

Introduction

Monica Jansen & Paula Jordão
(Utrecht University)

The events of 1968 and their repercussions in the seventies are generally characterised as an essential part of a decade of social conflict and evoke contradictory memories in national European imaginaries. This is certainly the case in Italy and Portugal, where the clash between creativity and violence, between utopia and dystopia, has left deep traces in the history, culture and literature of both countries. In Portugal, the premonitions and effects of the April revolution of 1974 are the main landmarks of this period. Simultaneous with the euphoria caused by the fall of the fifty year-old dictatorship, the country became involved in a period of transition to a democratic system in which the adherence to the European Union and the controversial decolonisation process play a crucial role.

Meanwhile, Italy was the stage of conflicting militant social movements. On the one hand, we see a continuation of the liberating ideals of the baby boomers of 1968 and on the other hand a hardening of the political struggle that results in the terrorism of the so-called “Leaden Years” (“anni di piombo”). Robert Lumley, author of an important study on the cultures of revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978, poignantly called his volume *States of Emergency*, referring to new social subjects as well as to the crises the emergencies provoked in the social order. The 1977 student movement in Bologna and the kidnapping of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades in 1978 are good examples of this double-faced revolt.

Aware of the importance of such issues the departments of Italian and Portuguese Studies of Utrecht University in March 2004 decided to organise an international conference in order to highlight the tensions between national realities and

international ideology in the particular cases of Portugal and Italy.¹ Central to this comparative approach is the question of how to conceive a political and cultural change in an already postmodern condition. How can revolutionary values keep their cogency after the fall of the masternarratives of ideology?

Gathered in Utrecht, Lusitanists and Italianists reflected on topics that pointed in two directions: the interaction between cultural artefacts of the seventies and their socio-political (inter)national contexts on the one hand, and the subsequent representations of the seventies in contemporary Portuguese and Italian literature and culture on the other. The papers focus on different agents of cultural change, ranging from writers and intellectuals to philosophers and activists. For the first time they offer a comparative approach to the “political” and the “personal” dimension of cultural memories that, complementing and contradicting each other, intersect different national cultures. These proceedings are also the final result of the NWO Postdoctoral Research Project “Postmodern Writing and Cultural Identity in Italy and Portugal”, carried out by Monica Jansen between 2000 and 2004.

The invited speakers, Eduarda Dionísio and Isabel Pires de Lima for the Portuguese perspective and Enrico Palandri and Robert Lumley for the Italian case, were selected for their expertise and personal experience of the seventies. Writer Eduarda Dionísio is known in Portugal as one of the most

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influential names of the carnation revolution. Having participated in many political and cultural events in the revolutionary period, Dionísio gives us a fascinating and personal account of that time in her novel *Retrato dum amigo enquanto falo*. Enrico Palandri is the writer of *Boccalone*, a novel that has been interpreted, also during this conference, as a significant literary and sociological portrait of the generation that in Italy is considered to have been involved in the *settantasette* movement. Historian Robert Lumley, one of the founders of Italian Cultural Studies in the British academies, in his work on the seventies in Italy has combined cultural, intellectual and social history. His “cultural eye” combining the perspectives of the Poet, the Historian and the Semiologist, proved to be very constructive for the debate during the conference. Isabel Pires de Lima, a scholar of comparative literature and an expert on the work of the realist writer Eça de Queirós, has studied intensively the Portuguese literary production during and after the Revolution. For this particular occasion Pires de Lima chose to focus on one of Vergílio Ferreira’s novels in particular as an example of ontological complexities and contradictions common to all periods.

Besides these personal and theoretical accounts, the proceedings offer a rich variety of perspectives that may be roughly structured around some recurrent topics and keywords: Testimony, Autobiography, Poetry, Women’s writing, Popular culture, History, Violence, Trauma, Desire, Youth, Revolt and Revolution. The organisation of the papers reflects the comparison between the representations of the seventies within the national settings of Portugal and Italy. The proceedings therefore consist of two parts that both are structured thematically, a thread that we will briefly expose below.

