1975)*, ed. by G. Raboni (Milan: Mondadori, 1977), pp. xi-xxi (p. xvi).

⁷⁴ Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 199.

⁷⁵ See Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', pp. 199-200.

⁷⁶ See Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', pp. 200-01.

⁷⁷ See Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 202.

⁷⁸ See Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', pp. 202-03.

⁷⁹ See Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 205.

⁸⁰ See Montale, *L'opera in versi*, p. 1113.

⁸¹ For information relating to this translation, see Giuseppe Ungaretti, *Vita d'un uomo: Viaggi e lezioni*, ed. by P. Montefoschi (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), pp. 1351-52.

⁸² The text is taken from Ungaretti, *Vita d'un uomo: Viaggi e lezioni*, p. 397.

⁸³ Ungaretti, *Vita d'un uomo: Viaggi e lezioni*, p. 397.

⁸⁴ Franco Contorbia, *Sinigaglia, Montale e il «sabià»* (Borgomanero: Fondazione Achille Marazza, 2001), p. 29. Mauro Musciacchio, *Un uccello che si chiama Sabià* (Genoa: Casa Editrice Liguria, 1959).

⁸⁵ Sandro Sinigaglia, *La Camena gurgandina* (Turin: Einaudi, 1979). The poem is also present in Sandro Sinigaglia, *Poesie* (Milan: Garzanti, 1997). The quotation here is taken from the latter volume.

⁸⁶ Contorbia, *Sinigaglia, Montale e il «sabià»*, p. 31.

⁸⁷ Contorbia, *Sinigaglia, Montale e il «sabià»*, p. 29.

⁸⁸ Cesare Segre, 'La *Canção do exílio* di Gonçalves Dias ovvero le strutture nel tempo', *Strumenti critici*, VII, II-III, 21-22 (October 1973), 186-215. There is a particular reason why the Genoese poet might have been interested in this issue of *Strumenti critici*: immediately after Segre's text, in the section of the periodical entitled 'Microfilm', there appears Eugenio Montale, 'Due poesie inedite', ed. by M. A. Grignani, 217-23.

⁸⁹ See Segre, 'Due note per Montale', p. 26.

⁹⁰ Cesare Segre, *Le strutture e il tempo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), pp. 221-52. It is worth adding that the issues of *Strumenti critici* for 1973 and *Le strutture e il tempo* are present in the Fondo Montale.

⁹¹ See Segre, 'Due note per Montale', p. 26. Segre does not believe that Ungaretti's translation was important for Montale: 'Noto che la *Canção* non è di facile reperimento, e non è nemmeno conosciuta in Italia, se non dai lusofili (la traduzione che ne fece Ungaretti [...] restò senza echi)' (p. 27).

⁹² Segre, 'Due note per Montale', pp. 26-27. Segre also points out 'una certa rassomiglianza strutturale' between 'Canção do exílio' and 'Il sabià' (see p. 27).

⁹³ On 'In un giardino "italiano"' and the writing not of Risi but of Gianna Manzini, see Ioli, *Montale*, pp. 173-74.

⁹⁴ For an analysis of 'Ribaltamento', see Lorenzo Renzi, 'Effetti di sordina nell'ultimo Montale', *Studi novecenteschi*, VII, 19 (June 1980), 81-94 and Ó Ceallacháin, *Eugenio Montale*, pp. 116-17.

⁹⁵ Domenico Porzio, 'Montale secondo Montale', *L'Espresso*, 9 October 1977, 138-45 (p. 143).

⁹⁶ Arshi Pipa, 'L'ultimo Montale', in *La poesia di Eugenio Montale: Atti del Convegno Internazionale tenuto a Genova dal 25 al 28 novembre 1982*, pp. 241-64 (p. 241).

⁹⁷ Nelo Risi, *Amica mia nemica* (Milan: Mondadori, 1976).

⁹⁸ Nelo Risi furnished me with this precious information in a conversation that took place in August 2002.

⁹⁹ Mengaldo, 'Nelo Risi', p. 856.

¹⁰⁰ In a private interview with Nelo Risi held in July 2001 I enquired about the possibility of an influence of Risi's writing on Montale. Risi responded as follows: 'Io conoscevo bene Montale. Quand'era senatore a vita, per un periodo di tre o quattro anni, veniva a mangiare da me e mia moglie Edith Bruck. Il rispetto che ho avuto per Montale è stato immenso: non c'è dubbio che egli è stato il poeta che ha maggiormente condizionato il secolo italiano della poesia. Allora credevo che l'idea che noi poeti più giovani avessimo potuto suggerirgli qualcosa fosse piuttosto supponente. Di conseguenza in questo mio 'colloquio' [...] con [...] Montale, non ho mai voluto intavolare la questione della sua svolta poetica. Ma so che leggeva i nostri versi; so che ne ha tenuto conto. Ritengo che qualcosa abbia preso dalla mia poesia'. (A transcription of my interview with Risi is due to be published in a future issue of *The Italianist*.)

¹⁰¹ See Casadei, 'Nella stagione di «Satura»' and, in particular, p. 67 of this article.

¹⁰² Karl Löwith, *Critica dell'esistenza storica*, trans. by A. L. Künkler Giavotto (Naples: Morano, 1967). Henceforth, this volume will also be referred to through the abbreviation *CES*.

¹⁰³ Numerous scholars have addressed the issue of the significance of philosophical writing for the poetry of Montale, focusing for the most part on the first three collections. Limiting ourselves to work published in the last two decades, we might recall Giovanni Bardazzi, 'Schopenhauer tra Montale e Sbarbaro', *Studi novecenteschi*, XV, 35 (June 1988), 63-107; Elena Boretti, 'Montale e Bergson', *Le lingue del Mondo*, L, 2 (March-April 1985), 103-16; Leonardo Bucciardini, 'A un grande filosofo: Note sul rapporto Montale-Croce' and Saverio Orlando, 'Filosofia, Ninfa gentile', both in *La fortezza*, II, 2 (1991), 82-84 and 107-13; Franco Contorbia, 'Montale, Genova, il modernismo', in *Montale, Genova, il modernismo e altri saggi montaliani* (Bologna: Pendragon, 1999), pp. 13-52; Raffaele Lampugnani, 'Immanenza e trascendenza in Montale: l'esempio di Bergson', *Spunti e ricerche*, 6 (1990), 57-75; Marchese, *Montale: La ricerca dell'Altro*; Roberto Orlando, 'Il 'razionalismo' di Montale fra Bergson e Šestov', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, III, XXIV, 4 (1994), 973-1012; Roberto Orlando, 'Il tempo negli «Ossi di seppia» (con alcune fonti filosofiche)', *Spunti e ricerche*, 10 (1994), 1-42; Roberto Orlando, 'Tema e *imagery* di *Tempo e tempi* (Montale, *Satura*)', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, III, XXIV, 1 (1994), 439-54; Bruno Rosada, 'Il contingentismo di Montale', *Studi novecenteschi*, X, 25/26 (June-December 1983), 5-56; Claudio Scarpati, 'Scepsi e ascesi all'epoca degli «Ossi»' and 'Montale, Contini e le «Rencontres»', both in *Sulla cultura di Montale: Tre conversazioni* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1997), pp. 7-32 and 57-84.

¹⁰⁴ See 'Francesco Flora e l'«Ulysses». (Polemichetta Montale-Cabibbe)', *Rivista di studi crociani*, V, I (1968), 121-22.

¹⁰⁵ See *Rivista di studi crociani*, V, I (1968), 106-08. Given the standpoint of the periodical in question, Franchini's slating of *Critica dell'esistenza storica* was, to say the least, predictable.

¹⁰⁶ Montale wrote in his final years: 'Al tempo cronologico non mi sono mai del tutto rassegnato; ed è questa congenita diffidenza che mi ha sempre tenuto lontano da ogni integrale storicismo, materialista o dialettico che sia' (Eugenio Montale, *Nel nostro tempo* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1972), p. 8). For pre-1968 statements that manifest the poet's anti-historicism, see Elisabetta Graziosi, *Il tempo in Montale: Storia di un tema* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978), pp. 132-37. For Schopenhauer as a source for *Satura*'s anti-historicism, see Marchese, *Montale: La ricerca dell'Altro*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰⁷ On Montale's critique of dialectics, see Vincenzo Di Benedetto, 'Montale fra trascendenza e immanenza', *Otto/Novecento*, XVIII, 6 (1994), 83-113 (pp. 90-95).

¹⁰⁸ I would like to express here my gratitude to Mario Rovere at the Ufficio Conservazione of the municipal library of Milan for his kind assistance during my time in Milan.

¹⁰⁹ 'La storia' may contain distinct echoes of other philosophical texts. On the possible influence of the writing of Merleau-Ponty, for instance, see Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia*, p. 181.

¹¹⁰ For another possible source for this verse, see Di Benedetto, 'Montale fra trascendenza e immanenza', p. 95.

¹¹¹ See Montale, *L'opera in versi*, p. 1070.

¹¹² See Reginald John Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 282.

¹¹³ See Nicola Gardini, 'Lingua e pensiero nel primo Zanzotto: dagli ermetici a Montale', *Otto/Novecento*, XIX, 2 (March-April 1995), 73-97 (p. 74).

¹¹⁴ Porzio, *Con Montale a Stoccolma*, p. 17.

¹¹⁵ Cambon, 'Montale sull'ultima spiaggia. Pagine di diario', p. 342.

¹¹⁶ Andrea Zanzotto, *La Beltà* (Milan: Mondadori, 1968). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Zanzotto's poetry are taken from Andrea Zanzotto, *Le poesie e prose scelte*, ed. by S. Dal Bianco and G. M. Villalta (Milan: Mondadori, 1999). Incidentally, it might be pointed out here that Zanzotto has been one of the most sensitive readers of Montale's later poetry: see the section 'Eugenio Montale' in Andrea Zanzotto, *Fantasie di avvicinamento*, pp. 15-44. (On Zanzotto's reading of the later Montale, see Riccardo Scrivano, 'Marginalità montaliane', *La rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 82, 1-2 (January-August 1978), 73-84 (pp. 81-82) and Pietro Cataldi, 'Zanzotto e Montale', *l'immaginazione*, 37-38 (January-February 1987), 5.)

¹¹⁷ See Osip Mandelstam, 'Della natura della parola', in *La Quarta Prosa: Sulla poesia: Discorso su Dante: Viaggio in Armenia* (Bari: De Donato, 1967), pp. 59-78 (p. 65).

¹¹⁸ See Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia*, p. 176.

¹¹⁹ Vivienne Hand, *Zanzotto* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 131.

¹²⁰ See Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'Un libro importante su Montale', in *La tradizione del Novecento: nuova serie*, pp. 189-214 (p. 202).

¹²¹ Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, p. 201.

¹²² Stefano Agosti, 'Introduzione alla poesia di Zanzotto', in Andrea Zanzotto, *Poesie (1938-1972)*, ed. by S. Agosti (Milan: Mondadori, 1973), pp. 9-27 (p. 20).

¹²³ Agosti, 'Introduzione alla poesia di Zanzotto', p. 22.

¹²⁴ For a fuller list, see Ravazzoli, 'Figure etimologiche, tautologie e altri contagi in "Satura" di Eugenio Montale', pp. 43-48.

¹²⁵ Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 190.

¹²⁶ Of course, these figures are not absent from Montale's earlier prose writing (although it must be admitted that they are considerably less frequent there than in the future verse). See Maria Antonietta Grignani, 'Incespicare in prosa e in poesia: tecniche argomentative e intertestualità nell'ultimo Montale', *Allegoria*, II, 6 (1990), 25-46 and, in particular, the section 'Intenzioni argomentative, trasfusioni retoriche', pp. 30-36.

¹²⁷ Mazzoni, '*Satura* e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 190. Perhaps Mazzoni could have mentioned Agosti's well-known reading of 'Sul lago d'Orta', where the latter critic draws a parallel between Montale's 'proda sabbiosa erbosa' and Zanzotto's characteristic 'stilemi di contraddizione' (see Agosti, 'Il testo della poesia in Montale: "Sul lago d'Orta"', p. 175). And to Agosti's observation one might add that 'erbe' and 'sabbie' sit almost side by side in a verse from Montale's Italian translation of W. B. Yeats' 'The Indian to His Love': 'tra l'erbe, tra le sabbie, susurrando'. See 'L'indiano all'amata' in *Quaderno di traduzioni (L'opera in versi)*.

¹²⁸ The text of 'Così siamo' quoted is that to be found in the original 1962 edition of *IX Ecloghe* (Milan: Mondadori), a text which differs very slightly from the 'Così siamo'

present in *Le poesie e prose scelte*. On 'Xenia I', 14, see Antonio Sichera, 'Sulle orme della «donna miope»: la poesia, il non sapere e la morte in *Xenia I*, 14', in *Poesia e "oltre": Tre studi su Foscolo, Pirandello e Montale* (Catania: C.U.E.C.M., 2000), pp. 73-116.

¹²⁹ See *Il prisma di Arsenio*, p. 176. On the subject of Luzi's 1952 collection and the 'Xenia', we might remark that the 'lacrime e fastidi' of 'Xenia II', 1 probably derive from the final strophe of 'Brughiera' (like the 'Xenion', revolving around the twin themes of life and death): 'Il medico si curva sulla piaga, | ride se noi diciamo morte, insiste | che tutto deve convertirsi in vita | o in ciò che le somigli e che proceda, | esprima o risa o lagrime o fastidio, | piccole scorrerie vili o viaggi' [my italics]. See Silvio Ramat, '«Satura», il progetto comico', in *L'acacia ferita e altri saggi su Montale* (Venice: Marsilio, 1986), pp. 145-83 (p. 175).

¹³⁰ See Montale, *L'opera in versi*, p. 1005.

¹³¹ Says Zanzotto: 'Può darsi che lui [Montale] avesse già in testa di fare un'ennesima caricatura de "La pioggia nel pineto" di D'Annunzio, ma ne *La beltà* ce n'è una mia. È possibile che questa gli abbia richiamato la voglia di tornare sul campo scherzando e gli riuscì davvero grandiosamente' (see Butcher, 'Le ultime poesie di Eugenio Montale. Intervista ad Andrea Zanzotto', p. 331). For other possible sources for 'Piove', see Giovanni Cillo, 'Satura, o dell'ossimoro permanente', in *Contributi per Montale*, ed. by G. Cillo (Lecce: Milella, 1976), pp. 173-98 (p. 196) and Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', pp. 193-94.

¹³² Quoted from Wystan Hugh Auden, *Poesie di W. H. Auden*, trans. by C. Izzo (Parma: Guanda, 1952).

¹³³ Ricci, *Il prisma di Arsenio*, p. 176.

¹³⁴ De Rosa, 'Scansioni dell'ultimo Montale' and, by the same author, 'Dal quarto al quinto Montale'.

¹³⁵ De Rosa, 'Dal quarto al quinto Montale', p. 421.

¹³⁶ Martelli, *Eugenio Montale*, pp. 139-40 and Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, p. 233.

¹³⁷ Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, pp. 233-34.

¹³⁸ Montale, *Il bulldog di legno*, p. 42.

¹³⁹ Montale once said of his fifth collection: 'è un diario di chi è asserragliato, assediato nella propria stanza, il paesaggio non c'è più, si può sentire cantare un grillo notturno, la voce di un avvinazzato, ma l'esterno, il mondo esterno è ridotto molto, molto'. See Walter Mauro and Elena Clementelli, 'Eugenio Montale', in *La trappola e la nudità: Lo scrittore e il potere* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1974), pp. 134-40 (p. 140). On the domestic space from *Satura* to *Quaderno*, see Ó Ceallacháin, *Eugenio Montale*, pp. 96-117.

¹⁴⁰ On the euphony of the post-*Satura* verse, see Renzi, 'Effetti di sordina nell'ultimo Montale'; Neria De Giovanni, 'Campionature metriche e fonologiche dell'ultimo Montale', in *Da Sebastiano Satta a Eugenio Montale: Studi sulla poesia italiana del Novecento* (Pisa: Giardini, 1984), pp. 59-73; Orelli, 'Tra le ultime poesie'.

¹⁴¹ Luperini. *Storia di Montale*, p. 233. We might note, furthermore, that a short while after the appearance of *Diari Mengaldo* was to write of a 'fortissima continuità fra il "quinto" e il "quarto" Montale' ('Primi appunti su "Satura"', p. 335).

¹⁴² See Mauro and Clementelli, 'Eugenio Montale', p. 136.

