

Amelia Rosselli and *Écriture Féminine*: Voice-Body-Music

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Transnational and Comparative Literatures

Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies

University of Alberta

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Abstract

French feminist scholars, poets, and philosophers Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva proclaimed the absolute necessity of a revolution in poetic language, both in the realm of the signifier and the signified. Even though they used different terms, they both described a peculiarly feminine writing that would challenge and annihilate the limits of phallogocentric language. Interestingly, they both emphasized musicality as one of the main elements of *écriture féminine*.

In my thesis I apply French feminist theories about poetic language to the Italian poet, musicologist, pianist, and composer Amelia Rosselli's experimental and deeply musical poetry. Indeed, musicality is an essential trait of her poetry as she herself proclaims in her poetic manifesto, *Spazi Metrici*: "Any problematic of poetic form has always been connected for me to that which is more strictly musical, and I have never in reality divided the two disciplines" (Rosselli and Scappettone 37). Even though Amelia Rosselli is undoubtedly considered one of the most revolutionary poetic voices of Italian and international 20th century literature, she has not yet been studied, translated, or given the importance and value she deserves. In particular, even though the musical nature of her poems has been recently celebrated by critics, the relationship between music and *écriture féminine* in her poems has not yet been analysed.

In my analysis I will first focus on three main components of *écriture féminine*: voice, body, and music in Rosselli's collections of poems in English, *Sleep* (1953-1966) and her collection in Italian, *Variazioni Belliche* (1964). It is argued here that her musical metric along

with elements of voice and body make Rosselli's writing an incredibly successful exemplification of a purely feminine revolutionary form of writing, one that challenges the axioms of phallographic language through the absolute predominance of the semiotic over the symbolic. More broadly, I want to demonstrate how musico-poetic analysis can enrich both feminist literary analysis and feminist theory.

Dedicated to all the unheard voices of women

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Lynn Penrod, my supervisor, for introducing me to the fascinating world of *écriture féminine* and for allowing me to work on a project that connects my two passions, music and literature.

I would like to acknowledge the hard-working staff and faculty members in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies for their guidance and mentorship.

I would also like to thank my classical guitar professors, Faedi Ferrante and Pietro Antinori, for guiding me for so many years in my musical academic journey and for being such an inspiration throughout my musical career.

Special thanks to my amazing friends, Daniel Mika, Leanne Rempel, and Sofia Monzón Rodriguez for motivating me, for pushing my limits, and for being such a wonderful emotional support in the past year while I was working on this thesis.

Lastly, I have to thank my parents, Daniela Mancini and Maurizio Benvenuti, and my grandmother, Leonetta Fois, for supporting me unconditionally in pursuing my passions, and for filling the first years of my life with books and music.

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Introduction

French feminist scholars, poets, and philosophers Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva proclaim the absolute necessity of a revolution in poetic language, both in the realm of the signifier and the signified. Although these theorists use different terms, they both describe a non-binary, alogic, peculiarly feminine form and practice of writing that would challenge and annihilate the limits of phallogentric rational binary discourse. Interestingly enough, they both emphasize musicality as one of the main elements of *écriture féminine*.

In the *Laugh of the Medusa* (1976) Cixous celebrates the privileged relationship between women's writing and the voice: "first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman. Why this privileged relationship with the voice? Because no woman stockpiles as many defenses for countering the drives as does a man" (Cixous et al. 881). Similarly, Kristeva in *The Revolution of Poetic Language* (1974) fuses linguistic insights with psychoanalytic theory as she presents two distinct yet profoundly interrelated aspects of the significance process, the semiotic and the symbolic: "the symbolic, dominated by the father, the phallus, and the law; and the semiotic, haunted by the vengeful traces of a lost preoedipal maternal world" (Ellmann 25). The semiotic aspect of language is musical, vocal, preferential, rhythmic, kinetic and bodily; and for Kristeva, feminine writing is a specifically semiotic liberated style at the antithesis of conventional patriarchal language.