As a writer who intensely lived and wrote about the period of the carnation revolution in 1974, Eduarda Dionísio is in the

privileged position of revisiting the political, social and cultural atmosphere of that time. She begins her account “La littérature Portugaise: les Années 70 Coupées en Deux” by dividing the revolutionary period in three parts (before, during and after the revolution) in order to revisit the cultural, social, and political Portuguese reality of that time. Economical and political immigration, censorship, and an annihilating colonial war are only a few reasons she gives for the appalling situation in which the country found itself in the period previous to the carnation revolution.

While stressing the importance of the revolution as a moment of radical political, social, and cultural change for Portugal, Eduarda Dionísio also sees it as a period of bewilderment for intellectuals in general and writers in particular. As she puts it, writers saw themselves going from a position of heroes in which they fought a dictatorial regime, to a position of unknown soldiers in which the learning process to democracy could be (and was) done without their influence. This resulted in a literary vacuum that lasted until the eighties, when a considerable number of prose and poetry books found their way to the public. In a vivid and outspoken account, Eduarda Dionísio’s reflection on the revolutionary period exceeds the years directly before and after the carnation revolution. By including the cultural, social and even political decades that preceded it, she fulfils what she sees as her task of preserving the cultural legacy of one of the most important periods of the Portuguese history.

The emphasis on the role of literature as a document of the revolutionary years is clearly visible in most of the papers presented at the conference and collected in this volume. In “The Distopic Vision of the City: António Lobo Antunes and Rubem Fonseca” Cristiana Sasseti shows how both writers described a similar decadency in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro in comparable historical and political periods of Portugal and

Brazil. In order to better understand the cultural atmosphere of the years between 1974 and 1980 from a journalistic point of view, we may turn to Fernando Venâncio's "Les Déçus de la Révolution Portugaise dans la Chronique de Journal, 1974-1980". Anabela Oliveira's "La Révolution: Foisonnement d'Images ou les Différents Pétales d'un Œillet" proposes a dialogue between (Portuguese) literature and (German and Yugoslavian) film, emphasizing their similarities. In a more general approach to the historical meaning of the literary period, Signe Ørom opts for revisiting History and its heroes in "The Dethronement of Historical and Mythical Figures in Portuguese Novels in the Eighties and Nineties", stressing most particularly the iconoclasm of those years. Finally Maria Benedita Basto goes beyond the Portuguese continental frontiers and addresses the poems written by Mozambican *guerrilleros* of the FRELIMO as a "deconstruction and reconstruction of ideological representations of identity and alterity" in "Who is written? The Representation of the Other in Rewriting Experiments during the Portuguese Colonial War and the Mozambican Liberation Struggle".

Poetry was without any doubt one of the most important means to express one's opposition to the dictatorial regime, as Rui Torres shows us in "Poetics and Politics of the Portuguese Experimental Poetry". Poetry written by women played a significant role during and after the revolution. In "Les Années 70 ont-elles existé? – à propos de *Finita* de Maria Gabriela Llansol" Pedro Eiras calls our attention to the poetical and highly personal account given by Maria Gabriela Llansol of the revolutionary period. Maria Teresa Horta, well known as one of the "three Marias", is one of the female poets mentioned by both Ana Raquel Fernandes and Anna Klobucka. In "Breaking with Social and Literary Conventions: Judith Teixeira and Maria Teresa Horta" the former compares both poets in their transgression of the gender and cultural roles in two very

important periods of Portuguese history, the dictatorship in 1926 and in the period before the 1974 democratic revolution. Anna Klobucka chooses a gynocritical perspective in order to address aspects of the work of Luiza Neto Jorge, Maria Teresa Horta, Ana Luísa Amaral and Adília Lopes in “Back into the Future: Feminism in Portuguese Women’s Poetry since the 1970s”. Subsequently, Hilary Owen analyses Natália Correias’s *matrismo* in “‘Out’ Performing the Mãtria in Natália Correia’s *A Madona*”, drawing on Judith Butler’s theories of sexual difference and female reproductivity. To conclude the papers on Portuguese women’s writing Claire Williams focuses on contemporary prose: in “*Não há coincidências?* Women’s Writing in Portugal in 1974 and 2004” she analyses the early twenty-first century’s “literatura light”.