Part III – Further Intertextual Echoes in *Satura* and the Later Poetry

Bearing in mind the huge number of volumes involved, the question of the salience for the post-*Bufera* verse of the narrative texts Montale reviewed in the Sixties is one which is likely to keep critics busy for many years to come. Works of fiction discussed publicly by the poet between 1960 and 1969 include: Arpino, *La suora giovane*; Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*; Cassola, *La ragazza di Bube*; Cancogni, *La parigina*; Denti di Pirajno, *Ippolita*; Moravia, *La noia*; Romano, *L'uomo che parlava solo*; Vincenti, *Malattia*; La Capria, *Ferito a morte*; Arpino, *Un delitto d'onore*; Manzini, *Un'altra cosa*; Ginzburg, *Le voci della sera*; Anonimo Triestino, *Il segreto*; Cavani, *Zebio Còtal*; Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Racconti*; Boito, *Senso e altre storielle vane*; Emanuelli, *Settimana nera*; Bassani, *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*; Cancogni, *Parlami, dimmi qualcosa*; De Feo, *Gli inganni*; Barolini, *Una lunga pazzia*; Buzzati, *Un amore*; Piovene, *Le furie*; Ginzburg, *Lessico familiare*; Arpino, *L'ombra delle colline*; Bianciardi, *La battaglia soda*; Parise, *Il padrone*; Hemingway, *Di là dal fiume e tra gli alberi*; Bonfantini, *La svolta*; Bellow, *Herzog*; Snow, *Gli uomini nuovi*; Van Vechten, *La contessa tatuata*; Cavani, *Il fiume*; Parise, *Il ragazzo morto e le comete*; Calvino, *Le Cosmicomiche*; Corti, *Il ballo dei sapienti*; Cassola, *Tempi memorabili*; Palazzeschi, *Il buffo integrale*; Rolland, *Jean-*

Christophe; Hawthorne, *Settimio Felton*; Bulgakov, *Il Maestro e Margherita*; Patti, *Un bellissimo novembre*; Emanuelli, *Un gran bel viaggio*; Palazzeschi, *Il doge*; Huysmans, *A rovescio*; Barnes, *Bosco di notte*; Barolini, *L'ultima contessa di famiglia*; Solzhenitsyn, *Divisione Cancro*; Bruck, *Le sacre nozze*; Gramigna, *Marcel ritrovato*; Romano, *Le parole tra noi leggere*.¹ To begin the third and final part of this thesis, let us hone in on just one of the above texts, Italo Calvino's 1965 collection of short stories *Le Cosmicomiche*.²

Echoes from Italo Calvino's Fiction

Montale commences his review of Calvino's volume, published on 5 December 1965 in *Il Corriere della Sera* under the heading 'È fantascientifico ma alla rovescia', by noting that according to a well-known theory by Hörbiger every so often a planet or moon collides with the Earth. He proceeds to relate in brief the content of the first story in *Le Cosmicomiche*, 'La distanza della Luna'. In this piece Calvino's first person narrator Qfwfq tells not of a catastrophic clash between a planet or a moon and the Earth but, instead, of how the Moon, which once used to draw so close to the Earth that it was possible to reach it with the assistance of a ladder, shifted away from this planet, taking with it Qfwfq's beloved Mrs. Vhd Vhd. Montale writes: 'Testimone oculare della faccenda è il patriarca Qfwfq vivente nel cosmo fin dall'inizio della nebulosa che poi si condensò nelle varie galassie, e cioè in piena coincidenza con i fatti registrati dai primi versetti del Genesi' (SMP 2761). The reviewer is alluding in these lines to another story

by Calvino, 'Sul far del giorno' (the second piece in *Le Cosmicomiche*). In this tale Qfwfq recalls when the material of the nebula which he and his family inhabited began to condense and describes that moment when the Sun started to emit light, thereby ending a secular period of total darkness.

Montale focuses in the second paragraph of 'È fantascientifico ma alla rovescia' on the fourth text in *Le Cosmicomiche*, 'Tutto in un punto'. Qfwfq tells in this piece of that era, before the big bang, in which all the material of the universe was concentrated in a single point. Amongst the immense amount of material present in this point there lived entities in some respects akin to human beings, e.g. Mrs. Ph(i)Nk₀, her friend De XuaeauX, the Z'zu family and Mr. Pber^t Pber^d. Qfwfq describes the extraordinary existence of himself and all the others crammed like sardines (*si licet parva componere magnis*) into one point as follows: 'Ogni punto d'ognuno di noi coincideva con ogni punto di ognuno degli altri in un punto unico che era quello in cui stavamo tutti' (RR 2: 118).³ Qfwfq and his close neighbours were, in the words of Montale, '[e]sseri materiali [...] ma anche del tutto immateriali' (SMP 2761). Interestingly, a similar paradox to this appears in 'Il vuoto' (*Quaderno*), where Montale asserts that the air is '[u]na materia immateriale'. And an immaterial material entity may also be found in 'Ai tuoi piedi', again in *Quaderno*: 'questo corpo ormai incorporeo'.

In the third paragraph of his review Montale refers to five other texts in *Le Cosmicomiche*: 'Un segno nello spazio', 'I Dinosauri', 'Giochi senza fine', 'Lo zio acquatico' and 'La spirale'. 'Un segno nello spazio' and 'La spirale' will be discussed in some depth further on in this section. At this point, however, one might ponder briefly on Montale's words regarding 'Lo zio acquatico'. The reviewer remarks that an ancestor of

Qfwfq was 'il Nestore dei pesci di acqua dolce, feroce tradizionalista affezionato alla sua pozzanghera in tempi progressisti, quando gli altri pesci, trasformati in zampe le loro pinne, stavano mutandosi in rettili' (*SMP* 2761-62). Yet, in these lines Montale does not accurately represent the content of Calvino's text. In fact, in 'Lo zio acquatico' the eponymous character does not inhabit a puddle: although landlubbers attempt to lure him to live on the mainland with the offer of a 'fossetta umida, fresca' in 'un bel praticello' (*RR* 2: 145), the reactionary uncle continues to dwell in 'quel braccio di laguna dov'erano nati tutti i nostri vecchi' (*RR* 2: 143). Now, in 'Lo zio acquatico' the home of the uncle, the lagoon, is the old world. This old world co-exists alongside the new, i.e. the land, where many of the uncle's relatives live. Calvino does not hint in 'Lo zio acquatico' that the old is threatened with destruction. Montale, on the other hand, by altering the residence of the traditionalist 'zio acquatico' from a 'braccio di laguna' to a 'pozzanghera', most definitely does: a puddle, of course, rarely lasts long. In short, Montale, probably unconsciously, here suggests the idea that the world of yesterday, with all its values and traditions, is doomed to a rapid extinction. This notion, it is worth pointing out, is present in much of the poet's writing of the time. Consider, for example, *Auto da fé*, a collection of articles that came out in 1966, just a short time after Montale's review of *Le Cosmicomiche*.

The final paragraph of 'È fantascientifico ma alla rovescia' is the most stimulating of the whole review. Montale states that 'La spirale' is the finest of the twelve texts in *Le Cosmicomiche*, that piece in which 'il gioco intellettuale si avvicina di più alle illuminazioni della poesia' (*SMP* 2762). (In fact, one of Calvino's greatest talents was that of being able to produce writing that was both cerebral and extremely rich in that

enigmatic quality which goes by the name of 'poetry': the accusation of dry intellectualism levelled from time to time against the later Calvino does not stand up to a sensitive analysis.) Montale asserts in his review that one might imagine that Borges is amongst Calvino's readings. (And, indeed, the writer from San Remo once affirmed that behind his 'Cosmicomiche' were, above all, Leopardi, Popeye comics, Samuel Beckett, Giordano Bruno, Lewis Carroll, the painting of Matta and, in some cases, Landolfi, Kant, Borges and the 'incisioni' of Grandville (*RR* 2: 1322).) Yet, continues the reviewer, the parallel with Borges is flawed in as much as whilst the Argentine author 'lavora su pretesti e paradossi di cultura', Calvino, on the other hand, 'svolge qui ipotesi astratte e surreali, allargando così, ma anche svuotando il campo delle sue osservazioni' (*SMP* 2762). Montale concludes his review of *Le Cosmicomiche* as follows:

Resta da lodare l'efficacia stilistica di Calvino, il suo così prudente e misurato impiego del «parlato» e la lucida intelligenza di uno scrittore che sta trincerandosi deliberatamente (ma forse non per sempre) in un suo fortitizio di disimpegno e di «inappartenenza», proprio oggi, in una stagione in cui una problematica d'accatto potrebbe dargli una notorietà magari immeritata ed effimera, ma non per questo meno desiderata da altri autori della sua generazione. (*SMP* 2762)

In an interview with Paolo Bernobini published in *La Fiera Letteraria* of 10 February 1966, i.e. just a few weeks after the appearance of 'È fantascientifico ma alla rovescia', Montale observes that some have disapproved of his lack of social commitment. He proceeds to assert: 'credo che siano in errore perché ci sono accenni abbastanza espliciti nei miei libri, ma forse volevano che io li intruppassi, li ingaggiassi in modo più preciso' (*SMAMS* 1652). Montale states: 'io credo che se tutti fossero *engagés* nel senso ristretto della parola, il mondo sarebbe un serraglio spaventoso e molto più feroce di quello che è oggi' (*SMAMS* 1652). It is necessary, he comments, that someone should stay outside the

‘menagerie’ in order to see how things develop. And, indeed, for the most part Montale tended to keep a certain distance from the ‘menagerie’. The majority of his verse texts do not incorporate precise references to and polemics against the wider socio-political reality: Calvino, in his ‘Tre correnti del romanzo italiano d’oggi’, accurately described Montale’s early poems as ‘chiuse, dure, difficili, senza alcun appiglio a una storia se non individuale e interiore’.⁴ One of the reasons why Montale admired the author of *Le Cosmicomiche* was that in a season in which, he believed, a more socio-politically engaged literature might have won Calvino fame, this last – who in the then recent past had been relatively ‘engagé’ (see, for example, *La giornata d’uno scrutatore*, published in 1963) – had chosen to take refuge in a ‘fortilizio di disimpegno e di «inappartenenza»’. Montale saw in the Calvino of *Le Cosmicomiche* a kindred spirit, an artist who, like himself, was at the time deliberately eschewing the writing of overtly socially committed creative literature, preferring to position himself outside the ‘serraglio’, far from the madding crowd.

Prior to focusing on individual cases of local influence, it is worthwhile remarking on Montale, Calvino and the ‘Xenia’. Consider the dates of composition of the ‘Xenia I’ poems: 1 - 10.4.1964; 2 - 10.4.1964; 3 - 10.4.1964 (with modifications dated 6.2.1966); 5 - 10.4.1964 (with modifications dated 15.12.1965); 6 - 10.4.1964; 4 - 2.12.1965; 10 - 8.12.1965; 7 - 9.12.1965; 8 - 9.12.1965 (a second version is dated 14.12.1965); 11 - 10.12.1965; 13 - 10.12.1965; 14 - 10.12.1965; 12 - 5.2.1966 (a second version is dated 11.2.1966); 9 - 6.2.1966.⁵ So, Montale penned the first five ‘Xenia’, three of which in their definitive form, on 10 April 1964. It would seem, meanwhile, that in the rest of 1964 and in the first eleven months of 1965 he did not produce a single new poem. In

December 1965, however, Montale began to write once more, and at a rapid pace. In fact, in little more than a week, between 2 December and 10 December, he composed seven 'Xenia' (all but one in their definitive form). 'Xenia I', 5 and 'Xenia I', 8, meanwhile, were revised respectively on 15 and 14 December 1965.

On 28 November 1965 Montale published a review of Parise's *Il ragazzo morto e le comete* (SMP 2758-60). Then, from 29 November 1965 to 15 December 1965 (the date upon which the poet's eruption of creativity seems to have fizzled out), Montale reviewed only one book: *Le Cosmicomiche*.⁶ This review, it has already been stated, appeared in *Il Corriere della Sera* on 5 December 1965. It might reasonably be conjectured, then, that the explosion of creativity during the first half of December 1965 was triggered by the reading of *Le Cosmicomiche*. This volume that, in Montale's own words, approaches the 'illuminazioni della poesia', this work in which the subject repeatedly expresses his yearning for an absent female (see, for example, 'La distanza della Luna', 'Tutto in un punto' and 'La spirale') might very well have functioned as a catalyst for the genesis of at least a quarter of the 'Xenia'.

Bolstered by this discovery, the critic is naturally tempted to set off in search of local echoes from *Le Cosmicomiche* within the 'Xenia' poems. It is a search, however, that is destined to leave the same critic empty-handed. In fact, despite detailed analysis it would appear that Calvino's work did not leave precise traces of itself in Montale's 'canzoniere' for Mosca. It did, however, exert an easily recognisable influence on specific poems in the post-'Xenia' verse and it is to just this corpus of material that we must now turn our attention.

It will be recalled that in 'È fantascientifico ma alla rovescia' Montale refers to 'Un segno nello spazio', the third story in *Le Cosmicomiche*. He writes that Qfwfq, someone who has carried out '[m]emorabili imprese', 'ha tracciato un segno nello spazio, attendendo poi migliaia di millenni il momento favorevole per ritrovarlo quando il moto della sua galassia lo abbia per così dire «doppiato», dando così luogo al primo fatto che potrebbe dirsi storico' (*SMP* 2761). Let us look more closely at Calvino's extraordinary tale.

'Un segno nello spazio' commences with a very short preface in which it is affirmed that the Sun, situated in the outer zone of the Milky Way, takes approximately two hundred million years to execute a complete circuit of the Galaxy. After this 'cappello scientifico' the text proceeds: 'Esatto, quel tempo là ci si impiega, mica meno, – disse Qfwfq, – io una volta passando feci un segno in un punto dello spazio, apposta per poterlo ritrovare duecento milioni d'anni dopo, quando saremmo ripassati di lì al prossimo giro' (*RR* 2: 108). Millions and millions of years ago Qfwfq created the first sign ever in the circuit of the Milky Way, if not in the entire universe. Qfwfq cautions his audience against presuming that by a sign he means something that differs from something else: 'Un segno come? È difficile da dire perché se vi si dice segno voi pensate subito a un qualcosa che si distingue da un qualcosa, e lì non c'era niente che si distinguesse da niente' (*RR* 2: 108). (This curious sign would seem to defy the laws of Saussurean semiotics...) Qfwfq's sign was not the product of any tool or hand. Indeed, such objects had not yet come into being:

voi pensate subito a un segno marcato con qualche arnese oppure con le mani, che poi l'arnese o le mani si tolgono e il segno invece resta, ma a quel tempo arnesi non ce

n'erano ancora, e nemmeno mani, o denti, o nasi, tutte cose che si ebbero poi in seguito, ma molto tempo dopo. (RR 2: 108)

Qfwfq greets an inquiry from his audience concerning the sign's visibility with sarcasm: 'Visibile? Sì, bravo, e chi ce li aveva gli occhi per vedere, a quei tempi là?' (RR 2: 109). Sight and life, the reader learns, only came later (see RR 2: 112-13.) In short, Qfwfq furnishes very little information regarding his sign. He does discourse, however, at some length on the grand consequences of its fabrication, observing, for instance, that with the sign thought became possible:

Ci pensavo giorno e notte; anzi, non potevo pensare ad altro; ossia, era quella la prima occasione che avevo di pensare qualcosa; o meglio, pensare qualcosa non era mai stato possibile, primo perché mancavano le cose da pensare, e secondo perché mancavano i segni per pensarle, ma dal momento che c'era quel segno, ne veniva la possibilità che chi pensasse, pensasse un segno, e quindi quello lì, nel senso che il segno era la cosa che si poteva pensare e anche il segno della cosa pensata cioè di se stesso. (RR 2: 109-10)

Montale's 'Vivere' (*Quaderno*) opens with an epigraph, 'Vivere? Lo facciano per noi i nostri domestici', an Italian translation of a segment of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's celebrated drama *Axël*.⁷ In part I of 'Vivere' the first person states that in the exam for admission into life he was given just these words as the subject for a composition. He was one of a crowd of unborn people taking an incredible test: 'Folla di prenatali i candidati, | molti per loro fortuna i rimandati'. The first person set about writing his composition: 'Scrissi su un foglio d'aria senza penna | e pennino, il pensiero non c'era ancora'.

Clearly, part I of 'Vivere' bears striking similarities with the first phase of the narrative in 'Un segno nello spazio'. At the very beginning of this story Qfwfq recounts that he produced a sign in space: 'feci un segno in un punto dello spazio'. In part I of 'Vivere' the subject declares that he wrote on space: 'Scrissi su un foglio d'aria'. (It

appears, however, that he did not actually make any mark; later, it is stated that ‘il foglio restò bianco’.) Qfwfq generated his sign without the use of any implement (‘a quel tempo arnesi non ce n’erano ancora’); the ‘io’ of ‘Vivere’, meanwhile, wrote ‘senza penna | e pennino’. Qfwfq created his sign in a period in which thought did not exist (‘pensare qualcosa non era mai stato possibile’) and life had not yet commenced. Similarly, the events described in part I of ‘Vivere’ took place at a time when ‘il pensiero non c’era ancora’ and life, at least for the protagonist and the crowd, had not yet started. (Being was the reward for passing the exam that they were sitting.) All the above strongly induces one to surmise that part I of ‘Vivere’, certainly one of the most ‘fantastic’ poems to be found in *L’opera in versi*, might be partially indebted to *Le Cosmicomiche*.

Moving on to another of the short stories in Calvino’s book, in ‘È fantascientifico ma alla rovescia’ Montale had this to say about ‘La spirale’: ‘È questo il più bello dei dodici racconti, quello in cui il gioco intellettuale si avvicina di più alle illuminazioni della poesia’ (*SMP* 2762). (And it might be mentioned that Calvino himself, in a letter to the German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger, deemed ‘La spirale’ to be the most interesting piece in *Le Cosmicomiche*.)⁸ The first sentence of this tale’s short preface, as usual, entirely in italics, reads as follows: ‘*Per la maggioranza dei molluschi, la forma organica visibile non ha molta importanza nella vita dei membri d’una specie, dato che essi non possono vedersi l’un l’altro o hanno solo una vaga percezione degli altri individui e dell’ambiente*’ (*RR* 2: 207). Still, mollusks may have brightly coloured striations and forms that appear extremely beautiful to the human eye. Qfwfq kicks off another story regarding his remarkable past: ‘Come me quand’ero attaccato a quello scoglio, volete dire? [...] con le onde che salivano e scendevano, e io fermo, piatto piatto, a succhiare

quel che c'era da succhiare e a pensarci sopra tutto il tempo?' (RR 2: 207). Back then, Qfwfq was not aware that he had any form: 'Forma non ne avevo, cioè non sapevo d'averne, ossia non sapevo che si potesse averne una' (RR 2: 207). He was an undifferentiated mass: 'Non avevo né occhi né testa né nessuna parte del corpo che fosse differente da nessun'altra parte' (RR 2: 207). Qfwfq informs his audience that his condition in those days was rich, free and satisfying. Indeed, compared to that existence that one leads when one possesses a form, life then was marvellous: 'se si pensa a quello che l'avere una forma fa escludere di altre forme, al tran-tran senza imprevisti in cui a un certo punto ci si finisce per sentire imbottigliato [*sic*], ebbene, posso dire che allora era un bel vivere' (RR 2: 208).

Through the sea the Qfwfq of 'La spirale' learns of the existence of 'le altre'. He enters into communication with one of these 'altre', exchanging messages with her via the seawater. The two mollusks become lovers and, as so often in *Le Cosmomiche*, Qfwfq is gripped by jealousy. He contemplates the possibility that out of timidity and naivety the 'altra' might not pay sufficient attention to his characteristics, that others might take advantage of this fact, that a circle of strangers might become party to the couple's most intimate games. The aged narrator recalls: 'Fu allora che mi misi a secernere materiale calcareo. Volevo fare qualcosa che marcasse la mia presenza in modo inequivocabile, che la difendesse, questa mia presenza individuale, dalla labilità indifferenziata di tutto il resto' (RR 2: 212). Qfwfq, in a wondrous act of self-affirmation, created a coloured spiral shell.