In my thesis I apply French feminist theories about poetic language to the Italian poet, musician, translator, musicologist, and composer Amelia Rosselli's experimental and deeply musical poetry. Even though Amelia Rosselli is undoubtedly considered one of the most

revolutionary poetic voices of Italian and international 20th century literature, she has not yet been studied, translated, or given the importance and value she deserves. In fact, even though the musical nature of her poems has been recently celebrated by critics, the relationship between music and *écriture féminine* in her poems has not yet been analysed. I strongly believe it is important for scholars to further investigate the subtle connections between Amelia Rosselli's experimental language through the use of musicality and *écriture féminine*. Musicality is indeed an essential trait of her poetry – both esthetically but also philosophically – as she herself proclaims in her poetic manifesto *Spazi Metrici*: “Any problematic of poetic form has always been connected for me to that which is more strictly musical, and I have never in reality divided the two disciplines, considering the syllable not only an orthographic nexus but also a sound, and the sentence not only a grammatical construct but a system as well” (Rosselli and Scappettone 37).

I will draw examples from the collection of poems in English, *Sleep* (1953-1966) and the collection in Italian, *Variazioni Belliche* (1964), trying to answer the following questions: How does striving towards a state of music translate formally into her work? How can we apply French feminist theories about language to Amelia Rosselli's extremely experimental poetry? Why can Amelia Rosselli's musical versification be considered a brilliant example of *écriture féminine*? What is the correlation between form and content? But also, what are the ontological implications of poetic musicality?

I argue that within and through her deeply musical language, or better stated, languages, Rosselli is able to express the *feminine* and completely revolutionize the phallogentric limits of rational, binary language, thereby transforming it into a poetic language that does not know genders and where words expand beyond the limits of the signified and bring the signifier to new

poetic-musical expressions as theorized by Cixous and Kristeva. Rosselli is successfully able to launch structural literary assaults on the authority of traditional poetic forms and completely subvert them as Cixous and Kristeva suggest in their writings.

In Chapter One I will introduce the marginalized position of the author in the Italian and international canons as well as the multiple reasons behind her *étrangeté*. In Chapter Two I will deepen the relationship between Amelia Rosselli and music through considering Rosselli's lifelong musical studies and deep passion for the musical world. In Chapter Three I will examine her relationship with *écriture féminine* and justify why it is still relevant today to analyse her poems through Cixous's and Kristeva's feminist theories. In Chapter Four I will examine the privileged connection between Rosselli's *sujet femme* and the voice. In Chapter Five I will deepen the relationship between Amelia Rosselli's poetic expression and its corporeal-organic essence. More specifically, I will show through numerous examples drawn from the collection of poems, *Sleep*, how she is able to *speak the body*. In Chapter Six, I will analyse in detail the musical component of Rosselli's poems that enables her to attain or at least to get closer to a condition of music. Specifically, I will focus on the compositional technique of theme and variation. In the final Chapter, I will deepen the philosophical and universalistic scope of Rosselli's writing showing parallels with the feminist philosophical and linguistic agenda of Cixous and Kristeva.

Language is the principal protagonist of Rosselli's poetry, and that is where a genuine revolution takes place. Within and through language, and particularly through the use of musicality, Rosselli is able to attain a successful example of *écriture féminine* that manages to annihilate male-dominated routinized linguistic practices and in general challenge the limits of language in order to reach new forms of expression that are closer to the non-binary universal

language of the heart. More broadly, I want to demonstrate how musico-poetic analysis can enrich both feminist literary analysis and feminist theory.

Chapter One

Amelia Rosselli – *l'étrangère*

Ne pas chercher à fixer, à chosifier l'étrangeté de l'étranger. Juste la toucher, l'effleurer, sans lui donner de structure définitive. Simplement en esquisser le mouvement perpétuel.
–Kristeva, *Étrangers à Nous-mêmes*

Amelia Rosselli is undeniably one of the most revolutionary poetic voices of twentieth century Italian literature (Tandello. *Introduction* XI). I further argue that her linguistic experimentation, her eccentricity, her difference and separation from the male-dominated Italian canon also make her one of the most innovative exemplifications of *écriture féminine* in the twentieth century. She was an Italian poet, but she wrote in Italian, French, and English while aiming for a universal language. She was an Italian poet, but also a musician, composer, and musicologist writing articles about ethnomusicology, performing on stage and dreaming about “panmusic.” Using Pier Paolo Pasolini’s words, Amelia Rosselli was a “fenomeno in sostanza unico” (XII). However, as Emanuela Tandello (friend and translator of Amelia) points out, she is still not well translated nor known well enough in the national and international literary world. In other words, Rosselli remains on the periphery of the Italian literary canon – an *étrangère* at home. There are three principal reasons for this: first of all, she was a woman trying to let her marginalized voice be heard in the hostile male-dominated Italian avant-gardist literary movement; secondly, she was an immigrant in her own country, an exiled daughter of World War II and finally, her trilingualism was almost an *unicum* in the Italian literary tradition.