Finally, Isabel Pires de Lima in “*Na tua face* by Vergílio Ferreira: ... Towards a New Natural Order of Being”, opts for a philosophical approach of Vergílio Ferreira’s novel. By addressing the construction of doubles in Ferreira’s narrative, Pires de Lima demonstrates how this novel “undermines the ‘Vergilian’ novel of the nineties and its epistemological project”. A typical ‘Vergilian’ novel combining two very different genres, that of the novel and of the essay, *Na tua face*, goes beyond the already familiar reflection in Ferreira’s oeuvre on choice, freedom and lack of communication. It proposes a game of doubles, by which the meaning of life appears as particularly complex, for the unlimited possibilities that it presents. As Isabel Pires de Lima says: “In the incredibly complex games of interlocking, telescoping and mirroring that comprise this novel, where everything is doubled, oscillating, indeterminate, undifferentiated, contiguous, non-hierarchical, it seems clear that from the questions about knowing the world or the possibility of ever knowing it that run through Vergílio Ferreira’s novels, he has moved on to a questioning of the world that is inconclusive.”

With “The Historian, the Poet, and the Semiologist: Perspectives on the Post 68 Decade” Robert Lumley introduces a tripartition that could serve to distinguish a pattern in the contributions that analyse the value of literature in and after the seventies in Italy. What connects the three roles represented by Nanni Balestrini, Umberto Eco and Luisa Passerini, is the gradual loss of a belief in a collective project and the loss of faith in a politic rhetoric. Focussing on Balestrini’s *L’editore*, Eco’s *Il nome della rosa* and Passerini’s *Autoritratto di gruppo*, Lumley tries to evaluate the political experience of the seventies through narrative accounts written in the eighties that also give a possible answer to the question of the value of literature. Only Passerini’s autobiographical account is open-ended. Indeed, from other writings by Lumley we know that he considers the feminist revolt to be the most positive outcome of 1968 in terms of “opening a door on a cultural revolution in Italy” (*States of Emergency* 333). Passerini’s political biography also forms a (short-lived) connection with the Portuguese context in those years, the process of decolonisation in Africa, since she worked with FRELIMO in 1968. Maybe it is noteworthy that the poet Balestrini is discussed through a work of prose. As Lumley argues, Italian literature of the seventies is characterised by non-fiction rather than by the poetry that announced the neo-avant-garde of the Gruppo 63. Generally speaking the papers on Italy do not deal with poetry, contrary to those on Portugal.

In terms of *impegno*, Lumley, interestingly enough, distinguishes between participants and observers of the seventies, defining Passerini and Balestrini “organic intellectuals” and Eco a “traditional intellectual” in Gramsci’s terminology. Together with the different point of views, of history, of poetry, and of semiology, they form a kaleidoscope with shifting optics. With the help of the example of *L’editore*, Balestrini’s account of Feltrinelli’s death, we could bring together those papers that discuss history’s perception through

literature. One of the histories of the seventies is definitely written by terrorism and violence. This story could start with Balestrini's *Gli invisibili* published in 1987, a work that is "emblematic" in its representation of violence and can be studied from different angles. Vincenzo Binetti in "Re-mapping Autonomous Spaces and Invisible Communities in Nanni Balestrini's Testimonial Narrative", concentrates on the shifting boundaries of the prison space, studying it as an effort to confront the reader with a "visualisation" of what the ideology of the Italian nation-state was trying instead to relegate to the comforting domain of invisibility. Clodina Gubiotti in "Nanni Balestrini's *Gli invisibili*: Fictional Spaces for an Epic Monument to the Seventies" proposes to study *Gli invisibili*'s peculiar re-working of the narrative dynamics, characterizing the epic genre. She shows that the epic representation of memory takes on polemical connotations if confronted with the title of the novel. This time (in)visibility is not linked with ideology but with memory, a connection that is further elaborated in a comparison with Natalia Ginzburg's *Caro Michele*.