Sometime around the summer of 1968, less than three years after his review of *Le Cosmomiche*, Montale completed 'Botta e risposta II'. On the 'botta' of 'Botta e

risposta II' there is no need to dwell, especially as the text in question has already been dealt with in detail in relation to Sereni and *Gli strumenti umani*. Instead, let us turn our attention to this poem's long and elaborate 'risposta', unlike the previous 'botta' not enclosed in speech marks. Initially, Montale writes of a large ant pushing a diaphanous dry leaf that 'ospita viaggiatori che salgono e scendono in fretta', a scene that might symbolise contemporary living in Italy, characterised by its incessant haste.⁹ The poet then goes on to recall a trip to Ascona in which he ascended Monte Verità, mentioned in the previous 'botta', and interviewed the famous Dutch musicologist Anthony van Hoboken. (Further information regarding this trip may be found in the 1957 article 'Trent'anni per smascherare i 2500 pezzi falsi di Haydn' (*SMAMS* 1053-57).) Today, things are not what they were: 'ora tutto è cambiato, un formicaio | vale l'altro ma questo mi attira di più'. In the midst of a swarming mass of 'policromi | estivanti', the elderly poet, often ready to deride himself, declares that he is 'più arlecchino | degli altri'. Evening then night arrive and the 'risposta' concludes:

Nel buio e nella risacca più non m'immergo, resisto
ben vivo vicino alla proda, mi basto come mai prima
m'era accaduto. È questione
d'orgoglio e temperamento. Sto attento a tutto. Se occorre,
spire di zampironi tentano di salvarmi
dalle zanzare che pinzano, tanto più sveglie di me.

'Botta e risposta II' is positively teeming with echoes from literary texts by other writers. Vittorio Sereni's 'Gli amici', Corrado Pavolini's 'Epigramma fiorentino' and Andrea Zanzotto's 'Esautorazioni' have already been referred to in this context. One could, in addition, advance more than one intertextual hypothesis concerning the verses 'Non credere che io porti la penitenza a un estremo | gusto di evanescenze e dilettazioni

morose'. In the opinion of Martelli, the phrase 'dilettazioni morose' might owe something to James Joyce's *Ulysses*, where the reader finds the following sentence: 'Morose delectation Aquinas tunbelly calls this, *frate porcospino*'.¹⁰ To this erudite observation we might add that Montale's 'dilettazioni morose' were perhaps also stimulated by the reading of Vladimir Nabokov (himself a passionate scholar of all things Joycean). In fact, in the 1959 Italian translation of *Lolita*, reviewed by the Genoese poet with scarce enthusiasm in the year of its publication (*SMAMS* 179-81), an anguished diary entry by that unforgettable sexual maniac Humbert Humbert begins with the words: '*Delectatio amorosa*' [author's italics].¹¹ Whatever the case may be, the focus of this section is the importance for Montale of Italo Calvino and it is to the possible relationship between 'Botta e risposta II' and the above-mentioned 'La spirale' that we must now turn.¹²

At a certain point in his 'risposta' Montale recollects having read about the suicide of an 'americana di Brünnen'. For this woman, he states, there existed no alternative. She used to assert that 'ognuno tenta a suo modo | di passare oltre'. But beyond what...? 'Botta e risposta II' proceeds:

Ricordavo Porfirio: le anime dei saggi
possono sopravvivere. Quei pochi
pensano vedono amano senz'occhi
né corpo o forma alcuna. Fanno a meno
del tempo e dello spazio, immarcescibili
avari (questo il greco
non lo disse e non è il caso di leggerlo).

In an interesting endnote to a recent study Orlando discusses these lines.¹³ With regard to the first sentence, he observes that Montale might have read in a 1954 Italian edition of

Porphry's writing the following: 'L'anima del saggio si accorda con Dio, guarda sempre a Dio e sempre in Lui dimora'. The critic does not suggest, however, that any traces of Porphyry's philosophy are to be found in the rest of the above verses. Indeed, it is likely that when Montale states 'questo il greco | non lo disse' he is referring to the content of the second and third sentences in this passage.¹⁴ If this is the case, what experience, be it 'autobiographical' or artistic, lies behind these two sentences?

The subject of the survival of souls – 'Ricordavo Porfirio: le anime dei saggi | possono sopravvivere' – probably triggered in Montale the recollection of a literary work that he had read quite recently: *Le Cosmicomiche*. There, the principal narrator and protagonist is, in the words of Montale himself, a being 'vivente nel cosmo fin dall'inizio della nebulosa che poi si condensò nelle varie galassie'. Various incarnations as a Carboniferous vertebrate ('Lo zio acquatico'), a dinosaur ('I Dinosauri'), a mollusk ('La spirale') and, it is fair to presume, a human, Qfwfq would seem to be more or less immortal. It is the contention here that when the author of 'Botta e risposta II' set about musing upon the *modus vivendi* of the 'saggi' – beings that, judging solely by the epithet 'immarcescibili | avari', he did not greatly admire – his thoughts were coloured by memories of *Le Cosmicomiche* and, in particular, of 'La spirale'.

Montale states in the above verses that the sage 'pensano vedono amano senz'occhi | né corpo o forma alcuna'. In 'La spirale', in the third sentence of his narrative, Qfwfq tells his audience: 'Forma non ne avevo, cioè non sapevo d'averne, ossia non sapevo che si potesse averne una'. Slightly later he affirms: 'Ma dato che non avevo forma mi sentivo dentro tutte le forme possibili, e tutti i gesti e le smorfie e le possibilità di far rumori, anche sconvenienti' (RR 2: 208). (It might be noted, moreover, that Qfwfq's

lover, 'l'altra', was also amorphous. The narrator recalls: 'La potevo pensare con una precisione minuziosa, [...] pensare lei come da senza forma qual era si sarebbe trasformata se avesse preso una delle infinite forme possibili, restando però sempre lei' (RR 2: 211).) Furthermore, near the beginning of his story Qfwfq remembers: 'Non avevo [...] occhi'. Montale, in fact, mentions Qfwfq's blindness in his review of *Le Cosmicomiche*: 'Anche più patetica la sorte del ricordato patriarca [Qfwfq], quand'egli ricorda la sua vita di mollusco, di gasteropode, intento a secernere la sostanza che si concreterà poi in una splendida, variegata conchiglia. Ma per quali occhi, se egli era cieco?' (SMP 2762). Lacking form and sight, Qfwfq, in his own peculiar manner, cogitated intensely – 'non avevo limiti ai miei pensieri, che poi non erano pensieri perché non avevo un cervello in cui pensarli, e ogni cellula pensava per conto suo tutto il pensabile tutto in una volta' (RR 2: 208) – and, of course, loved ardently. *In nuce*, the wise, as they are described in the second sentence of the above extract from 'Botta e risposta II', bear a most conspicuous resemblance to the Qfwfq depicted in the first pages of 'La spirale'.

The sage, declares Montale in the third sentence of the above-quoted passage, '[f]anno a meno | del tempo e dello spazio'. Here again the poet is modelling his 'saggi' on Qfwfq. For a certain period in his incredible life the protagonist of *Le Cosmicomiche* existed in a dimension where there was neither space nor time. In fact, in the earlier mentioned 'Tutto in un punto' Qfwfq recounts how he lived an essentially blissful life in that single point in which all the material of the universe was once concentrated. His tale commences: 'Si capisce che si stava tutti lì [...] e dove, altrimenti? Che ci potesse essere lo spazio, nessuno ancora lo sapeva. E il tempo, idem: cosa volete che ne facessimo, del tempo,

stando lì pigiati come acciughe?’ (RR 2: 118). Back then, ‘non esisteva né un prima né un dopo né un altrove’ (RR 2: 119). In general, it would appear that Qfwfq, if he does not perhaps always ‘do without’ space and time, is certainly not subject to anything like the same spatial and temporal constraints that man or, indeed, any of the living organisms known to mankind today are subject to. For example, in ‘Sul far del giorno’ Qfwfq recalls how, as a child, he existed in a time in which everything was pitch black and there were no proper solids; in ‘Gli anni-luce’ he narrates how he waited thousands and thousands of years for a message from another galaxy; and in ‘La spirale’ he tells of a fabulous love harboured for hundreds of millions of years: *‘Mi guardo intorno e chi cerco? è sempre lei che io cerco innamorato da cinquecento milioni di anni’* [author’s italics] (RR 2: 215). Montale does not state explicitly in ‘È fantascientifico ma alla rovescia’ that Qfwfq does without space and time. He does, however, seem to infer something very similar, if not identical, commenting that in cases such as that described in ‘La spirale’ ‘l’effetto genera la sua causa e tutto l’universo è un immenso contesto di fatti che si implicano a vicenda e in cui non ha senso parlare di tempo e di spazio, di prima e di dopo’ (SMP 2762).¹⁵

‘Botta e risposta II’ continues as follows:

Tirchi così? Per noi non esisteva
 scrigno di sicurezza per difendervi
 l’ultimo candelotto rimasto acceso.
 Se mai fosse il lucignolo prossimo all’estinzione
 dopo non era che il buio.
 Non per tutti, Porfirio, ma per i datterì
 di mare che noi siamo, incapsulati
 in uno scoglio. Ora neppure attendo
 che mi liberi un colpo di martello.

In 'La spirale', in his very first sentence, Qfwfq recalls that he was once a mollusk 'attaccato a quello scoglio'. And, indeed, the plot of 'La spirale' revolves around this same character's life as a mollusk clinging to a rock. With Calvino's story still very much in mind, in 'Botta e risposta II' Montale opts to describe metaphorically the existential condition of himself and the author of the missive from Ascona as being that of date mussels dwelling inside a 'scoglio'.

A final comment concerning the influence of 'La spirale' on Montale (and with this we round off our discussion of the intertextual relations between *Le Cosmicomiche* and the post-*Bufera* verse). In the closing sentence of 'Botta e risposta II' the poet, it has already been seen, mentions 'spire di zampironi' that attempt to save him from the biting mosquitoes. Given all the other echoes of 'La spirale' apparently present in 'Botta e risposta II', the reader might legitimately wonder about the origin of those 'zampironi' – contraptions for warding off mosquitoes and other nasty insects, which often take the form of a spiral – and, above all, those 'spire'.

Calvino's *Ti con zero*, a sequel of sorts to *Le Cosmicomiche*, was published in late 1967. It should be pointed out that Montale did not review *Ti con zero* and there is no mention of this work in any of the articles he published in *Il Corriere della Sera* or, indeed, elsewhere. Nonetheless, bearing in mind his prior interest in Calvino (besides *Le Cosmicomiche*, Montale reviewed *Il barone rampante* and *Il cavaliere inesistente*, not to mention the co-production with Luciano Berio *Allez-hop*), it is reasonable to hypothesise that the Genoese writer might have read the book in question. Such a hypothesis is comforted by the fact that the Fondo Montale contains a copy of *Ti con zero*.

‘I cristalli’ is the third story in the first part of *Ti con zero*. Its preface affirms that had the substances that made up the Earth in its incandescent state been allowed sufficient time and liberty, they would eventually have separated from each other to constitute a giant crystal. The first person monologue commences thus: ‘Avrebbe potuto essere diverso, lo so [...] ditelo a me: ci ho creduto tanto, in quel mondo di cristallo che doveva venir fuori, da non rassegnarmi più a vivere in questo, amorfo e sbriciolato e gommoso, come invece ci è toccato’ (RR 2: 248). The Qfwfq of ‘I cristalli’ lives in New Jersey and commutes to Manhattan where he possesses an office on the East Side. The Earth without a crust, he recalls, was ghastly, ‘un eterno inverno incandescente, un pantano minerale’ (RR 2: 249). One day, back then, Qfwfq’s female companion, Vug, indicated something that was taking shape in the midst of a flow of lava: ‘Era un solido di facce regolari e lisce e spigoli taglienti: e queste facce e spigoli s’andavano lentamente ingrandendo, come a spese della materia intorno, e anche la forma del solido cambiava, ma sempre mantenendo proporzioni simmetriche...’ (RR 2: 250). Qfwfq, passionate about order, was seized by the hope that the world would metamorphose into one immense crystal: ‘Un cristallo totale, io sognavo, un topazio-mondo, che non lasciasse fuori niente’ (RR 2: 252). Yet, Qfwfq’s tastes were certainly not those of his companion: ‘Quel che piaceva a lei – presto lo compresi – era scoprire nei cristalli differenze anche minime, irregolarità, imperfezioni’ (RR 2: 252). Back in present-day New York City, outside Tiffany’s, Qfwfq re-encounters Vug. It is almost summer: the two spend a day together on the beach at Staten Island and end up squabbling. Later, Qfwfq accompanies Vug back to her studio in downtown Manhattan, conscious that the modern world conforms to Vug’s rather than to his own ideal: ‘Il cristallo che è riuscito a essere il mondo, a rifrangerlo in infinite

immagini spettrali, non è il mio: è un cristallo corrosivo, macchiato, mescolato. La vittoria dei cristalli (e di Vug) è stata la stessa cosa della loro sconfitta (e della mia)' (RR 2: 256).

'*Un alone che non vedi...*', dated 1969, is chronologically one of the earliest poems present in *Diario postumo* and was not composed a long time after the publication of *Ti con zero*. At the beginning of '*Un alone che non vedi...*' Montale declares that the 'tu' (Annalisa Cima) is encircled by a halo which guides her towards other shores. The poem continues with the words of Montale's housekeeper, Gina Tiozzi:

– Ha tutto – dice Gina –
ed è infelice –; certo non
può capire come soffre
chi sogna strade di cristallo,
calpestando ogni giorno
il nero asfalto.

It might reasonably be presumed that part of the above passage was inspired by 'I cristalli'. In this story Qfwfq recounts that he dreamt of a crystalline world. In his first sentence he states that his belief that a world of crystal would one day exist was such that he has never reconciled himself to dwelling in the formless planet that was his lot: 'ci ho creduto tanto, in quel mondo di cristallo che doveva venir fuori, da non rassegnarmi più a vivere in questo, amorfo e sbriciolato e gommoso, come invece ci è toccato'. A few paragraphs later Qfwfq asserts: 'Sognai un mondo di cristallo, a quei tempi: non lo sognai, lo vidi, un'indistruttibile gelida primavera di quarzo' (RR 2: 251). Further on: 'Un cristallo totale, io sognavo, un topazio-mondo, che non lasciasse fuori niente'. Meanwhile, in '*Un alone che non vedi...*' Annalisa dreams of roads of crystal.¹⁶ As for the contrast in Montale's poem between the crystalline roads of the young muse's fantasy and the black asphalt of her reality, the following lines may well have proved stimulating:

Era un errore il mio, non mi ci volle molto a capirlo. Eccoci al punto d'arrivo: Vug è perduta; dell'eros di diamante non resta che la polvere; il preteso cristallo che m'imprigiona adesso è vile vetro. Seguo le frecce sull'asfalto, m'incolonno al semaforo e riparto (oggi sono venuto a New York in macchina) quando viene il verde (come ogni mercoledì perché accompagno) ingranando la prima (Dorothy dal suo psicanalista), cerco di tenere una velocità costante che mi permetta di passare sempre col verde in Second Avenue. (RR 2: 251)

Qfwfq's utopia of a world of crystal has not materialised; what surrounds him now is no immense crystal but the glass of that Manhattan on whose asphalt roads he drives along, carrying out a weekly chore.

'Diamantina' (*Diari*) was composed in 1972, several years after '*Un alone che non vedi...*'. Montale writes in this poem of Adelheit, alias Adelaide Bellingardi, a lady who is also referred to in 'Il frullato' (*Diari*), 'Il trionfo della spazzatura' (*Diari*), 'L'armonia' (*Quaderno*), '*Agile messaggero eccoti...*' (*Diario postumo*) and '*Vivremo mai nella nostra...*' (*Diario postumo*). Bellingardi, records Marco Forti, worked for a famous jeweller.¹⁷ It is quite probable that during the composition of 'Diamantina' the poet's meditations regarding this lady awakened in his mind memories of 'I cristalli', a story full of words associated with the jeweller's shop – e.g. 'diamante' / 'diamanti' (RR 2: 251, 253, 254), 'argento' (251, 253), 'topazio' (252), 'platino' (253), 'rubini' (254) and, of course, 'cristalli' –, a story where Qfwfq comes across his old female companion Vug outside the most celebrated jeweller's in New York: Tiffany's. The following four sentences, with which the lengthy second strophe of 'Diamantina' commences, would seem to incorporate echoes of Calvino's text:

Si trattava soltanto di sorvolare
o sornuotare qualche eventuale specchio

di pozzanghera e dopo col soccorso
 di sbrecciati scalini la scoperta
 che il mondo dei cristalli ha i suoi rifugi.
 C'è un tutto che si sgretola e qualcosa
 che si sfaccetta. Tra i due ordini
 l'alternarsi o lo scambio non può darsi.
 Forse un cristallo non l'hai veduto mai,
 né un vaso di Pandora, né un Niagara
 di zaffiri. [...]