Born in Paris in 1930, Amelia Rosselli was the daughter of English activist Marion Cave and Carlo Rosselli, a Florentine Jewish intellectual leader and founder of Justice and Liberty (a

non-Marxist resistance movement), who became a partisan hero and eventually a martyr of the Italian and European anti-Fascist Resistance. Rosselli's father was assassinated in June 1937, together with his brother Nello by the French Fascist terrorist organization, La Cagoule. Amelia Rosselli was born in a truly ferocious antitotalitarian climate: "The assassination of Matteotti¹ signaled the death of liberty in Italy; the assassination of the Rosselli Brothers signals the death of liberty in Europe" (Pugliese 229). Amelia Rosselli was Italian, but she spent her childhood and adolescence in exile between France, England, and the United States, eventually settling in Rome. She describes her nomadic existence in the poem, "Contiamo Infiniti Morti! la Danza è Finita! la Morte," contained in *Variazioni Belliche*, her debut volume, published in 1964:

Nata a Parigi travagliata nell'epopea della nostra generazione
fallace. Giacuta in America fra i ricchi campi dei possidenti
e dello Stato statale. Vissuta in Italia, paese barbaro.
Scappata dall'Inghilterra paese di sofisticati. Speranzosa
nell'Ovest ove niente per ora cresce. (*L'Opera Poetica* 46)²

Rosselli was definitely a cosmopolitan, but a forced one as she repeatedly says in her interviews: "Siamo figli della seconda guerra mondiale. Cosmopolita è chi sceglie di esserlo" and also "Noi non eravamo dei cosmopoliti, eravamo dei rifugiati" (Rosselli and Caputo 9). Daughter of the Second World War, forced cosmopolitan, escaping political persecution for most of her life and discovering Italy only at the age of 18, Amelia will never overcome a feeling of profound estrangement and alienation in her own country. In January of 1976 she described her

¹ Giacomo Matteotti (2 May 1885-10 June 1924) was an Italian socialist politician. On 30 May 1924, he openly spoke in the Italian Parliament accusing the Fascists of committing fraud in the elections, and denounced the violence they used to gain votes. Eleven days later he was kidnapped and killed by Fascists.

² Born in Paris labored in the epic of our fallacious/generation. Laid in America amid the rich fields of landowners/and of the statal State. Experienced in Italy, barbarous country./Fled from England, country of sophisticates. Hopeful/in the West where nothing for the moment grows (trans. Jennifer Scappettone).

relationship with her country in a letter to her brother John: “Nulla mi mantiene legata all’Italia (...) il mio cosiddetto ‘milieu mi ha annoiato a morte, e a dire il vero lo evito, sebbene mi senta più che sola. Il paese ha perso la sua attrattiva e mi sento a casa solo quando sono all’estero” (De March and Giovannuzzi CXV).

As noted above, Rosselli was a woman and therefore a stranger *par excellence* in the cultural, religious, political, and literary systems of her time. In the early Sixties, the avant-garde literary movement was thriving in Italy, and Amelia was confronted with the arduous task of trying to fit into an essentially male-dominated literary world. For example, in the group of the *Novissimi* (whose anthology was published in 1961 and signaled the beginning of the Italian avant-garde movement and which had originated from “the Group of 63”), women were definitely a marginalized minority. Out of the twenty-nine participants who spoke or read from their work at the first meeting of the group in 1963, only two were women – Carla Vasio and Amelia Rosselli. Moreover, among the ten writers whose work was staged during the evening devoted to the theatre, there were no women. In subsequent meetings of the group, “the gender ratio remained substantially unchanged” (Re, “Language” 135) with no women participating at the group’s final meeting held in Fano in 1967. And although in the anthology, *Poeti Italiani del Novecento* edited by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, Amelia Rosselli was included, she was the only woman selected for inclusion. Thus, even though the Italian avant-garde movement undoubtedly brought linguistic and cultural innovation to dramatically challenge the status-quo of the dominant bourgeois culture, it did not expressly address the ideology of gender nor did it welcome women to be part of it.