Balestrini's case demonstrates how the roles of participant and observer can intertwine creating all sorts of conflicting truths. Gubiotti shows with the ambivalent readers reactions to *Gli invisibili* that Balestrini's retrospective evaluation of his political involvement with the extra-parliamentary left did not exactly meet expectations. This ambivalence is Silvia Contarini's starting point who with "Années 70: une transition traumatique" also offers a critical reflection on the double aim of the conference to study the literary and cultural production of the seventies as well as the previous period. On the basis of Balestrini's work between 1960 and 1980 she traces a development that she characterises as being traumatic, to the hybrid, less engaged forms of post-neo-avant-garde and finally postmodern literature. As a 'poet'

Contarini, writer of the autobiographical novel *Noi veri delinquenti*, also tries to make a link between her own personal experience of the seventies and more recent events of violence, like those of Genoa 2001.

It is clear that terrorism and violence have had a traumatic impact, so much that according to Contarini it took some twenty years for the first novels to be written about this decade. This is illustrated by the unpublished memoir *L'attesa* analysed by Ruth Glynn in "Trauma on the Line: Terrorism and Testimony in the *anni di piombo*". Glynn concludes that the *anni di piombo*, because of their afterlife by way of "insidious" trauma, have had the impact of a collective cultural trauma. Susanne Kleinert in "Violence politique et sentiment d'irréalité: la représentation des années '70 chez Balestrini, Camon et Vassalli" analyses the fictional responses to the trauma of political violence formulated by Balestrini, Camon and Vassalli, that oscillate between existential, psychological and literary detachment. However, Vassalli's growing detachment does not exclude his condemnation of the represented history, as is shown by Alain Sarrabayrouse in "L'évolution de la condamnation d'une certaine forme de société dans l'œuvre de Sebastiano Vassalli". History is presented as intrinsically violent and this, of course, is the credo of Morante's *La storia* studied by Hanna Serkowska in "About One of the Most Disputed Literary Cases of the Seventies: Elsa Morante's *La Storia*". Contrary to what the novel's title suggests, Morante pleads for the Poet, instead of the Historian, to speak up for all, art being the only human action and value. Creating a "dissident" form of writing Pasolini, too, succeeds in creating an intellectual space outside the ideological and cultural perversion of power, as is demonstrated by Flaviano Pisanelli in "Pour une poétique de la dissidence. Lecture de *Pétrole* et de *Salò ou les 120 journées de Sodome* de Pier Paolo Pasolini".

The history of violence is countered by the history of anti-authoritarianism that celebrates values such as collectivism and sexual liberty. To express the incongruence of these conflicting ingredients we could borrow the quote from Balestrini and Moroni's seminal *L'orda d'oro* as it is reported as an epigraph in Binetti's paper: "Leaden Years, Separated Bodies, Government Massacres, Subversion, Emergency, or the opposite: The Best Years of our Life, Radical Transformation of Daily Life, Utopia, Need for Communism, Sexual Revolution, Armed Struggle, etc.". We could refer here also to the historian Paul Ginsborg according to whom the '77 movement had two faces, a militant and a playful one. Both dimensions are present in Philopat's *La Banda Bellini*, mentioned by Silvia Contarini and studied by Claudio Milanesi in "Le mouvement vu de l'intérieur: Milan de 68 aux années de plomb à travers le roman d'un témoin: Andrea Bellini et la Banda del Casoretto". From Milan's Casoretto district it is easy to pass to Bologna, the capital of 77 Movement. In this context the Poet becomes again a protagonist with writer Enrico Palandri, himself present at the conference. His contribution on "Time in Literature" at first sight seems far away from any direct historical references, but it could be read as an outcome of the debate on the seventies. Historical Time in the sense of the *anni di piombo*, according to Palandri in another of his writings, did no justice to his generation, to which also the writer Pier Vittorio Tondelli belongs. Only time in literature can subtract it from the determinism of the past and bring back "the voice that violence and legal processes have taken from us" ("la voce che violenza e processi ci hanno tolto") (*Pier. Tondelli e la generazione* 9). As Palandri put it at the conference, the value of literature depends directly on the power of words: "We want to see things happen, we want the word to be what helps us to see, not let time consign the strength of this perception to some other epoch, remote and separated from us." It is on Palandri's novel