Again and again in 'I cristalli' Calvino writes of a world of crystal: e.g. 'ci ho creduto tanto, in quel mondo di cristallo', 'Un cristallo totale, io sognavo, un topazio-mondo', 'fino al punto in cui il cristallo-io si sarebbe compenetrato e fuso col cristallo-lei e forse insieme saremmo diventati una cosa sola col cristallo-mondo' (RR 2: 255), 'Il cristallo che è riuscito a essere il mondo'. Analogously, 'Diamantina' has 'il mondo dei cristalli'.¹⁸ In Calvino's story Qfwfq reminisces about an epoch when crystals appeared in their thousands all at the same time, interpenetrating each other. In particular, he remembers the eruption of a crater: 'Esplose un cratere: dilagò una cascata di diamanti' (RR 2: 253). In 'Diamantina', meanwhile, Montale expresses uncertainty as to whether Adelheit has ever seen 'un Niagara | di zaffiri'. (And note that an area of Niagara Falls cataract lies within the state of New York, the very state in which a large proportion of the events recounted in 'I cristalli' takes place.)¹⁹

New York – a city that Montale visited just once, in 1950, when he was one of the passengers on the flight inaugurating the first regular Rome-New York air service operated by an Italian company – is mentioned in two poems from *Diario postumo*: 'King of the bay' (1970) and '*Vivremo mai nella nostra...*' (date uncertain).²⁰ It is the latter text that is now of particular interest. In '*Vivremo mai nella nostra...*', a sort of hymn to friendship, Montale wonders if Annalisa and himself will ever inhabit a commune in New

York, on the thirtieth floor of a skyscraper, together with their closest friends. That is, together with '[l]'inafferrabile' (Marisa Bulgheroni), 'il re della baia' (Luciano Rebay), 'il Sommo' (Sergio Solmi), 'il serenissimo' (Andrea Zanzotto), 'il banchiere' (Raffaele Mattioli), '[i]l filologo' (Cesare Segre), 'il saggista' (Claudio Magris), 'il giornalista' (Gaspere Barbiellini Amidei), 'l'amica napoletana' (Armanda Guiducci), 'il critico genovese' (Angelo Marchese), 'Adelheit', 'l'editore' (Vanni Scheiwiller or, perhaps, Marco Forti), 'Paola' (Paola Brovedani) and others. From on high they will be able to gaze at the 'immenso parco', i.e. Central Park. '*Vivremo mai nella nostra...*' proceeds:

Al sorgere della luce veleggeremo
tra cuspidi e cristalli illuminati
della città ove risuonano sirene,
e lo sguardo spazierà lontano.

Needless to say, 'cristalli' is not the first word most Italians would normally associate with the Big Apple. It may have been that the thought of Annalisa and the poems written for her suggested this word to Montale. In fact, besides '*Vivremo mai nella nostra...*' three texts in *Diario postumo* dedicated to Annalisa have 'cristallo' / 'cristalli' in them: the previously discussed '*Un alone che non vedi...*', '*Resta lontano dalle secche...*' (1974) and '*Porterai con te l'ultima ventata...*' (1976). It may also have been that the naming of Adelheit prompted Montale to recollect 'Diamantina' (a poem that, it has been seen, contains both 'cristalli' and 'cristallo') and / or 'Il trionfo della spazzatura' (where one reads 'Si procede assai bene tra la lordura | se una Chantal piovuta qui dal nord | vi accoglierà con una sua forbita | grazia più chiara e nitida dei suoi cristalli') and / or 'L'armonia' (where we find 'L'armonia è di chi è entrato nella vena giusta | del cristallo e non sa né vuole uscirne').²¹ Yet, one could quite legitimately put forward at least one

other intertext for the above-quoted verses from '*Vivremo mai nella nostra...*': 'I cristalli', that piece of writing in which New York is the principal *locus* of the narrative. More specifically, the second and third sentences of Qfwfq's monologue might very well have leapt to the fore of Montale's mind:

Anch'io corro come facciamo tutti, prendo il treno ogni mattina (abito nel New Jersey) per infilarmi nell'agglomerato di prismi che vedo emergere di là del Hudson [i.e. Manhattan], con le sue *cuspidi* aguzze; ci passo le giornate, lì dentro, su e giù per gli assi orizzontali e verticali che attraversano quel solido compatto, o lungo i percorsi obbligati che rasentano i lati e gli spigoli. Ma non cado nella trappola: so che mi fanno correre tra lisce pareti trasparenti e tra angoli simmetrici perché io creda d'essere dentro un *cristallo*, perché vi riconosca una forma regolare, un asse di rotazione, una costanza nei diedri, mentre non esiste nulla di tutto questo. (RR 2: 248) [my italics]

The moment has arrived to leave behind 'I cristalli' and to look briefly at a short story not by Calvino but by Montale, 'Ricordo di una spiaggia'. This tale appeared in Rome's *Il Popolo* in 1943, before being republished in a slightly different form in May 1945 with the title 'Punta del Mesco'. The story was published a third time, with further alterations, in December 1945 under the heading 'Una spiaggia in Liguria'. In this piece the protagonist, a teenager left at night on a beach in Liguria by his two companions, hears a shot ring out and then the barking of a dog. The brushwood moves and there appears, in a cloud of butcher's broom, a badger. The animal stares at the protagonist who in his turn sets him in the sights of his rifle. He pulls the trigger and deliberately misses. The badger does not wait around; it slips into a fissure between two rocks and vanishes. There then arrives with his mongrel dog a 'manente' who asks the subject if he has finished off the badger. The 'manente', the reader discovers, had been lying in wait for this creature: 'Era rimasto lassù un paio d'ore, appostato davanti alla tana, con tanto di calcina sul mirino per puntar meglio al buio. Ed era sicuro di aver mirato dritto; ma la bestiaccia aveva fatto

palla come un riccio, e s'era buttata a corpo morto nel precipizio' (*PR* 660). Some time later, the boat of the protagonist's companions reappears and 'Una spiaggia in Liguria' comes to an end.

Several decades after the publication of 'Una spiaggia in Liguria', on 5 September 1978, Montale composed 'Schiappino' (*Altri versi*):

Il figlio del nostro fattore
aveva fama di pessimo tiratore:
lo chiamavano Schiappa o con più grazia
Schiappino.
Un giorno si appostò davanti alla roccia
dove abitava il tasso in una buca.
Per essere sicuro del suo tiro
sovrappose al mirino una mollica di pane.
A notte alta il tasso tentò di uscire
e Schiappino sparò ma il tasso fece
palla di sé e arrotolato sparve
nella vicina proda. Non si vedeva a un passo.
Solo un tenue bagliore sulla Palmaria.
Forse qualcuno tentava di accendere la pipa.²²

It is quite likely that 'Una spiaggia in Liguria' is based on a childhood memory, that it is what may be classified as an 'autobiographical' work. 'Schiappino', then, would essentially be a new textual version of a very old memory. Yet, the latter piece incorporates a number of facts which are absent from 'Una spiaggia in Liguria'. Most strikingly, in the poem from *Altri versi* the hunter is a farmer's son renowned for being a terrible shooter and nicknamed 'Schiappa' or 'Schiappino'. Now, the badger hunter that is described in both 'Una spiaggia in Liguria' and 'Schiappino', if he ever existed, might really have had a reputation for being a poor shot and been called 'Schiappa' or 'Schiappino'. If that were indeed the case, the first sentence of the above-quoted poem would be principally 'autobiographical' in nature. However, it might also be that the

novelties in 'Schiappino' with respect to 'Una spiaggia in Liguria' sprang not from Montale's childhood memories but from his reading of one or more literary texts. Let us presume here that the first sentence of 'Schiappino' was indeed, at least in part, the fruit of the poet's literary experiences.²³

It is not to be excluded that for 'Schiappino' Montale might owe a debt to 'Ti con zero', the first text in the third section of the homonymous volume. In this piece a lion (L) has launched itself – jaws wide open, claws outstretched – towards a hunter (Q) [Qfwfq?]. The hunter, who is the first person narrator of 'Ti con zero', has let fly a poison-tipped arrow (F) in the direction of the said lion. If this arrow misses its target, the same hunter risks being annihilated in a very short while. In the second before he knows whether his arrow will make contact with the lion, the hunter reflects on the existing state of affairs, on t_0 . At a certain point in his remarkable philosophical musings, Q asserts that, given that every second is definitive, there is no need to fret about what is befalling him in future seconds:

Ogni secondo è definitivo, chiuso, senza interferenze con gli altri, e io Q_0 qui nel mio territorio t_0 posso stare assolutamente tranquillo e disinteressarmi di quello che contemporaneamente sta accadendo a $Q_1 Q_2 Q_3 Q_n$ nei rispettivi secondi vicini al mio, perché in realtà i leoni $L_1 L_2 L_3 L_n$ non potranno mai prendere il posto del noto e tuttora inoffensivo per quanto minaccioso L_0 , tenuto a bada da una freccia in volo F_0 contenente ancora in sé quella potenza mortifera che potrebbe rivelarsi sprecata da $F_1 F_2 F_3 F_n$ nel loro disporsi su segmenti di traiettoria sempre più distanti dal bersaglio, ridicolizzandomi come l'arcere più schiappino della tribù, o meglio ridicolizzando come schiappino quel Q_n che in t_n prende la mira col suo arco. (RR 2: 316-17)

If the arrow were to miss its target, the hunter, the person who aimed that same arrow at the lion, would be made to look like a 'schiappino'.

Still, the hypothesis that ‘Ti con zero’ might have been influential on Montale during the composition of ‘Schiappino’ is, frankly speaking, not especially persuasive. For a considerably more convincing literary ‘source’ for this poem it is necessary to look further afield than the ‘Cosmicomiche’ and to examine a text by Calvino that was first published in the Forties: ‘Il bosco degli animali’.²⁴ This short story appeared in the Turin edition of *L’Unità* of 20 April 1948, less than three years after the publication of ‘Una spiaggia in Liguria’. A longer version of the tale was included in *Ultimo viene il corvo* (1949), Calvino’s first collection of short stories. The author made a few minor modifications to this text before it was republished in what would prove to be its definitive format in *I racconti* (1958), one of the volumes by Calvino to be found in the Fondo Montale.

‘Il bosco degli animali’ bears striking affinities with ‘Una spiaggia in Liguria’ and ‘Schiappino’. The protagonist of this story is a peasant named Giuà Dei Fichi. One day Giuà is out gathering firewood – and in ‘Una spiaggia in Liguria’ the protagonist is instructed by his companions to do just this – when the Germans come to comb his village. Upon learning of this unwelcome visit, Giuà dashes off to save his cow, Coccinella: ‘Giuà Dei Fichi s’affrettava con le corte gambe, rotolando come una palla giù per i pendii, guadagnando le salite a cuore in gola’ (*RR* 1: 281). (‘Una spiaggia in Liguria’: ‘la bestiaccia aveva fatto palla come un riccio, e s’era buttata a corpo morto nel precipizio’. ‘Schiappino’: ‘ma il tasso fece | palla di sé e arrotolato sparve | nella vicina proda’.) One of the Germans happens upon the stable where Coccinella is housed. Giuà goes to get his old ‘doppietta da caccia’ (*RR* 1: 282) (in ‘Una spiaggia in Liguria’ the protagonist has with him a ‘doppietta ad avancarica’, *PR* 659). He loads and goes to lie in

wait for the German: ‘Giuà caricò il fucile con due pallottole da cinghiale, si cinse la pancia con la cartuccera e quatto quatto, a fucile spianato, andò a appostarsi all’uscita della stalla’ (RR 1: 282-83). (‘Una spiaggia in Liguria’: ‘Era rimasto lassù un paio d’ore, appostato davanti alla tana’. ‘Schiappino’: ‘Un giorno si appostò davanti alla roccia | dove abitava il tasso in una buca’.) But Giuà is, unlike the incredible ‘ragazzo’ of the short story ‘Ultimo viene il corvo’ (also to be found in *Ultimo viene il corvo* and *I racconti*), an extremely bad shot; he dares not fire on the German for fear that he might accidentally slaughter his prized bovine. And so, the foreigner is allowed to lead Coccinella away into the wood. However, at a certain point the German abandons Giuà’s cow and goes after other animals. Giuà stalks his quarry but does not shoot, this time for fear of destroying other people’s property. At last, when the German has the scrawniest of chickens in his hand, Giuà opens fire. An extraordinarily bad marksman, he ends up killing not his enemy but the chicken. After all this, the ill-fated German takes a cat by the scruff of its neck. But the feline assails the thief and the two end up tumbling into a precipice: ‘Nella zuffa che seguì l’uomo e la belva rotolarono ambedue nel precipizio’ (RR 1: 287) (‘Una spiaggia in Liguria’: ‘ma la bestiaccia aveva fatto palla come un riccio, e s’era buttata a corpo morto nel precipizio’).

Taking all the above into proper account, it is not difficult to see how Calvino’s ‘Il bosco degli animali’ could have entered into Montale’s reflections concerning that which would eventually be the poem ‘Schiappino’. Now, in ‘Il bosco degli animali’ Calvino writes:

Ora bisogna sapere che Giuà era il cacciatore più schiappino del paese. Non era mai riuscito a centrare, manco per sbaglio, non dico una lepre ma nemmeno uno scoiattolo. Quando sparava ai tordi al fermo, quelli manco si muovevano dal ramo. Nessuno voleva

andare a caccia con lui perché impallinava il sedere dei compagni. Non aveva mira e gli tremavano le mani. (RR 1: 283)

The penultimate sentence of the same story reads: 'Fu così che Giuà, tiratore schiappino, fu festeggiato come il più grande partigiano e cacciatore del paese' (RR 1: 287). Would it not then be reasonable to conjecture that it was Calvino's 'Il bosco degli animali' that inspired Montale to have his badger hunter be a terribly bad shot nicknamed 'Schiappino'...?

Further Intertextual Echoes

To conclude, there appears below a succession of hypotheses relating to the influence of works first published during the Sixties on particular passages in *Satura*, *Diari* and *Quaderno*. The principal texts that will be discussed are: Luciano Erba's *Il male minore* (1960), Umberto Eco's *Apocalittici e integrati* (1964), Giovanni Giudici's *La vita in versi* (1965) and *Autobiologia* (1969), Antonio Barolini's *L'ultima contessa di famiglia* (1968) and Sergio Solmi's *Dal balcone* (1968). Let us venture forth on this intertextual itinerary with the earliest of the above volumes, *Il male minore*.

(i) Luciano Erba, *Il male minore*

'Il genio' (*Satura*) is dated 15 January 1970. In the first strophe of this poem Montale states that the genius does not speak out of his own mouth. However, as the reader finds

out in the second strophe, the latter does leave vestiges of himself: ‘Il genio lascia qualche traccia di zampetta | come la lepre sulla neve’. The nature of the genius is such, proceeds the poet, that if he ceases to walk every contraption is palsied. When this occurs, the world is at a standstill, waiting for a hare to run on snowfalls: ‘Allora il mondo è fermo nell’attesa | che qualche lepre corra su improbabili | nevate’. In the final strophe of ‘Il genio’ Montale asserts that, be it stationary or moving swiftly in its ring-a-ring-a-roses, the world cannot read the hare’s prints, long since disintegrated. In other words, mankind is not destined to apprehend the significance of the genius’s message.

Most likely, one of the literary stimuli behind the creation of ‘Il genio’ was ‘Quasi una fantasia’ (*Ossi*). There, the subject imagines a ‘giorno d’incantesimo’ in which he will have before him ‘un paese d’intatte nevi | ma lievi come viste in un arazzo’. The first sentence of the final strophe of ‘Quasi una fantasia’ reads: ‘Lieto leggerò i neri | segni dei rami sul bianco | come un essenziale alfabeto’. As for those hare prints, it is not to be excluded that Montale was influenced by the reading of that 1968 translation by Singh of Thomas Hardy’s poetry mentioned briefly in part one of the present study. The third strophe of Singh’s version of ‘The Haunter’ begins:

Si, lo seguo in luoghi
noti solamente ai sognatori,
ove timorose lepri lasciano impronte di lunghi passi,
e si levano in volo corvi notturni [...]

Still, the critic eager to discover literary sources for Montale’s hare prints in the snow can, it will be seen, do rather better than this.

Il male minore, Luciano Erba’s first full-length collection of verse, came out at the beginning of the Sixties. The fact that this highly successful volume was published in

what was perhaps the most prestigious and widely read series of poetry books in Italy, Arnoldo Mondadori's 'Lo Specchio', increases the likelihood that Montale would have been familiar with it. The third poem in *Il male minore* is entitled, à la Ungaretti, 'Sentimento del tempo' and commences as follows:

Tu mi parli
della traccia di lepre sulla neve
di Mahori cantata dalla radio
quando ti svegli
che danzano a New York.

Montale, for all his life ardently interested in fauna, would surely have been struck by this passage. In particular, the second verse, 'della traccia di lepre sulla neve', might have lodged itself in his mind. The above three substantives appear together in an identical order in the second strophe of 'Il genio': 'Il genio lascia qualche traccia di zampetta | come la lepre sulla neve'.²⁵ In short, it is highly feasible that Erba's hare left traces of itself not just in the snow but also in the sharp memory of Eugenio Montale.²⁶

(ii) Giovanni Giudici, *La vita in versi* and *Autobiologia*²⁷

Let us proceed now skywards from four-legged animals to birds, creatures that Montale truly adored, as even the most inattentive reader of *Ossi* and the successive collections will quickly realise. We might recall in this context that in a little-known interview with Lorenzo Papi published in 1975 the poet affirmed: 'Più passa il tempo e più non capisco bene che senso si possa dare all'uomo. Gli animali, specialmente gli uccelli, li capisco

molto di più. [...] Gli uccelli sono gli esseri più belli e più validi del mondo'.²⁸ In the following few paragraphs it will be argued that several of the 'ornithological' passages to be found in the post-*Bufera* verse might be indebted to Montale's reading of Giovanni Giudici and, in particular, to those poems by Giudici that refer to winged creatures. But, first of all, it is necessary to address an inescapable question: given that there does not exist a single mention of Giudici in any article published by Montale, what evidence is there to suggest that the interested party actually knew the younger poet's verse?