However, interestingly enough, the initial phase of the Italian women's movement from 1965 to 1969 coincided with the phase of the great debates of the Neoavanguardia and was

certainly inspired by them. Amelia Rosselli *in primis* was definitely influenced by the linguistic experimentation of the neo-avangardist movement, but was nevertheless always considered an exception, again an *étrangère* within it and like many other women writers (Carla Vasio, Patrizia Vicinelli, Giulia Niccolai, for example) had to face the difficulties of constructing her experimental work in conditions of profound solitude and alienation.

Furthermore, it is significant that she spoke, wrote, and published her works in three languages, which was an almost unprecedented case in Italian literature. As Tandello observes, her multilingualism is “L’aspetto più eclatante meno canonico di Amelia Rosselli, segno evidente del suo ‘cosmopolitismo’ e di un’alterità, di un’estraneità uniche nella storia della nostra letteratura” (XXII). She habitually spoke Italian with her parents, French in school, French and English with the nannies, and English again with her siblings: “a Parigi abbiamo sempre parlato un miscuglio di lingue: italiano con il babbo e la mamma, inglese con le bambinaie inglesi, francese a scuola” (Fiori 167). When Amelia moved to the United States and later on to London, English became the language of her education. Growing up in this translinguistic environment where different languages cohabited, “contaminated,” and yet nourished each other, her poetic voice could not be truly monolingual. Not only does she write in three languages, but those three linguistic worlds communicate with each other, influencing each other and thus creating a unique language for Rosselli’s writing.

Starting in 1952, Amelia Rosselli built her poetic voice in three languages: first in English, *My Clothes to the Wind* (1952), then in Italian, *Cantilena (Poesie per Rocco Scotellaro)* (1953), and in French, *Adolescence (Exercices Poétiques 1954-1961)*, *Sanatorio 1954* (1954-1955). In *Le Chinois à Rome* (1955) French became the main language, but the other languages were still present as a substratum. *Diario in Tre Lingue* (1955-1956) is perhaps the

most striking example of interference among the three languages, with numerous examples of italianisms in English, anglicisms in Italian, etc. Her later poetry collections (*Variazioni Belliche*, *Variazioni Ospedaliere* etc.) will be written in Italian. This later choice of Italian “con il suo sfondo ritmicamente greco-latino” (De March and Giovannuzzi LXXI) as her privileged language of poetic expression because of its sonorous-musical quality, “l’italiano è una lingua più sonora, forse più eccentrica: anche meno sfruttato poeticamente, e si adatta meglio a me” (LXXIX), is an interesting one. However, Italian was never perceived as her first language. Rosselli felt like a stranger in her own language: she does not have a real “mother tongue” and often feels like an *étrangère* in whatever language she uses: “Amelia parrebbe sentirsi una straniera in qualunque lingua comunichi” (Tandello XIX). She had to “rivivere e riconquistare la nostra lingua comune quasi che fosse una lingua straniera” (Giudici X). Being linguistically and culturally heterogeneous given her unusual international upbringing, her poems were at first regarded suspiciously by critics because they infringed upon the narrow limits of national literature by challenging monolingual Italian culture and by bringing innovation to a profoundly provincial country.

In conclusion, Amelia Rosselli was a stranger in her own country, a stranger in her language, a stranger in a male-dominated literary world. However, despite her marginalized position, she was able to fit in, at the end of the day, as a kind of “misfit” and enter the *sanctum* of the 20th century Italian canon³ as the only woman writer.

³ I am referring to the inclusion of Amelia Rosselli in the anthology, *Poeti Italiani del Novecento*, by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo as the only woman.

Chapter Two

Amelia Rosselli: Poet and Musician

La musica comunque fa la sua parte
e nell'intendimento di essa
risiede la mia passione che contorcendosi si
dipinse egualmente spaventata dal lutto
dei suoi grandi occhi e della canzone.