Boccalone, published in 1979, that the contributions of Bart Van den Bossche, Stefania Ricciardi and Daniel Mangano focus. Van Den Bossche in “*Voci dal Settantesette: Orality and Historical Experience in Enrico Palandri’s Boccalone and Pier Vittorio Tondelli’s Altri libertini*” explores the paradox between the fact that Palandri’s *Boccalone* and Tondelli’s *Altri libertini* are read as literary and sociological portraits of an entire generation, while the *Movimento* is evoked in a series of hints and isolated episodes, with hardly any contextualisation or interpretation. Ricciardi in “Enrico Palandri, *Boccalone*: une montgolfière vers les années 80” proves the hypothesis of a literary escape from the heavy burden of the leaden years by focussing on the intertextual references in *Boccalone* and by considering it one of the first examples of “autofiction”. Mangano extends Palandri’s example to a rebel of the 90s, Enrico Brizzi, in “De *Boccalone* à *Jack Frusciante*: continuum ou hiatus?”. Both Enricos identify with Salinger’s protagonist of *Catcher in the Rye* but they belong to different periods, Brizzi being a child of the so-called “era of the void” (“ère du vide”, Gilles Lipovetsky). The liberation of gay identity is another result of the 77 Movement. Tondelli is the focus of Christoph Oliver Mayers paper “Pier Vittorio Tondelli à la recherche d’une patrie?”, in which homosexuality is analysed as a provocation against the canon and as a claim for acceptance and thus for canonisation.

From literature it is a small leap to semiotics. The story of a movement is also the story of a shared and distinctive language. Lumley in his contribution quotes Eco from “Political Language: the Use and Abuse of Rhetoric” published in 1973, in which the creative use of language is ascribed to poets who make us “see reality with new eyes”. These creative linguistic signs of the cultural revolutions of ’68 and ’77 are studied in Renzo Ardiccioni’s exploit on the “indiani metropolitani” (“1977: les ‘indiani metropolitani’ déterrent la hache de guerre. Excursion sur les traces des avant-gardes des années 70 qui

descendirent en ville à la recherche de nouveaux parcours d'art, de littérature, de communication et de vie”) and in Niek Pas's contribution “The Incarnation of the Spirit of Liberty” on the perception of the Dutch Provo-Movement by Italian countercultures of the sixties and beyond.

Literary projects are another aspect of collective cultural movements. Lumley speaks of a failed collective project, and Contarini uses similar terms when analysing the traumatic transition from the seventies to the 90s. This could be symbolised by the *Alì Babà* project, the failed attempt by a group of Italian intellectuals including Italo Calvino and Gianni Celati to found a new literary review, studied by Anna Botta, Marina Spunta, Monica Jansen & Claudia Nocentini. Botta focuses in “The *Alì Babà* Project (1968-1972): Monumental History and the Silent Resistance of the Ordinary” on Calvino's and Celati's alternative view of micro-history expressed in the programmatic texts intended for *Alì Babà*. Spunta in “Gianni Celati's ‘natural’ Narration and the Call of the Plains” concentrates on Celati's exploit of orality that moves him away from Calvino's rationalist poetics, in order to recover a commitment to narrating “fictions to believe in”. Jansen & Nocentini in “Alì Babà and Beyond: Celati and Calvino in the Search for “Something More” start from the need felt by Celati and Calvino to revise the notion of the intellectual after May 1968 and try to link the *Alì Babà* project to other more recent literary journals on the internet such as *Zibaldoni e altre meraviglie*, that show the same search for “commitments to believe in”. Different literary values divide the ways of Celati and Calvino. This becomes even clearer from the papers that discuss Calvino's literary utopia in particular. Els Jongeneel in “*Les Villes invisibles* d'Italo Calvino: entre utopie et dystopie” studies the oscillation between poststructuralist and structuralist models of reality, while Gian Paolo Giudicetti in “L'idéologie dans *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (1979) d'Italo