Apart from the fact that Montale and Giudici, both Ligurians who spent much of their lives in Milan, were for many years linked by a bond of friendship, there are two pieces of information that might induce us to believe that Montale was indeed familiar with Giudici's poetry.²⁹ Firstly, the Fondo Montale contains a copy of almost all of Giudici's collections dating from between the mid Sixties and the very early Eighties: we find there *La vita in versi* (1965), *Omaggio a Praga* (1968), *Autobiologia* (1969), *Poesie scelte: 1957-1974* (1975), *Il male dei creditori* (1977) and *Il ristorante dei morti* (1981). Secondly, the reader is presented with what appears to be a parody of the title of Giudici's first large-scale volume of poetry, *La vita in versi*, in a poem by Montale dated 20 October 1976: 'La vita in prosa' (*Poesie disperse*) (a title, this, that in all probability parodies simultaneously that most famous of French songs 'La vie en rose').³⁰ Taking for granted, *non sine causa*, that Montale did indeed know *La vita in versi* and the successive collections and, at the same time, inspired by Franco Fortini (someone who was convinced that Giudici was influential on the post-*Bufera* verse), let us delve into how the younger writer's poetry might have informed Montale's writing from the Seventies.³¹

In ‘Gli uccelli parlanti’ (*Quaderno*) Montale observes that according to one calculation there exist four hundred ‘moral’ words. With a humorous twist, he goes on to state that not even the currently fashionable ‘uccelli indiani’ are able to utter a greater number of such words. The poet describes these creatures as similar to blackbirds with a ‘rapace becco di fuoco e penne neroblù’. Now, in his verse production prior to ‘Gli uccelli parlanti’ Montale had used more than one compound containing ‘nero’ as its initial component. *Bufera*, in fact, includes the adjective ‘nerocupi’ (‘L’orto’) and the noun ‘nerofumo’ (‘Gli orecchini’) (and note that the latter is used in relation to flight: ‘Non serba ombra di voli il nerofumo | della spera’). Meanwhile, in ‘Il gallo cedrone’, also in *Bufera*, Montale had employed an adjective composed of two colour lexemes – the second of which ‘nero’ – to describe a dead bird, addressing a capercaillie, now roasting away, as ‘rossonero | salmì di cielo e terra a lento fuoco’.³² Yet, it must be stressed that the word ‘neroblù’ – unlike ‘rossonero’, extremely rare in Italian – does not occur a single time in any text in *L’opera in versi* composed prior to ‘Gli uccelli parlanti’.³³

At this juncture, it is necessary to turn to Giudici’s verse and, in particular, to look at ‘Dal suo punto di vista’, one of the first poems in *La vita in versi*.³⁴ Here, as elsewhere in the 1965 collection, Giudici satirises the *mores* of contemporary capitalist society. The reader is given to believe that the bulk of the text is a verbatim quotation from an ‘opuscolo di propaganda’. According to this pamphlet, it is absurd to let your supper be wrecked over a few hangings. Rather, one should think about the potential for trade in the Soviet bloc: ‘we’ will exchange refrigerators for caviar. This is no time for ethical scruples. Says the propaganda pamphlet: ‘L’anima, il bene e il male, vecchie storie...’. In

exchange for a military truce, 'we' will be able to provide (at a reasonable price) pinball machines for those with nervous disorders, factory concerts and an almost identical diet for masters and servants. The last strophe of 'Dal suo punto di vista' reads:

Daremo anche il poeta
che colga a prima vista
un neroblù di rondine nel cielo
– per la squallida coppia socialista,
domenica sulle rive del mar Nero».

During the composition of the previously mentioned 'Gli uccelli parlanti', a poem that, like 'Dal suo punto di vista', regards in good part morals, Montale mused upon birds. At a certain point his ornithological pondering might have led him to recollect 'Dal suo punto di vista' or, to be more precise, that passage at the very end of this text where Giudici writes of the poet who perceives a 'neroblù' of swallow in the sky. It would seem extremely probable that the principal source for Montale's 'neroblù', this most uncommon of words, is 'Dal suo punto di vista'. If this is indeed the case then it should be emphasised that here, quite typically, Montale appropriates an element from another person's writing in a novel and interesting manner. In fact, grammatically speaking, whilst in 'Dal suo punto di vista' 'neroblù' is a common noun, in the chronologically later 'Gli uccelli parlanti' it appears as an adjective.

Readers hunting, on the other hand, for a poem by Giudici in which a compound chromatic lexeme is employed adjectivally in relation to a bird would do well to shift forward in time a few years from *La vita in versi* to the 1969 collection *Autobiologia*, where they will come across 'Il civettino' and a passage in which an owlet is described as a 'batuffolo grigiobiondo'. Yet, this poem, collocated just a page or two before a piece

regarding ‘cireneo Montale’ (‘Il cattivo lettore’), contains much more than just this to intrigue any scholar in search of intertextual echoes.

Consider the last few lines of ‘Il civettino’, there where the author contrasts the departure of his bird of prey with the exit of other household animals of his, including that hound immortalised in ‘Quindici stanze per un setter’ (*La vita in versi*):

Partì [la piccola civetta] [...] impermalita voltandosi a differenza di altri miei animali di casa: *un’anatrella azzoppata*, una cagnetta bastarda, un passero che volò via, un gatto nero – e il setter, naturalmente – tutto sommato fregati con belle maniere, spariti più docilmente. [my italics]

Who knows whether this passage proved to be useful to the author of *Quaderno* when he came to pen ‘Dopopioggia’, that poem, reproduced earlier alongside Sereni’s ‘Nella neve’, in which there appears ‘un’anatra stanca, forse azzoppata’?

Whatever the case may be, it would seem all but certain that the same ‘Il civettino’ inspired a sizeable proportion of ‘Il rondone’ (*Diari*), like Giudici’s text the story of the short-lived residency of a bird in the poet’s abode.³⁵ To demonstrate this, let us go through Giudici’s poem in detail, comparing it with ‘Il rondone’. Giudici starts off ‘Il civettino’ by denying that the arrival of an owl spells misfortune: ‘Non porta male una che sbatacchiando | le ali precipita in casa | dalla finestra di cucina un giorno’. He proceeds to question:

Ma cosa c’entra coi morti una che sbatacchiando
di primo volo anagrafica esistenziale
batuffolo grigiobiondo nell’angolo del fornello
si posa?

Turning now to Montale's poem, 'Il rondone' commences with the poet recounting that the swift gathered up from the pavement had its wings encrusted with tar and could not fly, before continuing: 'Gina che lo curò [il rondone] sciolse quei grumi | con batuffoli d'olio e di profumi'. The likelihood that the source for those 'batuffoli' was Giudici's text about an owlet is augmented greatly by the fact that in no poem by Montale prior to 'Il rondone' does there appear the noun 'batuffolo', although it will be observed that whereas Giudici's 'batuffolo' is a metaphor for the bird itself, Montale's 'batuffoli' are real flocks used to swab the hapless swift. Returning to 'Il civettino' – and note that both the poem from *Autobiologia* and that from *Diari* have a bird's name as their title – Giudici proceeds to state that his bird of prey was no bigger than a sparrow except for its 'occhio': 'era una piccola | civetta sbalestrata né più né meno che un passero, | tranne l'occhio grifagno [...]'. Montale, in his turn, also goes on to mention an 'occhio', commenting that his swift, which appears to have been much gentler than Giudici's owlet, looked almost gratefully at his saviour Gina: 'Lui la guardava quasi riconoscente | da un occhio solo. L'altro non si apriva'. In both poems, having mentioned how the bird was housed, the discourse turns to questions of diet. Giudici declares that his owlet was 'sfamata | quel tanto da non morire', before explaining: 'Ma non nostra la colpa, fu lei [la civetta] che non seppe gradire | la dieta familiare, voleva carne soltanto'. In 'Il rondone', on the other hand, more specific with regard to the content of the bird's diet, one reads: 'Poi [il rondone] gradì mezza foglia di lattuga | e due chicchi di riso' (and observe that the verb 'gradire', whilst present in 'Il civettino', is – analogously to the previous

‘batuffoli’ – nowhere to be found in any of Montale’s earlier verse). ‘Il rondone’ draws to a close as follows:

Il giorno dopo all’alba [il rondone] riprese il volo
senza salutare.
Lo vide la cameriera del piano di sopra.
Che fretta aveva fu il commento. E dire
che l’abbiamo salvato dai gatti. Ma ora forse
potrà cavarsela.

It might be claimed that Giudici’s little owl took his leave from his host rather more graciously than Montale’s swift since, as we read in the closing verses from ‘Il civettino’ quoted in the previous paragraph, the bird of prey did at least turn around as he was departing. As for Montale’s remark about having rescued the swift from cats, for a likely source for this idea it is sufficient to take a glance at the penultimate sentence of Giudici’s poem:

Con proditorio rimpianto
altrove fu collocata [la civetta]: da uno di quegli strani
uomini, veramente la chiese per la caccia,
ma che mangiano gatti sono ghiotti
di rane di cavallette vivisezionano cani
divorano pesci rossi uccelletti
con penne e tutto...

In short, it would appear that for the poetic rendering of what was almost certainly a real-life experience Montale drew liberally on Giudici’s text for language and ideas. At the same time, it is worth underlining that if ‘Il civettino’ is characterised by its brilliant touches of humour and its great lexical and syntactic inventiveness, ‘Il rondone’ is rather more sober and linguistically and structurally far less elaborate, as if Montale felt that his

experience with the swift was of such a wonderful simplicity that only a limpid and uncomplicated style was appropriate to evoke it.

(iii) Antonio Barolini, *L'ultima contessa di famiglia*³⁶

Sticking with our ornithological theme, it is opportune to proceed from living birds to those of the spit-roasted variety, from the witty verse of Giovanni Giudici to the equally witty prose of Antonio Barolini. Montale discussed the literary production of the latter in *Il Corriere della Sera* on a number of occasions. In 1954 he published a brief review of *La gaia gioventù e altri versi agli amici* (SMP 1689-90). Eight years later, in 1962, he dedicated a considerably longer article to the first novel by Barolini to appear in print, *Una lunga pazzia* (SMP 2461-66). The author of this book, affirms Montale, is not someone who keeps abreast of literary vogues; indeed, in the opinion of the Genoese poet, Barolini writes – or appears to write – as if one were still in the age of Capuana's *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*. At a time in which (according to the reviewer) the literary landscape was dominated by the 'neo-avanguardia' with its 'pesante conformismo' (SMP 2466), Montale welcomed this novel, so extraneous to the prevailing atmosphere of radical experimentalism.

In the third paragraph of his review of *Una lunga pazzia* Montale mentions stories about life in Italy which Barolini, who lived for some time in the United States, had published in *The New Yorker* and in a volume, stating that he is uncertain as to whether there will ever be an Italian edition of these texts. In fact, in spring 1968 Feltrinelli

published *L'ultima contessa di famiglia*, a collection of sixteen short stories including many pieces that had previously been printed (in English) in *The New Yorker* and *The Reporter*.³⁷ Punctually, on 20 April 1968, there appeared in *Il Corriere della Sera* 'Poeta sperso fra gli uomini', a review by Montale of this very work (SMP 2887-91). Here, as in his piece on *Una lunga pazzia*, Montale claims that Barolini is not the most 'up-to-date' person: 'Barolini non è nato moderno, questo si sapeva e non dice nulla. Più interessante è invece constatare che non ha mosso un dito per diventarlo' (SMP 2888).

Interestingly, a good proportion of the comments about Barolini contained in 'Poeta sperso fra gli uomini' might plausibly be applied to Montale himself. For example, if Montale describes the writer from Vicenza as a 'disadattato' (SMP 2889), then the same person once declared in an interview with Enzo Biagi: 'Una mia definizione? Sono poco adatto alla vita'.³⁸ Later in his review Montale asserts that Barolini possesses 'la capacità di commuoversi ma anche quella di riscattarsi con un *sense of humour* che non appartiene alla tradizione goldoniana ma gli permette di smussare gli angoli del tragico quotidiano' (SMP 2889). This observation, of course, would be equally valid with regard to the Genoese poet. Montale also writes that in Barolini, unlike in the 'poeti dello sguardo' (an allusion to Alain Robbe-Grillet and other contemporary French experimental writers), objects 'trasudano memoria e sono quasi un Monte di pietà di affetti e di significati, un deposito di pegni solo recuperabili da chi presenti polizze che vogliono dire dolore, dispersione, fatica e soprattutto caparbia volontà di sopravvivere' (SMP 2891). Thus, in 'Il bauletto dello zio Vittorio', the last story in *L'ultima contessa di famiglia*, Barolini writes at length of an ugly old trunk that is capable of exciting puissant sentiments within the narrator of the story. Montale, meanwhile, to limit oneself to a single example, had,

less than two years prior to his review of Barolini's collection of short stories, penned a poem concerning a rusty shoehorn whose loss had been a great source of regret for his wife and himself ('Xenia II', 3).

Of all the stories in *L'ultima contessa di famiglia* Montale gives by far the most space in 'Poeta sperso fra gli uomini' to 'La grande schidionata del cugino Canal', a work which he describes as Barolini's masterpiece to date. The plot of this story is, in brief, as follows. The Schiavon della Vignola family, Venetian patricians, used to pay regular visits to their relatives on the mainland and sample their spit-roasted wildfowl. One day the narrator's mother, Lucia, and her father, Gregorio, went to Venice, expecting to be hosted by Count Schiavon. However, the avaricious noble did not receive them. The same fate befell another relative, Canal. This last eventually avenged himself by locking Count Schiavon and his family out of his house and dripping the fat from a bird spit onto the carriage in which they were waiting. Later, Canal would say of this incident, addressing himself to the narrator's grandfather: 'La piú gloriosa schidionata d'uccelli della mia vita! Impossibile superarmi, Gregò: parola di galantuomo! Non hai mai mangiato nemmeno tu uccelli così buoni: né mai piú li mangerò io stesso!'.³⁹

It is hardly difficult to see why the above-mentioned piece appealed to Montale. In particular, the Genoese writer, someone who was together fascinated and horrified by wild bird hunting, someone famed for his passion for the art of cooking, must have been attracted by the first pages of this story, those in which Barolini tells of the capturing, spit-roasting and consumption of wild birds. Montale, indeed, dwells on these pages in his discussion of 'La grande schidionata del cugino Canal':

E si badi che tale episodio [Count Schiavon evading his invitees] non fa parte per se stesso ma è inserito in ciò che potrebbe dirsi la ricetta per cuocere allo spiedo gli uccelli di passo (quelli, beninteso, uccisi col fucile, prima che il travaso di bile dei pennuti presi al roccolo ne abbia alterato il sapore). Se aggiungete a tutto questo l'orrore della moglie dello scrittore per il barbaro aucupio perpetrato dagli incivili italiani e la indulgenza del marito nell'attesa di una trimalcionesca delizia, potete immaginare quanti fili e quanti motivi si congiungano in quello che è fino ad oggi il capolavoro di Barolini (*La grande schidionata del cugino Canal*). (SMP 2890)

A knowledge of *L'ultima contessa di famiglia* and Montale's remarks on the same turns out to be more than a little interesting with regard to 'Soliloquio', a poem published in *Il Corriere della Sera* of 1 June 1975 before being included in *Quaderno*. The first fourteen verses of this text read as follows:

Il canale scorre silenzioso
maleodorante
questo è il palazzo dove fu composto
il Tristano
ed ecco il buco dove Henry James
gustò le crêpes suzette –
non esistono più i grandi uomini
ne restano inattendibili biografie
nessuno certo scriverà la mia –
gli uomini di San Giorgio sono più importanti
di tanti altri e di me ma non basta non basta –
il futuro ha appetito non si contenta più
di hors-d'œuvre e domanda schidionate
di volatili frolli, nauseabonde delizie –

Here, Montale is evidently describing Venice, the city where Richard Wagner composed part of *Tristan und Isolde* and a place where the American writer Henry James sojourned. When the poet claims that nobody will write his life story, he is playfully teasing Giulio Nascimbeni, author of the biography *Eugenio Montale* (a work that in the year of the composition of 'Soliloquio' came out in its third edition).⁴⁰ Meanwhile, those 'uomini di San Giorgio', people that are 'più importanti | di tanti altri e di me', might possibly be the

people behind the Fondazione Cini, a highly prestigious organisation situated on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. There can be no doubt that Montale was intimately familiar with this foundation; over the years, in fact, he published a large quantity of articles regarding its cultural events.⁴¹

The poet proceeds to assert that the future is hungry: no longer content with 'hors-d'œuvre', it asks for 'schidionate | di volatili frolli'. But what, one might question, led Montale to think of birds on skewers? Presuming that the ideas in 'Soliloquio' came to the poet in the order in which they appear in the text, the answer is most probably that elements in the first thirteen lines of this poem stimulated Montale's thoughts to turn to 'La grande schidionata del cugino Canal', that short story which years previously he had deemed to be Barolini's literary masterpiece. Four elements in the poem were of salience here. Firstly, at the very beginning of 'Soliloquio' there is the lexeme 'canale'. One of the major protagonists of the aforementioned story, a character mentioned in its title, goes by the name of Canal. Secondly, much of the first thirteen lines of 'Soliloquio' concerns Venice. Part of 'La grande schidionata del cugino Canal', meantime, recounts the visit of the narrator's mother and grandfather to the 'Serenissima' in search of the elusive Count Schiavon. Thirdly, Montale writes in 'Soliloquio' of Henry James, an American writer who spent much time in Italy. Conversely, the author of 'La grande schidionata del cugino Canal' was an Italian writer who, as Montale himself points out in 'Poeta sperso fra gli uomini', resided for a long period in America. Finally, Montale refers to eating: 'il futuro ha appetito non si contenta più | di hors-d'œuvre'. Eating, of course, is a major theme in Barolini's story. Thus, it is not at all arduous to perceive how during the composition of 'Soliloquio' 'La grande schidionata del cugino Canal' could have darted

to the forefront of the Genoese poet's mind. Thence the 'schidionate | di volatili' to be found in the poem from *Quaderno*.

As for the epithet 'nauseabonde delizie' applied to the 'schidionate | di volatili frolli', one might recollect that in his discussion of 'La grande schidionata del cugino Canal' Montale writes of the husband's forbearance as he waits for a 'trimalcionesca delizia' (i.e. for the spit-roasted birds). It is reasonable to conjecture that the expression 'nauseabonde delizie' might be a distant echo of these very words (and, not by pure coincidence perhaps, 'nauseabonde' and 'trimalcionesca' are both pentasyllabic adjectives).