– Rosselli, *Serie Ospedaliera*

Music always occupied a central role in Amelia Rosselli's life. She was a musician and composer long before becoming a poet. She studied violin, piano, composition, and ethnomusicology. She performed extensively, built instruments, and published numerous essays on music. She began her musical studies (violin, piano, and composition) in London at St. Paul's School at the age of 17, which is quite late for a music student. However, music was her very first passion as Aldo Rosselli, Amelia's cousin, states: "La musica fu la sua prima grande passione. Bach, Haendel. Poteva suonare per ore l'organo dell'antica chiesetta sulla collina" (Palli Baroni 61). Yet in an interview with Spagnoletti, Amelia recounted how growing up she loved both music and literature equally: "ero appassionata tanto di letteratura che di musica" (*È Vostra la Vita* 119). She continued studying composition in Florence under the direction of Luigi DallaPiccola and Guido Turchi. Later in Rome she came into contact with the avant-gardist musical environment (Roman Vlad, Franco Evangelisti) and published her first work as a music theorist, a review of Lupi's essay, *Armonia di Gravitazione*. In 1951 and 1952 she started studying ethnomusicology in Paris, London, and Rome and began her research on the harmonic system used in Third World countries and on atonal music at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, trying to find "una possibile struttura di sottofondo alle musiche non temperate, cioè non

strettamente classiche, soprattutto quelle cosiddette folkloriche, mediorientali, orientali, Sud Italia forse” (qtd. in De March and Giovannuzzi LXIV). The results of her ethnomusicological studies were published in 1954 in the essay, *Il Saggio degli Armonici*. In the summer of 1959 Rosselli studied contemporary music in Darmstadt, Germany, where the presenters included Stockhausen, Boulez, and Cage. The musical experience of serialism profoundly influenced her writing, especially her use of repetition and variation, as I will illustrate in more detail in the next chapters.

Given Rosselli’s professional experience and training as a musician and musicologist, it is not surprising to find structural links between her verse and musical compositional techniques from different eras. From classical tonal music, such as Bach, or the music of Third World cultures, or the dodecaphonic and post-dodecaphonic music of late modernity, the entire musical realm was always an endless source of inspiration for her writing process. She announces it herself in her poetic manifesto, *Spazi Metrici*: “Any problematic of poetic form has always been connected for me to that which is more strictly musical, and I have never in reality divided the two disciplines, considering the syllable not only an orthographic nexus but also a sound, and the sentence not only a grammatical construct but a system as well” (Rosselli and Scappettone 247). And again in her life-long research on language and experimentation, Rosselli is continuously facing acoustic dilemmas: “mi trovai a dover risolvere anche problemi relativi a questioni musicali, tecnico-musicali, acustico-musicali, che riguardavano anche la metrica in senso strettamente tecnico” (*È Vostra la Vita* 130). In another interview, she explains how, during the creative process, she would alternate the composition of poems and the execution of music on the piano in an attempt to translate musical intuitions into words: “It was enough for me to play a prelude of Bach or Chopin to reinterpret it, almost afterward, in poetic form” (*Locomotrix* 260)

and “Ci fu questa strana coincidenza che mi portava a tentare di tradurre una intuizione musicale in parole” (Cambon 49).

In the elaboration of Rosselli’s poems, the role of music is central, whether intrinsically through rhyme, variation, melody, harmony or dissonance or extrinsically through the use of musical metaphors and analogies. In the next chapters, I will uncover numerous examples of the interferences between the musical and poetic worlds, demonstrating how the amplification of the aural substance of language becomes absolutely primary in Rosselli’s writing process. In the double articulation of language, the realm of the signifier becomes more important than the signified. In other words, in Rosselli’s system of signification “il cosa-vuol-dire appare assai meno importante del dire in se” (Giudici X). Music is the source of inspiration. Music is an ideal to strive for or sometimes the first intuition of a poem. In summary, when analysing Rosselli’s poems, any linguistic-poetic technical issue becomes also a musical-acoustic one. The two disciplines – music and poetry – can never be separated.

Chapter Three

Amelia Rosselli and Écriture Féminine

Rintracciare, per la donna, forme artistiche sue originarie e perfino chimicamente più sue, resta problema aperto. Ma se la donna ne e' conscia, il suo scrivere si fa davvero più laborioso.

–Rosselli

I am aware of the difficulties that a feminist interpretation of Amelia Rosselli's poems presents, considering that she herself criticized several aspects of what might be defined as "women's writing." However, I also believe that it is relevant to investigate the purely feminine aspects of Amelia Rosselli's innovative poetic language because of the multiple traits of *écriture féminine* it incorporates, which contribute to an extremely successful artistic result. Indeed, through her experimental language, Amelia enacted a revolution inside the stifling mechanisms of patriarchal language, precisely as the French theorists Cixous and Kristeva urged women writers to engage in. Her voice "mette in discussione la tradizione, cercando di confrontarsi e all'occorrenza di scontrarsi e di provocare una collisione nel sistema comparativo" (Maffioli 335). In other words, she enacts a "rivoluzione semantica" that challenges the limits of signification and that challenges the traditional language of the *santi padri*, as well, playing parodically with their *catatonic* voices, subverting them, and creating a new revolutionary linguistic system.