Calvino” analyses Calvino’s relation with ideology on different text levels. The question of the value of literature is tackled by Jonathan Smith, who in “Synecdoches, Disjunctions: Eco, Pareyson, and Literature after *Kant and the Platypus*” centres mainly on Eco’s *On Literature*, concluding that literature is a synecdochic value that challenges the market ideologies consolidated since the seventies.

Umberto Eco has however also been one of the first theorists of popular culture and genre literature, that emancipated in the seventies. This is illustrated by the contributions on the detective novel by Joseph Eynaud (“The Italian Detective Novel: The Literary and Cinematic *Giallo*”) and Franco Manai (“Loriano Macchiavelli and the Italian Detective Novel of the Seventies”). Not only the detective novel and cinematic *giallo* give us an X-ray of society, but also a popular genre like satire. Inge Lanslots & Annelies Van den Bogaert in “Benni’s Tristalia” show convincingly how Stefani Benni uses references to popular culture and mass media to create his dystopic image of Italy, maybe with the intention to create new spaces for utopia. That research methods can also be used as a means to uncover inconvenient truths is shown by Liz Wren-Owens in “The Tools of the Detective: Leonardo Sciascia’s Approach to Literature in the mid to late 1970s” focussing on Sciascia’s factual investigations *The Disappearance of Majorana* and *The Moro Affair*.

This means that *impegno* is not abandoned after all. Lumley in his paper refers to the concept of the writer-intellectual and quotes Jennifer Burns’s formula the “acid test” of commitment, stressing the importance of the “relationship of reciprocity and responsibility” between writer and reader. This dimension is studied by Carmela Lettieri in “Quel rôle pour l’écrivain(et la littérature) face au souvenir des *années de plomb*? Tabucchi, Riotta, Guccini et Macchiavelli”. We could compare Lettieri’s findings to the engagement that Raniero

Speelman extracts from Levi's writings of the seventies in "Primo Levi in the Seventies: 'letterato' or 'impegnato'?", the two roles completing each other in a resistance to violence in general and revisionism in particular.

The winning story, at least in quantity, could be that of women's writing, more specifically women's anti-realist writing in the 1970s which produced texts founded in the body and expressing female desire, a desire which has finally come out in 1990s youth narrative, as is suggested by Adalgisa Giorgio in "'Bad Girls' in the 1970s and 1990s: Female Desire and Experimentalism in Italian Women's Writing". We find here the different dimensions present in the topics treated so far. History is represented in women's accounts of the Second World War, as is shown in Miriam Halpern's "Remembering World War II in 1970s Italian Women's Writing". Autobiographical fiction is central to Sabina Gola's "La forme autobiographique dans la littérature féminine depuis les années 70". The insular female experience of the seventies is discussed by Margherita Marras in "Entre texte et contexte: pour un parcours de la littérature féminine des îles italiennes (Sardaigne et Sicile) des années 70 à nos jours". Finally, references to popular culture and the crime novel in particular can be found in Marie Françoise Zana Regniez' account on "Petits meurtres en famille. Que dit le meurtre? Comment dire le meurtre? Réflexions sur le meurtre dans la littérature féminine".

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