(iv) Sergio Solmi, *Dal balcone*⁴²

L'ultima contessa di famiglia, it has been noted, was published in 1968. Another work to appear in this year of momentous political upheavals was *Dal balcone*, a collection of verse by Sergio Solmi. This last first met Montale in Parma in 1917. He was one of the very first people to whom Montale showed his poetry (see *SMAMS* 1721) and the dedicatee of the section entitled 'Meriggi' in the 1925 Gobetti edition of *Ossi*. Montale was certainly an admirer of the poetry of Solmi: when, probably sometime in the very late Twenties or early Thirties, he came to draw up a list of poets to be included in an anthology of contemporary Italian verse edited by himself and the Florentine writer Angiolo Orvieto, Sergio Solmi's was one of the names he jotted down (*SMAMS* 1965). Montale also appreciated Solmi's other work. Thus, he was amongst the first to publish

on the prose writing of Solmi, warmly reviewing in 1930 the latter's debut volume *Il pensiero di Alain* (SMP 423-29). Several other articles followed this piece, including, in 1969, over fifty years after the two men had made each other's acquaintance, 'Sergio Solmi. Settant'anni. Uomo e poeta', a eulogy to the person who was possibly Montale's closest friend (SMP 2932-34). And it might be observed that the writer from Rieti makes more than one appearance in *Diario postumo*: in 'L'esegeta' the 'Sommo' is the only person who will be permitted to enter without a ballot into an imaginary phalanstery belonging to the author and his interlocutor (Annalisa Cima), whilst in 'Vivremo mai nella nostra...' Solmi is included in another ideal society, a commune for Eugenio's and Annalisa's dearest friends located on the thirtieth floor of a New York skyscraper.

Bearing in mind Montale's close relationship with Solmi, it would seem all but certain that the former would have been familiar with *Dal balcone*. The likelihood that Montale knew this collection is augmented by the fact that the Fondo Montale contains a copy of this same (with an inscription by Solmi). Now, in one of the more imaginative poems in *Dal balcone*, 'Levania', the 'io' wonders if in his past existence he landed on 'Levania'. As the author informs his reader in a note at the end of *Dal balcone*, this proper noun designates the Moon. When he was young, the first person subject of 'Levania' was eager to reach this satellite, to draw on the silence of its light. He attributed a fundamental value to the Moon: it was 'il punto fermo apposto alla insensata | fantasia delle forme', 'il concreto, | bianco, forato, calcinato fondo | dell'essere'. In the long concluding sentence of 'Levania' the first person reminisces over the frequent occasions upon which he has gazed from the lunar heights over to the Earth:

E sovente dai supremi

bastioni di Levania il verdeggianti
 pianeta ho contemplato, l'ombra vaga
 di oceani e di foreste, della vita
 impetuosa e fuggevole le polle
 iridescenti – risalendo l'orlo
 dei suoi convulsi crateri, vagando
 lungo la sponda dei suoi mari morti.

Several months after the publication of *Dal balcone*, on the last day of 1968 and the first of 1969, Montale composed a short poem entitled 'Fine del '68', later inserted into *Satura*. The first of this text's two strophes reads as follows:

Ho contemplato dalla luna, o quasi,
 il modesto pianeta che contiene
 filosofia, teologia, politica,
 pornografia, letteratura, scienze
 palesi o arcane. Dentro c'è anche l'uomo
 ed io tra questi. E tutto è molto strano.

The United States manned spacecraft Apollo 8 was launched on 21 December 1968; having encircled the Earth, the craft orbited the Moon ten times. Thus, what in the last verses of 'Levania', dated 1954, can only have been fiction, in the dying days of 1968 drew close to becoming a reality. (The first Moon landing would take place a few months later, on 20 July 1969.) This development in the 'magnifiche sorti e progressive' of humanity obviously played an important role in the genesis of 'Fine del '68'.⁴³ Yet, if real-life events furnished Montale with the stimulus for the composition of 'Fine del '68', it is fair to claim that this poem would not have assumed the form that it did without the abiding memory of the above-mentioned text by Solmi. In fact, it would seem indisputable that Montale modelled the opening of his poem on the beginning of the final sentence of 'Levania': compare Solmi's 'E sovente dai supremi | bastioni di Levania [i.e. the Moon] il verdeggianti | pianeta ho contemplato' with Montale's 'Ho contemplato

dalla luna, o quasi, | il modesto pianeta'. The similarities are manifest: 'ho contemplato' the 'pianeta' (Earth) from the Moon (and observe, in addition, that in both extracts the substantive 'pianeta' is preceded by an adjective: 'verdeggiante' / 'modesto').

Before leaving *Dal balcone* behind and moving on to the final intertext to be discussed here, it is worth highlighting some of the differences between the last sentence of 'Levania' and 'Fine del '68'. The subject of the former poem describes the Earth he claims to have seen many a time from the Moon as a vital entity, a 'verdeggiante' place with oceans and forests, iridescent springs of the 'vita | impetuosa e fuggevole'. All this is in stark contrast with the Moon, barren and lifeless, with its 'convulsi crateri' and its 'mari morti'. At the end of 'Levania' Solmi seems to set the Earth up as a positive entity, something to be longed for from the sterile Moon. The subject of 'Fine del '68', on the other hand, contemplating the world from near the Moon, mentions very different things. The Earth is not described as a verdant place of oceans and forests but, rather, as a 'modest' planet containing philosophy, theology, politics, pornography, literature and sciences. The second and final strophe of 'Fine del '68' commences: 'Tra poche ore sarà notte e l'anno | finirà tra esplosioni di spumanti | e di petardi'.⁴⁴ Montale goes on to affirm that there might soon be explosions of bombs or even worse. The sober little poem from *Satura* ends: 'Se uno muore | non importa a nessuno purché sia | sconosciuto e lontano'. Thus, in 'Fine del '68', above all in the second strophe, the Earth is painted in a less than flattering light; it is the locus of pornography, bombs, death and widespread egotism. Inspired for the opening of 'Fine del '68' by the last section of Solmi's 'Levania', Montale furnishes his reader with a notably dissimilar message to that of his old friend.

(v) Umberto Eco, *Apocalittici e integrati*⁴⁵

To end, let us leave behind ‘literature’ in the strictest sense of the word and return once more to the world of philosophical writing, taking a glance at the early work of Umberto Eco. Montale reviewed two of the many volumes by Eco published during the Sixties: *Opera aperta* and *Apocalittici e integrati*. The review of the latter was published on 2 August 1964 in *Il Corriere della Sera* under the obviously ironic heading ‘Di bene in meglio’ (*SMAMS* 298-300). Montale remarks in the first paragraph of this piece that according to many ‘benpensanti’ the new mass media are not innately evil: it is all a question of how these media are employed. For the ‘benpensanti’, he asserts, a proper utilisation of the radio, the television, comics, etc. would be one in which cultured and trustworthy men, artists and thinkers, played the dominant role; these same people would be capable of taming the new mass media ‘monsters’ without, however, reducing their efficiency. (These ideas are, of course, ones shared by the author of *Apocalittici e integrati*.) The reviewer goes on to note the lack of success of previous efforts to involve serious writers in radio and television dramas: ‘Gli scrittori preferirono attenersi ai mezzi di comunicazione tradizionali e i gestori degli schermi si limitarono a spolpare e disossare racconti e romanzi preesistenti’ (*SMAMS* 298). This sentence might well prompt one to remember a poem from *Diari*, ‘El Desdichado’ (the title is identical to that of a celebrated sonnet by the French writer Gérard de Nerval).⁴⁶ There, Montale renders public his

dissatisfaction regarding a rendition of Bizet's *Carmen* transmitted on television: 'Sto seguendo sul video la Carmen di Karajan | disossata con cura, troppo amabile'.

In 'Di bene in meglio' Montale denies that there is any truth in the allegation that those people whom Eco defines in his book as 'apocalyptic' are reactionaries. (The rejection of this accusation on the part of the Genoese writer is hardly surprising: Montale, who in the Sixties undoubtedly belonged to Eco's class of 'apocalyptic', had no desire to be pigeonholed as a reactionary.) The reviewer goes on: 'Si può benissimo negare il presente pur concedendo che per molti aspetti le grandi civiltà antiche fossero un «letamaio»' (*SMAMS* 299). Now, the main source for this notion that the grand civilisations of old were from more than one perspective atrocious places in which to live is the first essay in *Apocalittici e integrati*, 'Cultura di massa e "livelli" di cultura'. In one of his footnotes to this piece Eco quotes in translation a question by the distinguished American sociologist Edward Shils: 'Non sarà più corretto pensare che la cultura di massa sia meno nefasta per le classi inferiori che la esistenza lugubre e difficile che conducevano nelle epoche meno evolute?'. At this point in the footnote the author of *Apocalittici e integrati* takes over:

È la domanda che in genere non si pone mai chi caldeggia con nostalgia un ritorno all'equilibrio interiore dell'uomo greco. Quale uomo greco? Lo schiavo o il meteco cui erano negati diritti civili ed istruzione? Le donne, o le neonate che venivano abbandonate su un letamaio?⁴⁷

It would seem that Montale was quite struck by this remark. In fact, he returned to it in an interview with Ferdinando Camon published the year after his review of *Apocalittici e integrati* in the volume *Il mestiere di poeta*: 'Eco dice poi che le antiche civiltà erano, per

molti lati, dei letamai. È vero. Ma anche la nostra civiltà è per molti lati un letamaio' (*SMAMS* 1648).

A few years after 'Di bene in meglio' Montale composed 'Botta e risposta III', the last of the 'Botta e risposta' poems in *Satura*. The author of the 'botta', supposedly the Greek harpsichordist and Italianist Margherita Dalmati, states that she has seen once more the dormitory where the 'tu', i.e. Montale, took shelter when the Almanach de Gotha spilled forth from the King George hotel.⁴⁸ (The first person is referring here to one of Montale's visits to Greece, a visit that coincided with the royal wedding of Juan Carlos of Spain and Sophia of Greece in Athens on 14 May 1962.) Later, in the fourth strophe of his long 'risposta', the poet reminisces over the time he spent in Greece, affirming *inter alia*:

[...] Tutto ricordo
del tuo paese, del suo mare, delle
sue capre, dei suoi uomini,
eredi inattendibili di un mondo
che s'impara sui libri ed era forse
orrendo come il nostro.

Evidently, when Montale set about meditating on Greece, there came into his mind a comment in Eco's seminal 1964 volume that had rather impressed him a few years previously. The author of *Apocalittici e integrati* had demonstrated that the ancient Greek world was in several respects a monstrous place. Mindful of this, in 'Botta e risposta III' Montale states that ancient Greece, designated periphrastically as 'un mondo | che s'impara sui libri', may have been as dreadful as the world of today.

¹ On Montale's review of *Un amore*, see my '«L'artista dal cuore buono»: Montale on Buzzati', forthcoming in *Studi buzzatiani*.

² Whilst it would appear that to date no critic has delved at length into the significance of Calvino's writing for Montale, numerous scholars have discussed the importance of Montale for Calvino. See, above all, John Ahern, 'Out of Montale's Cavern: A Reading of Calvino's «Gli amori difficili»', *Modern Language Studies*, 11 (1982), 3-19; Silvio Perrella, 'Risonanze montaliane in Italo Calvino', in *Italo Calvino: la letteratura, la scienza, la città: Atti del Convegno nazionale di studi di Sanremo*, ed. by G. Bertone (Genoa: Marietti, 1988), pp. 156-63; Fabio Pierangeli, *Italo Calvino: la metamorfosi e l'idea del nulla* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1997); Rino Consolo, 'Lampi e lapsus (tra Calvino, Montale e Pirandello)', *Nuova Rivista di Letteratura Italiana*, I, 2 (1998), 453-61; Angela M. Jeannet, *Under the Radiant Sun and the Crescent Moon: Italo Calvino's Storytelling* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Claudia Nocentini, 'Montale Read and Revisited by Calvino', in *Montale Readings*, ed. by É. Ó Ceallacháin and F. Pedriali (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2000), pp. 1-15. Rosita Tordi Castria's very recent "'Liguria magra e ossuta". Calvino e Montale' (in *Montale europeo*, pp. 177-211), an article that consists for the most part of extremely lengthy quotations from the letters and prose of Montale and Calvino without any detailed comment, contributes little of any novelty to our understanding of the relationship between the two Ligurian writers.

³ Here, *RR* = Italo Calvino, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. by M. Barengi and B. Falcetto (Milan: Mondadori, vol. 1, 1991; vol. 2, 1992; vol. 3, 1994).

⁴ Italo Calvino, 'Tre correnti del romanzo italiano d'oggi', in *Saggi: 1945-1985*, ed. by M. Barengi (Milan: Mondadori, 1995, 2 vols.), pp. 61-75 (p. 64).

⁵ See Grignani, 'Storia di «Xenia»', pp. 87-88.

⁶ It should be noted, meanwhile, that in the *Corriere d'Informazione* of 8-9 December 1965 there appeared a review of a production of Verdi's *La forza del destino* (SMAMS 866-69), whilst the *Corriere d'Informazione* of 10-11 December 1965 carried a review of a production of the same composer's *Rigoletto* (SMAMS 869-71).

⁷ On 'Vivere', see Scrivano, '«Quaderno di quattro anni»: fine dei miti', in *Metafore e miti di Eugenio Montale*, pp. 93-127 (pp. 109-11).

⁸ See Italo Calvino, *Lettere: 1940-1985*, ed. by L. Baranelli (Milan: Mondadori, 2000), p. 902.

⁹ On Montale, ants and Forte dei Marmi, see Pivano, 'Eugenio Montale e la Mosca, 1966', p. 292.

¹⁰ Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia*, pp. 34-35.

¹¹ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, trans. by B. Oddera (Milan: Mondadori, 1959), p. 68. For the possible influence of Paul Morand's *Le voyage* (1927) and Dante on the author of 'Botta e risposta II', see the section 'Le "citazioni impreviste" di *Botta e risposta II*' in Ioli, *Montale*, pp. 133-45.

¹² Riccardo Castellana points out the salience of 'La spirale' for 'Botta e risposta II' in his unpublished 'tesi di laurea' "*Una costellazione di armoniche*": *Crisi della lirica e pluralità di generi in "Satura" di Montale*, Tesi in Storia della Letteratura Italiana Moderna e Contemporanea, University of Siena, 13 July 1994. Some of the following remarks are akin to comments made by Castellana in his discussion of 'Botta e risposta II'.

¹³ Orlando, '«O maledette reminiscenze!» Per una tipologia della 'citazione distintiva' nell'ultimo Montale', pp. 117-18.

¹⁴ See Orlando, '«O maledette reminiscenze!» Per una tipologia della 'citazione distintiva' nell'ultimo Montale', p. 118. In the same endnote Orlando mentions Leopardi's 'Dialogo di Plotino e di Porfirio' (*Operette morali*), which, he affirms, 'costituisce in qualche modo l'antecedente di un ricorso non ortodosso al pensatore [Porphyry], per una ricostruzione apocrifa dei suoi «ragionamenti»' (p. 118).

¹⁵ Orlando believes that in the last part of the above extract from 'Botta e riposta II' there converge 'suggerzioni' from the poetry of T. S. Eliot and Camillo Sbarbaro ('«O maledette reminiscenze!» Per una tipologia della 'citazione distintiva' nell'ultimo Montale', p. 118). By Eliot, Orlando mentions 'A Lyric' ('If Time and Space, as Sages say, | Are things which cannot be, | The sun which does not feel decay | No greater is than we') and 'Song' ('If space and time, as sages say, | Are things that cannot be'). By Sbarbaro, '*Sonno, dolce fratello della Morte*' ('Vieni, consolatore degli afflitti. | Abolisci per me lo spazio e il tempo | e nel nulla dissolvi questo io') and 'Lettera dall'osteria' ('scantonato dal Tempo e dallo Spazio'). Orlando also mentions Gozzano's '*Perchè nella tua favola compianta*', a sonnet which ends: 'Io non gemo, fratello, e non impreco: | scendo ridendo verso il fiume oscuro | che ci affranca dal Tempo e dallo Spazio'. Additionally, it might be pointed out that the lexemes 'tempo' and 'spazio' appear close together in 'L'orto' (*Bufera*): 'ti espandi | in tempo d'uomo, in spazio d'uomo'.

¹⁶ For another possible source for the verse 'chi sogna strade di cristallo', see Aldo Palazzeschi's 'Una casina di cristallo (congedo)' (*L'incendiario: 1905-1909*). There, the

Florentine poet dreams of a little crystal house: 'Io sogno una casina di cristallo | proprio nel mezzo della città | nel folto dell'abitato'. See Vincenzo Di Benedetto, 'Interpretazioni del Montale inedito', *Rivista di Letteratura Italiana*, XIII, 1-2 (1995), 159-88 (p. 163). For further ideas regarding the origin of Montale's 'strade di cristallo', see Angelo Marchese, 'Il mito della donna angelo nel «Diario postumo»', in *Atti del seminario sul Diario postumo di Eugenio Montale*, pp. 101-11 (p. 111).

¹⁷ Marco Forti, 'Eugenio Montale: vita, opere, ispiratrici', in *Per conoscere Montale: Antologia corredata di testi critici*, ed. by M. Forti (Milan: Mondadori, 1986), pp. 3-59 (p. 35). On this person, see also Montale's remarks in Mauro and Clementelli, 'Eugenio Montale', p. 140.

¹⁸ Montale may also have been influenced by his own 'Elegia', a poem dated 26 January 1918, first published in 1966 and now present in *Poesie disperse (L'opera in versi)*. 'Elegia' commences: 'Non muoverti. | Se ti muovi lo infrangi. | È come una gran bolla di cristallo | sottile | stasera il mondo: | e sempre più gonfia e si leva'.

¹⁹ For other possible sources for 'Diamantina', see Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia*, p. 34.

²⁰ On Montale's trip to New York, see 'Andati e tornati in novanta ore' (PR 325-30).

²¹ Of course, without the date of composition of 'Vivremo mai nella nostra...', one cannot know whether Montale had already written any of the above texts when he set to work on the aforementioned poem.

²² On 'Schiappino', see Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, pp. 244-46 and, by the same author, 'Note sull'allegorismo novecentesco. Il caso di Montale', in *L'allegoria del moderno*:

Saggi sull'allegorismo come forma artistica del moderno e come metodo di conoscenza (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1990), pp. 279-98.

²³ The last two verses of 'Schiappino', like the first four, do not closely resemble any passage in 'Una spiaggia in Liguria'. They might lead the seasoned reader of Montale to remember the following lines from the prose poem 'Dov'era il tennis...' (*Bufera*): 'A conti fatti, chiedersi il come e il perché della partita interrotta è come chiederselo della nubecola di vapore che esce dal cargo arretrato, laggiù sulla linea della Palmaria. Fra poco s'accenderanno nel golfo le prime lampare'. Antonio Zollino, on the other hand, is reminded by these verses of D'Annunzio's writing: see Zollino, 'Il riferimento dannunziano nell'ultimo Montale (da *Satura* ad *Altri versi*)', pp. 466-67.

²⁴ I am grateful to Giovanni Falaschi for having called my attention to 'Il bosco degli animali'.

²⁵ It should be noted that the words 'traccia' and 'lepri' had appeared not far apart from each other in the final strophe of 'Egloga' (*Ossi*): 'Non si leggeva più in faccia | al mondo la traccia | della frenesia durata | il pomeriggio. Turbati | discendevamo tra i vepri. | Nei miei paesi a quell'ora | cominciano a fischiare le lepri'. There is, however, no mention of 'neve' or similar anywhere in 'Egloga'.

²⁶ The subject of 'Botta e risposta I', a text written some years before 'Il genio', states that he and one or more others were 'badilanti infiacchiti colti in fallo | dai bargelli del brago'. On page 195 of *Il rovescio della poesia* Martelli suggests that Montale's 'badilanti' – a word that is not at all common in Italian – might originate from Nelo Risi's 'Neve come infanzia' (*Polso teso*), where the reader finds the verse 'i badilanti spezzano

la crosta –'. Yet, one might put forward numerous other possible literary sources for this word. 'Ricostruzione', for example, one of the poems in *Il male minore*, published just a year before the composition of 'Botta e risposta I': 'L'allegria del badilante | qui alla Spezia è il bicchiere di vino | ma il piccolo muratore | riguarda con occhi di fuoco | al reggiseno steso alla finestra | caramella di pesca dei garzoni'.

²⁷ Giovanni Giudici, *La vita in versi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1965) and *Autobiologia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969). All quotations are from Giovanni Giudici, *I versi della vita*, ed. by R. Zucco (Milan: Mondadori, 2000).

²⁸ Lorenzo Papi, 'Incontro con Montale', *La Nazione*, 23 September 1975, 3.

²⁹ For information concerning the relationship between Montale and Giudici, see Carlo Di Alesio's 'Cronologia' in Giudici, *I versi della vita*, pp. xlvii-c. On Giudici's reading of Montale's verse, see 'Il cattivo lettore' (*Autobiologia*), as well as Giovanni Giudici, 'Oltre Montale', in *Il secolo di Montale*, pp. 21-26.

³⁰ For a very similar idea, see Mazzoni, 'Satura e la poesia del secondo Novecento', p. 191. The first sentence of 'La vita in prosa' reads: 'Il fatto è che la vita non si spiega | né con la biologia | né con la teologia'. Given that the title of this poem parodies *La vita in versi*, might not this sentence be alluding to the above-mentioned *Autobiologia*?

³¹ See Fortini, '«Satura» nel 1971', p. 117.

³² I am grateful to Pierluigi Pellini for having drawn my attention to the affinities between 'Il gallo cedrone' and 'Gli uccelli parlanti'.

³³ The entry for 'neroblù' in the *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* furnishes just one example of its use: verses from 'Gli uccelli parlanti'. See Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande*

dizionario della lingua italiana (Turin: UTET, 1961-). There is no entry for this word in Tullio De Mauro, *Grande dizionario italiano dell'uso* (Turin: UTET, 1999-2000, 6 vols.).

³⁴ 'Dal suo punto di vista' may also be found in the aforementioned *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi*.

³⁵ For an analysis of 'Il rondone', see Alberto Jelmini, 'Poesia e linguaggio in Montale', *Cenobio*, XXXII, 2 (April-June 1983), 142-45. Meanwhile, for some thought-provoking comments about birds (and animals in general) in the later poetry of Montale, see Antonella Mantovani, 'Per un bestiario montaliano: la pista di «Al mare (o quasi)»', *Otto/Novecento*, XI, 5/6 (September/December 1987), 185-94.

³⁶ Antonio Barolini, *L'ultima contessa di famiglia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1968).

³⁷ See Barolini's 'Nota' in *L'ultima contessa di famiglia*, p. 7.

³⁸ Enzo Biagi, 'Eugenio Montale', in *Dicono di lei* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1978), pp. 186-93 (p. 188).

³⁹ Barolini, *L'ultima contessa di famiglia*, pp. 103-04.

⁴⁰ For bibliographic data regarding the most recent edition of this work, see earlier in this study.

⁴¹ In the Sixties alone, Montale published the following articles on Fondazione Cini events: 'Il drammatico Conclave del 1800 nella rievocazione di Gallarati Scotti a Venezia' (*SMP* 2269-73), 'Cento modi di intendere la grandezza di Tolstoi' (*SMP* 2288-92), 'Un film nero può portare un uomo debole al delitto' (*SMP* 2313-17), 'Una sacra rappresentazione e un «mistero»' (*SMAMS* 498-501), 'L'arte e la decenza nel cinema d'oggi' (*SMP* 2413-16), 'Studiosi bianchi e neri per la civiltà africana' (*SMP* 2417-20),

‘Cinema e libertà’ (SMP 2476-80) and ‘Nessuno fa il nome di Cristo nel dibattito su scienza e fede’ (SMP 2480-84).

⁴² Sergio Solmi, *Dal balcone* (Milan: Mondadori, 1968). All quotations here are from Sergio Solmi, *Poesie: (1924-1972)*, ed. by L. Caretti (Milan: Mondadori, 1978). On Montale and Solmi, see Tiziana de Rogatis, ‘Il classicismo paradossale’, in *Montale e il classicismo moderno*, pp. 71-94; Ioli, *Montale*, pp. 64-74; Rosita Tordi Castria, ‘Parma 1917. Il sodalizio con Sergio Solmi e Francesco Meriano’, in *Montale europeo*, pp. 65-83.

⁴³ For the salience of current affairs for ‘Fine del ’68’, see Ó Ceallacháin, *Eugenio Montale*, pp. 76-79. Ó Ceallacháin also observes in his book that there might be an ironic echo of Goethe’s *Faust* in the first strophe of ‘Fine del ’68’ (his acknowledged source for this idea is Patrick Boyde). See *Eugenio Montale*, p. 81.

⁴⁴ It is truly hard to resist the temptation of contrasting Montale’s New Year 1968 to the quiet New Year in ‘Carnevale di Gerti’ (*Occasioni*): ‘finì l’anno tranquillo senza spari’.

⁴⁵ Umberto Eco, *Apocalittici e integrati: Comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa* (Milan: Bompiani, 1964).

⁴⁶ In the second half of the Twentieth century Montale was not the only Italian writer to replicate the title of Nerval’s sonnet. In fact, Giorgio Caproni has a four-verse poem entitled ‘El desdichado’ in his 1986 collection of verse *Il Conte di Kevenhüller*. See Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, ‘Titoli poetici novecenteschi’, in *La tradizione del Novecento: Terza serie* (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), pp. 3-26 (p. 7).

⁴⁷ Eco, 'Cultura di massa e "livelli" di cultura', in *Apocalittici e integrati*, pp. 31-66 (p. 43).

⁴⁸ Incidentally, Mario Luzi's 1957 collection of verse *Onore del vero* includes a poem where, as in part II of 'Botta e risposta III', the interlocutor is Margherita Dalmati: 'A Niki Z. e alla sua patria' (Margherita Dalmati is the pseudonym of Maria Nike Zoroyannidis). Interestingly, both 'A Niki Z. e alla sua patria' and 'Botta e risposta III' have quite a political edge to them; indeed, it is not to be excluded that the one may have inspired the other.

Conclusion

In her recent synthesis of contemporary scholarship on Montale, Maria Antonietta Grignani identifies two ‘atti dovuti’ of our time towards the Genoese poet. The first of these is to reach a better understanding of the concrete biographical experiences behind Montale’s verse. From this point of view the year 2003 is set to be an *annus mirabilis*, seeing that it will yield the long-awaited publication of Montale’s letters to Irma Brandeis. The second ‘atto dovuto’ identified by Grignani is that of ‘allargare il ventaglio dei riferimenti culturali’.¹ The present study has sought to make a significant contribution to the latter line of research, arguing that a great deal of the new literature that appeared in or around the Sixties was of major importance for the development of the post-*Bufera* verse. This thesis, in fact, has set forth convincing evidence that a sizeable part of Montale’s later poetry would not have taken the form that it did without its author’s large-scale and highly sensitive reading of others’ writing.

Elsewhere, Grignani has affirmed that ‘Montale è stato il poeta più duttile del nostro Novecento, per il suo sistema cangiante di fonti e di riferimenti culturali’.² The findings here only serve to endorse Grignani’s statement, for it has been demonstrated beyond a doubt that Montale’s later poetic compositions owe a considerable debt not just to the classics, such as Dante, Leopardi, D’Annunzio and Gozzano, but also to the most recent artistic expressions, ranging from Ginzburg’s *Lessico familiare* and Sereni’s *Gli*

strumenti umani to Zanzotto's *La Beltà* and Giudici's *Autobiologia*. Indeed, one of the most striking discoveries made here is just how many different contemporary texts collaborated in the creation of the post-*Bufera* verse. In reality, the Montale of the Sixties and Seventies was a far cry away from that stereotype of an old man shut off from the rest of the world and indifferent to what was taking place around him.

In his 1965 review of Tino Richelmy's *L'arrotino appassionato* Montale recognises that 'la poesia in ogni tempo ha prodotto altra poesia' (SMP 2704). Here, it has been suggested that the author of *Satura* and the subsequent collections was highly receptive to the verse output of others: Lowell, Williams, Caproni, Sinisgalli, Sereni, Morgenstern, Fratini, Sala, Risi, Zanzotto, Erba, Giudici and Solmi are just some of the many names that have been mentioned in this context. The focus has been on Italian authors and, indeed, if pushed, one would have to admit that the later collections owe more to Italian verse than to foreign writing; try as one might, it would be impossible to find a contemporary foreign poet that exerted an influence on the later Montale anywhere near comparable to that of, say, Sereni with his *Gli strumenti umani*, Risi with his *Dentro la sostanza* or Zanzotto with his *La Beltà*. Rebecca West was indeed right when she wrote that '[f]orse in fin dei conti è giusto fare una distinzione tra Montale prosatore e Montale poeta, essendo quello molto più 'europeo' di questo almeno per quanto riguarda le fonti d'ispirazione e i temi e modelli dominanti'.³ Still, non-Italian poetry indubitably had its salience for the later Montale, as the earlier pages on Lowell's *Life Studies*, Williams' *Poesie* and Morgenstern's *Canti grotteschi* should serve to prove.

As for prose material, it has been demonstrated that this was vital for much of the post-*Bufera* production, thereby lending weight to Montale's earlier-quoted affirmation

that ‘il grande semenzaio d’ogni trovata poetica è nel campo della prosa’. The emphasis has fallen principally on six volumes, all but one of Italian origin: Ginzburg’s *Lessico familiare*, Löwith’s *Critica dell’esistenza storica*, Calvino’s *Le Cosmicomiche* and *Ti con zero*, Barolini’s *L’ultima contessa di famiglia* and Eco’s *Apocalittici e integrati*. Of these, only the first and second work would look to have been fundamentally important both on the level of macroscopic and microscopic influence: the salience of the other texts was limited exclusively to the plane of local echoes, with the exception of *Le Cosmicomiche* which also helped spark off the composition of a large proportion of the ‘Xenia’. The quantity and quality of the findings made in relation to the above texts, ranging from the discovery that one of these works – *Lessico familiare* – provided an essential impetus for the overall form and content of an entire phase in Montale’s verse composition to the revelation of minute but nonetheless noteworthy lexical and/or ideological convergences (see, for example, the sections on *L’ultima contessa di famiglia* and *Apocalittici e integrati*), lead one to suspect that further research on the later Montale and contemporary prose could prove extremely fruitful. At the beginning of part three of the present study an extensive list of some of the works of fiction reviewed by Montale around the time of the composition of *Satura* was provided: future scholars would certainly be well advised to take a close look at the issue of the possible importance of all these volumes for the post-*Bufera* verse.

With regard to the matter of macroscopic influence, it has been argued that contemporary literature carried out an important function in the creative process leading to the ‘Xenia’ and ‘Satura I’ / ‘Satura II’, contributing to the development of Montale’s language, metre, rhetoric, tone and themes. There was not just one fundamental intertext

at the root of the composition of the 'Xenia' and the rest of the later verse. There was, on the other hand, a large mass of works that set Montale thinking, that edged him in a particular direction when he came to set pen to paper. In the genesis of the 'Xenia' contemporary American poetry would appear to have played a noteworthy role: here, both Lowell's *Life Studies* and Williams' *Poesie* deserve attention. Recent Italian verse was also salient to some extent for the 'Xenia': the general poetic milieu in Italy in the late Fifties and early Sixties and, in particular, Caproni's *Il seme del piangere* have been discussed above. Nevertheless, the key contemporary intertext behind the 'Xenia' was Natalia Ginzburg's novel about her family and friends, *Lessico familiare*. This work, perhaps more than any other text, be it old or new, was responsible for encouraging Montale to alter his writing from the elaborate style and high lyricism of *Bufera* to the more 'prosaic' and 'comic' mode to be found in the twenty-eight poems regarding Drusilla Tanzi.

In the case of 'Satura I' and 'Satura II', meantime, Sereni's *Gli strumenti umani*, Morgenstern's *Canti grotteschi*, Vivaldi's verse anthology *Poesia satirica nell'Italia d'oggi*, Risi's *Dentro la sostanza*, Löwith's *Critica dell'esistenza storica* and Zanzotto's *La Beltà* were all of no minor significance, bolstering Montale to open up more to the wider world, to engage critically with his reality, to enrich his language with the most contemporary terminology, to confront the subject of historicism and to avail himself of strings of etymologically related words and polyptota (to mention just some of the areas touched upon in part two of the present study).

No doubt about it, the above authors differ considerably amongst themselves: Caproni's verse is far from Morgenstern's, Ginzburg's fiction is for the most part a long

way away from Calvino's. Still, all these many writers are united by one feature, something that was almost a *sine qua non* for Montale's full appreciation of their literary production: they may all be classified as writers who, whilst being innovative, did not attempt to dispense with the tradition that preceded them.

Descending from the plane of general influences to that of microscopic reverberations, numerous local echoes from other texts in the post-*Bufera* verse have been presented and discussed above, ranging from the utilisation by Montale of a single word (see, for example, the case of Giudici's 'Dal suo punto di vista' and 'Gli uccelli parlanti') to the adoption of a short phrase (see, for instance, the earlier paragraphs on Campo's version of 'Spring and All' and 'Nel cortile', on Risi's 'Attesa là' and 'In un giardino 'italiano'', on Löwith's *Critica dell'esistenza storica* and 'Divinità in incognito', on Zanzotto's 'Profezie o memorie o giornali murali' and 'Dopo una fuga', on Erba's 'Sentimento del tempo' and 'Il genio', and on Solmi's 'Levania' and 'Fine del '68') and – most interesting of all – the adaptation and redeployment of quite long passages by another author (see, for example, the parallels drawn between the section on Silvio Tanzi in *Lessico familiare* and 'Xenia I', 13, Sereni's 'Gli amici' and 'Botta e risposta II', 'Nella neve' – again by Sereni – and 'Dopopioggia', Morgenstern and Turazza's 'Palma Conocchia (imitazione)' and 'Il furore', Sala's 'Anche il tuono' and one of the poems in 'Motivi', Risi's 'Affascinato dai pesci rossi' and 'Ribaltamento', Löwith's 'Il linguaggio nella sua funzione mediatrice tra uomo e mondo' and 'La lingua di Dio', Zanzotto's 'Così siamo' and 'Xenia I', 14, and Calvino's 'Un segno nello spazio' and 'Vivere').

Thanks to the detailed identification of all these local echoes, a first conclusion that may be drawn at this point – and it is a conclusion that in the eyes of the author of the

present study is anything but uninteresting – is that intertextually speaking and from the point of view of Sixties literature Montale's later verse is extremely rich. In fact, if it is true that the poetry from *Ossi* to *Bufera* resonates with echoes from contemporary writers (D'Annunzio, Valéry, Gozzano, Sbarbaro and so on), then the same is true for the successive writing. The words of Luigi Blasucci, '[l']enciclopedia [di Montale], nutrita di oggetti e di riferimenti culturali, è tra le più folte della poesia contemporanea', would appear to be just as valid for the later Montale as they are for the earlier one.⁴

With regard to the nature of these local echoes it is far from easy to generalise. Nonetheless, several worthwhile observations may be made. Firstly, taking the post-*Bufera* verse in its entirety, it currently looks all but certain that the text from the Sixties that exerted the most potent force on Montale on the plane of local influence was *Gli strumenti umani*. This will hardly take the average reader by surprise given the praise that Montale lavished on this collection's author during his 1965 review of it, writing that 'tra i poeti della sua generazione [Sereni] è tra i primissimi' (*SMP* 2750). Meanwhile, other especially significant works from the standpoint of sheer quantity of local echoes include *Critica dell'esistenza storica* and *La Beltà*, both reviewed by the poet in 1968. Another all but incontrovertible observation is that Montale drew especially on passages regarding fauna, something that is not unexpected if one remembers the poet's lifelong enthusiasm for animals: Sereni's 'Dopopioggia', Fratini's 'Un nido d'aquila', Risi's 'Attesa là' and 'Affascinato dai pesci rossi', Calvino's 'La spirale' and 'Il bosco degli animali', Erba's 'Sentimento del tempo', Giudici's 'Dal suo punto di vista' and 'Il civettino', not to mention Barolini's 'La grande schidionata del cugino Canal', all fall into this category. The case of Giudici is particularly interesting, for it would appear that the author of *Diari*

and *Quaderno* drew repeatedly on the younger writer's verses concerning birds, using two poems, 'Dal suo punto di vista' and 'Il civettino', to enrich at least three separate texts of his own: 'Gli uccelli parlanti', 'Dopopioggia' and 'Il rondone'. On the phenomenology of local echoes in the later Montale we might remark additionally that works that would appear to have influenced the overall style of the post-*Bufera* verse frequently also seem to have left precise traces of themselves in individual poems (see, for example, the earlier analyses of *Lessico familiare*, *Gli strumenti umani* and *Dentro la sostanza*) and, furthermore, that, when it is a verse text that we are dealing with, the influential segment is very often located in a structurally marked zone, i.e. at the beginning or end of a line, a strophe or the entire piece. For instance, in more than one of the cases of intertextuality referred to in this study the first verse of a poem by another author evidently gave rise to the opening verse to a Montalean text: compare the eighth part of Giannangeli's 'Gli isolani terrestri' with part II of 'Botta e risposta I', Sinisgalli's 'Vidi le Muse' with 'Sul lago d'Orta' and Fortini's 'La gronda' with 'Vedo un uccello fermo sulla grondaia...'.⁵

Singh has written with reference to Montale of 'quella capacità di assimilare e di cointegrare contesti e riferimenti diversissimi, pur mantenendo intatta la propria individualità, che è segno di un genio autentico, di una rara intelligenza e di un carattere sicuro di sé'.⁵ Indeed, Montale's intertextual 'borrowings' from *Satura* onwards almost never smack of unmediated regurgitation. We might well attribute to the later Montale that which the interested party had to say of the much younger Zanzotto in his review of *La Beltà*: 'Le fonti culturali del poeta sono forse innumerevoli ma bene assimilate' (*SMP* 2893). One never garners the impression, at least judging from the original hypotheses

presented in this thesis, that the Genoese poet is somehow ‘plagiarising’ another writer: the intertexts tend to be woven skilfully into Montale’s unmistakable style, sucked into a creative vortex that metamorphoses them into something considerably different.

Let us take ‘Il sabià’. Here Montale makes use of Gonçalves Dias’s ‘Canção do exílio’, a footnote to an article by Cesare Segre on this same text and a short poem by Nelo Risi from *Dentro la sostanza*. Yet, whilst drawing on all these various pieces, the poet hardly provides us with a text that mirrors faithfully any one of its intertexts. True, Montale gets his phrase ‘Il sabià canta’ from ‘Canção do exílio’, but only to subsequently assimilate it into a very different context, going on to pour scorn on Gonçalves Dias, ‘un poeta senz’ali’. Furthermore, if the Italian author appropriated a remark by Segre, then it must be admitted that the oppositional phrase ‘a terra, non sugli alberi’ is substantially different from Segre’s ‘sugli aranci [...] non sulle palme’. Finally, whilst it is beyond any doubt that Montale drew on the fifth part of Risi’s ‘Segni dei tempi’ for several elements in his ‘Il sabià’, as demonstrated above, then it must nevertheless be stressed that the overall gist of his poem is hardly that of Risi’s ‘piccolo scherzo gnomico’. The fifth part of ‘Segni dei tempi’ mocks the philosophy of Socrates and polemicizes with the destructive attitude towards urban greenery in Italy. ‘Il sabià’, on the other hand, having ridiculed Gonçalves Dias, deals with a mysterious being (or beings) who sings neither above nor below and who is today reduced to little or nothing. ‘Il sabià’, in short, is very much Montale’s text, despite the fact that here and there he availed himself of others’ writing.

To find a further illustration of the Genoese poet’s fine talent for assimilating and integrating seamlessly other people’s texts into his own writing, we need look no further

than 'Botta e risposta II', much discussed in parts two and three of the present study. It has been suggested that during the composition of this poem from *Satura* Montale drew on not one but at least five different works. The first part of 'Botta e risposta II' seems to be loosely based on Sereni's 'Gli amici', whilst in the second part of this poem a comment about God echoes Pavolini's 'Epigramma fiorentino', two particular lexemes call to mind Zanzotto's 'Esautorazioni', the 'dilettazioni morose' look to derive from Joyce's *Ulysses* and/or Nabokov's *Lolita*, and the whole of the middle section of Montale's poem was strongly informed by the reading of Calvino's *Le Cosmicomiche*. A vast array of texts, then, that might in the hands of a lesser writer have led to a muddled pastiche, to a piece characterised by a definite lack of internal cohesion. And yet 'Botta e risposta II' could hardly be described as being a poor collage of others' literary production. Here, as elsewhere, the author of *Satura* takes, adapts and integrates with finesse so that the resulting text is both highly readable and stamped with the unmistakable hallmark of Montale or, to be more accurate, the Montale of the late Sixties.

And, in general, once a case of intertextuality has been established with a very high degree of certitude it is often just as intellectually illuminating to draw contrasts as it is to compare, thereby highlighting exactly how Montale elaborated on his source text. It is precisely for this reason that in the course of its discussions of local echoes the present thesis has frequently sought to underline not just the lexical, formal and thematic points of convergence but also the key instances of textual divergence.

Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti states at the very beginning of his thought-provoking article 'La citazione montaliana (testo e altri testi)':

Poiché in ogni opera poetica esiste l'effetto d'eco e di agonismo della poesia precedente e della stessa poesia dell'autore, in altri contesti e testi sperimentata, è naturale che vi si possano reperire immagini, frasi, rime, parole, che da quella tradizione derivano: ma è fondamentalmente diverso se si tratta di semplici reminiscenze a cui non è collegata nessuna intenzione, o se, invece, si tratta di citazioni calcolate, sia nel senso che l'autore intende così dare un'interpretazione di qualche luogo topico di altri poeti, sia che voglia prendere le distanze critiche da uno specifico poeta o da una sua concezione o intenzione o immagine, né è raro il caso che attraverso la citazione il poeta intenda anche indicare la linea di discorso nella quale progetta di inserirsi e operare, pur con le dovute e necessarie variazioni e attualizzazioni del modello (come è il caso degli stilnovisti e dei petrarchisti, soprattutto del cinquecento).⁶

It was seen earlier on in this investigation in connection to the research of Roberto Orlando that in the post-*Bufera* verse on several occasions Montale unambiguously quotes from classic writers, only to negate for satirical purposes what these same writers have to say. One might recall, for instance, the passage from Carducci's 'Sonetto a Dante', 'muor Giove, e l'inno del poeta resta', which becomes in 'L'élan vital': 'Muore Giove, Eccellenze, e l'inno del Poeta | NON resta'. Furthermore, it was also suggested that in the case of the intertextual nexus Giannangelì-Montale there could conceivably be a parodic element (and for a text in *Satura* that certainly belongs to the genre of parody we need look no further than 'Piove' with its brilliantly comic reworking of D'Annunzio's classic). Faced, on the other hand, with the original conjectures of local influence set out in parts one, two and three of this thesis, it would indeed be hard to perceive anything more than 'innocent' echoes, 'semplici reminiscenze a cui non è collegata nessuna intenzione'. Unless one is prepared to misread wilfully the message of Montale's poem, it is difficult to argue that in any of these instances the author is attempting to supply a reading of another's text or take his distance from a specific writer or, even, that he is pointing out the artistic path which he intends to follow.

Still, in their quest to say something novel about Montale scholars have frequently been inclined to exaggerate with regard to local echoes, fabricating highly complex conjectures of parody, allusion, etc. concerning what to most eyes appear to be at best simple literary reminiscences. For an extensive illustration of this tendency, we need go no further than the above-mentioned article by Bàrberi Squarotti. This study, whilst exhibiting admirably the erudition and creativity of its author, is in its elaborate intertextual hypotheses often far from convincing. For instance, Bàrberi Squarotti is probably quite right to detect in the verses from 'Riviere' (*Ossi*) '[...] Erano questi, | riviere, i voti del fanciullo antico | che accanto ad una rósa balaustrata | lentamente moriva sorridendo' a quotation from Gozzano's 'I colloqui' (*I colloqui*): 'il *fanciullo* sarò tenero e *antico* | che sospirava al raggio delle stelle, | che meditava Arturo e Federico' [my italics]. But to then go on to suggest that in the above-quoted passage Montale has his 'fanciullo antico' dying in order to reject a Gozzanian type of poetry and that in these same verses 'l'ironia di Gozzano è respinta e superata' for '[i]l fanciullo di Gozzano usa ampiamente l'ironia davanti alla malattia a cui è sottoposto e alla morte che incombe: ma Montale afferma di essere uscito fuori di tali coordinate di idee e di poesia, il fanciullo antico può morire sorridendo, perché ora non si sente più coinvolto in quel destino', all of this really seems to be overstretching the meaning of the above passage from 'Riviere', adding a semantic layer to the text in question which was not at all present in the author's intentions.⁷ To take another example from Bàrberi Squarotti's article, it is certainly not impossible that when Montale wrote in 'Non chiederci la parola che squadri da ogni lato...', again in *Ossi*, 'sì qualche storta sillaba e secca come un ramo' he was drawing on the opening line of Gozzano's 'L'onesto rifiuto' (*I colloqui*): 'Un mio gioco di sillabe

t'illuse'. However, what Bàrberi Squarotti goes on to claim concerning the intertextual relationship between these two verses is quite unconvincing:

La poesia per Gozzano può illudere che, dietro il gioco delle sillabe, ci sia la vita. Ma la poesia è un gioco. La sillaba di Montale è storta e secca. Dentro neppure l'illusione della vita può darsi. Anzi Montale rifiuta la possibilità che la poesia sia, in qualunque modo, gioco. Tutto vi è disseccato e contorto, non vitale, di conseguenza, ma nudamente concettuale. Per respingere la vita Gozzano deve scrivere un'intera dichiarazione di rifiuto, perché la sua poesia è un gioco di sillabe che illude sull'esserci, alle origini, la vita che non c'è, bruciata anch'essa come le rovine che è l'animo di Totò Merùmeni, ma da cui nasce una fiorita d'esili versi, consolatori, sì, per il poeta, ma non atti certamente a far rinascere la vita. La consolazione è negata da Montale. Le sue sillabe sono secche e storte. Dichiarano il non essere e il non volere nel modo più netto, spoglio e radicale. La vita che in realtà non c'è non è pensabile che sia nella poesia, neppure per essere poi negata. Anche questa è una presa di distanza da parte di Montale nei confronti delle forme gozzaniane, come quelle più rappresentative di una dimensione «crepuscolare» tuttavia avvertita come fondamentale novità nei primissimi decenni del novecento, con la quale è necessario fare i conti. La sillaba secca e storta ne è la negazione più radicale.⁸

Can it really be that in his 'sì qualche storta sillaba e secca come un ramo' the author of 'Non chiederci la parola che squadri da ogni lato...' intended to distance himself from Gozzano's poetry? Is it really likely that Montale expected his readers, or even just his most erudite and perceptive readers, to interpret the above verse in this precise manner? The answer must surely be that whilst this possibility is not to be excluded *tout court* it is nonetheless extremely improbable.

A final exemplification of that tendency amongst scholars to read too much into local echoes in Montale, one pertaining this time to the post-*Bufera* verse. According to Oreste Macrí in his long article 'L'«improprietà» tra sublimità e satira nella poesia di Montale', in the case of Montale's appropriation of Sinisgalli's 'Vidi le Muse' for the opening to his 'Sul lago d'Orta' (see part one of this study) we find ourselves before an instance of parody. Yet, on this occasion the distinguished scholar fails to persuade. Firstly, if by parody we mean something along the lines of 'to imitate for comic purposes', then it is

hard to see what ironic capital Montale is making out of Sinisgalli's poem in 'Sul lago d'Orta', where there is no overtly comic deformation of the intertext, as there had been, for example, with D'Annunzio's 'La pioggia nel pineto' in *Satura*. Moreover, if the opening to 'Sul lago d'Orta' were a deliberate parody, then it is indeed strange that the influential passage in 'Vidi le Muse' reappears in a poem by Montale post-dating 'Sul lago d'Orta' by just a year and a half, 'Proteggetemi...' ('proteggetemi dalle Muse | che vidi appollaiate | o anche dimezzate a mezzo busto'). Macrí himself affirms that 'le parodie difficilmente si ripetono'.⁹ In fact, for the truth of the matter on this issue the reader would do far better to turn to Edoardo Sanguineti. The ever-perceptive critic has the following to say concerning the intertextual connection between 'Vidi le Muse' and 'Sul lago d'Orta': 'Esclusa la parodia, è da escludere anche l'allusione: sarà piuttosto, è da credere, un involontario rigurgito memoriale, più affine a un *lapsus* che a un qualunque riflesso soggettivamente letterario'.¹⁰

As for the thorny question of *intentio auctoris* or, in other words, whether Montale echoed locally other writers on purpose or if, instead, the fusion between text and intertext took place somewhere below the threshold of consciousness, in most instances any decision here can rarely be more than subjective. Zygmunt Barański, someone who has invested considerable energy into looking at the influence of Dante on Twentieth-century Italian poetry, has *à propos* the following to say:

It seems to me, ultimately, to be less important to establish gradations of intentionality for Dante's presence (or, in fact, for that of any author) in later generations of writers than, firstly, to recognize and catalogue as widely and as sensitively as possible such a presence, and, then, to study it in its specific and general effects.¹¹

All the same, if one were obliged to venture an opinion on the subject, one would have to assert instinctively that the vast majority of the literary ‘quotations’ identified in parts one, two and three of this thesis were not intentional but, rather, more or less involuntary poetic flowerings from the seeds of past readings. A well-known intertextual phenomenon, this. We might quote opportunely from Calvino, ‘le vere fonti di un autore sono le cose che legge e che dimentica e che forse riaffiorano come memoria inconscia’, or from Eliot in an article on Pound: ‘I have, in recent years, cursed Mr Pound often enough; for I am never sure that I can call my verse my own; just when I am most pleased with myself, I find that I have only caught up some echo from a verse of Pound’s’.¹² In short, it is not easy to overestimate the importance of unconscious textual influence for the process of literary composition.

The nature of artistic memory is indeed curious: ‘si può essere fulminati da una cariatide dell’Erettèion facendo coda allo sportello delle tasse; ci si può ricordare un verso del Poliziano persino in giorni di follie e di carneficina. Tutto è malcerto, nulla è necessario nel mondo delle rifrazioni artistiche’ (*SMAMS* 142). This thesis has concentrated for its intertexts on literature from the Sixties, that decade which corresponds to the writing of *Satura*, dated ‘1962-1970’, and immediately precedes the composition of virtually all of *Diari*, *Quaderno* and *Altri versi*. It has looked at a broad cross-section of all the material from this decade, in some cases touching only briefly upon a work, in other cases focusing at length on a volume in order to draw out the full implications of Montale’s reading of it. Naturally, one could proceed further in this direction and dig still deeper into the literature of the Sixties. Meanwhile, however, there abides a definite need to look further afield. Bàrberi Squarotti has affirmed that the author

of the post-*Bufera* verse 'attinge, per le sue citazioni, molto spesso a testi e tradizioni culturali di non più comune conoscenza, molto al di là anche della contemporaneità e dei prossimi predecessori'.¹³ Additionally, it might be interesting to confront the question of the possible significance for the later Montale of other artistic media, such as the visual arts and music: 'I modelli e le «fonti» montaliani non sono necessariamente di tipo verbale', advises Mengaldo in his panorama of *L'opera in versi*.¹⁴ Yet, all this must remain the territory of future research. We might conclude by transcribing once more that passage from Montale's 1966 review of a Roethke anthology reproduced at the beginning of the present investigation: 'L'ipotesi romantica che l'arte nasca dalla vita anziché dall'arte già esistente, trova pochissime conferme nella storia'. It is hoped that this study has furnished persuasive evidence that the 'arte già esistente' had an anything but negligible impact on the Montale of *Satura* and beyond.

¹ Maria Antonietta Grignani, 'Il punto su Montale', *Moderna*, 1, 1 (1999), 195-214 (p. 207).

² Grignani, 'Meaterlinck-Debussy [*sic*], Blake, Rossetti', p. 13.

³ Rebecca West, 'Montale profeta del postmoderno', in *Montale e il canone poetico del Novecento*, pp. 202-10 (p. 206).

⁴ Luigi Blasucci, 'Appunti per un commento montaliano', in *Montale e il canone poetico del Novecento*, pp. 11-32 (p. 14).

⁵ Singh, 'Montale e la poesia inglese', p. 219.

⁶ Bàrberi Squarotti, 'La citazione montaliana (testo e altri testi)', p. 25. For similar considerations regarding Montale's poetry, see Blasucci, 'Appunti per un commento montaliano', p. 19.

⁷ Bàrberi Squarotti, 'La citazione montaliana (testo e altri testi)', p. 28.

⁸ Bàrberi Squarotti, 'La citazione montaliana (testo e altri testi)', pp. 38-39.

⁹ Macrí, 'L'«improprietas» tra sublimità e satira nella poesia di Montale (con un'appendice sul questionario Guarnieri)', p. 361.

¹⁰ Sanguineti, 'Muse appollaiate', p. 326.

¹¹ Zygmunt G. Barański, 'The Power of Influence: Aspects of Dante's Presence in Twentieth-Century Italian Culture', *Strumenti critici*, I, 3 (September 1986), 343-76 (p. 375).

¹² Calvino, *Lettere*, p. 1436; Thomas Stearns Eliot, 'Isolated Superiority', *The Dial*, LXXXIV, 1 (January 1928), 4-7 (p. 5).

¹³ Bàrberi Squarotti, 'La citazione montaliana (testo e altri testi)', p. 48.

¹⁴ Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'L'opera in versi di Eugenio Montale', in *La tradizione del Novecento: Quarta serie* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000), pp. 66-120 (p. 90).

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Ossi di seppia (Turin: Gobetti, 1925).

Le occasioni (Turin: Einaudi, 1939).

La bufera e altro (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1956).

Satura (Milan: Mondadori, 1971).

Diario del '71 e del '72 (Milan: Mondadori, 1973).

Quaderno di quattro anni (Milan: Mondadori, 1977).

Altri versi (Milan: Mondadori, 1981).

Diario postumo: 66 poesie e altre, ed. by A. Cima (Milan: Mondadori, 1996).

All these collections, except the last, may be found in:

L'opera in versi, ed. by R. Bettarini and G. Contini (Turin: Einaudi, 1980).

(ii) Prose

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