Amelia Rosselli did not explicitly describe herself as a feminist and wanted to detach her poetry from the more intimistic, autobiographical, or better stated, confessional stream of women's writing. For example, she denounced the private aspect of such writing: "il grosso difetto della letteratura femminile o un pochino femminista oggi e quello di essere orgogliosa (...)

non sanno uscire dalla loro vita privata (...). Per me tanto vale che venga a raccontarmi i suoi fatti privati,” yet at the same time she also recognised how writing and femininity are profoundly intertwined: “Tra il mio operare poetico e la mia femminilità vi è sempre stato uno stretto interlaccio” (Frambotta 160). However, even though she did not define herself as a feminist, she was nonetheless participating in the main cultural events organized by the Italian Feminist *milieu*. For example, she was the first guest at the “Mese della Poesia” organized by Cristiana Fischer at the Libreria delle Donne in Milan, where Fisher describes Rosselli in this way: “Non amava molto le femministe (le sembrava una posizione di difesa e di minorità) ma riconosceva l’affetto che le veniva dalle amiche femministe e lo apprezzava molto” (De March and Giovannuzzi CXXX). Rosselli also participated in “Poesia al Femminile” at the theatre In Out of Rome in 1985 and at the lecture “Milano Donna,” at the Casa della Poesia in Milano.

Moreover, Rosselli always showed “un interesse vivo e diretto (...) verso la questione femminile (...) concretamente documentato dall’esistenza di un gruppo non trascurabile di libri conservati nella sua biblioteca personale (Mondardini 281). She was aware of the difficulty of describing a purely organically feminine writing as theorized by Cixous, but she also acknowledged its hidden potential once the woman writer became aware of it; as she says in one of her interviews: “rintracciare, per la donna, forme artistiche sue originarie e perfino chimicamente più sue, resta problema aperto. Ma se la donna ne è conscia, il suo scrivere si fa davvero più laborioso” (Frambotta 160). Moreover, Rosselli was deeply aware and interested in the specificity of the physiology of the female body, recognizing that “con la sua fisiologia corporale che ha qualcosa non di diverso da scrivere, ma di più fisiologico da distinguere anche sul piano contenutistico” (Rosselli et al. 136). This resonates with Cixous’ theorization of a physiological female specificity: “It is beyond doubt that femininity derives from the body, from

the anatomical, the biological differences, from a whole system of drives which are radically different for women than for men” (Makward and Cixous 28). Therefore, once the woman is aware of the specificity of a feminine form of writing, the feminine universe can become an inextinguishable source of creative inspiration. I will analyse Rosselli’s attention to the vocabulary of the female body in Chapter Five, specifically the way in which Amelia *speaks the body*, underlining the connection with Cixous’ theories about the female body.

Rosselli recognizes a female specificity in Sylvia Plath’s poetry. She feels that Plath resonates more naturally with both the content and style of her own work, and argues that it is easier for a woman to appreciate and translate her work. When comparing her translation of Sylvia Plath’s poems with those of Giudici and Morisco, she criticizes Giudici both for his choice of poems and his translations because of his distance from the female aspects of Plath’s poetry: “In quelle scelte da me, come in quelle della Morisco, c’è più pienezza di vita, senso della natura. Sono le poesie più sonore, più agréables. Poi credo che sia piu facile per una donna amare la Plath” (De March and Giovannuzzi CXXXI). Interestingly, the fullness of life, the sense of nature, and sonorous aspects are described as the main elements of Plath’s poetry. Thus, even though indirectly, Rosselli mentions several of the main elements of *écriture féminine* when justifying her choice and also establishes an important tie between the female translator and her ability to resonate more naturally with the voice of another woman poet. Women are more capable of resonating with thematic and structural components of *écriture féminine* and therefore able to more fully appreciate women's poetry.

Although there are other very interesting contemporary feminist scholars, I strongly believe that Cixous and Kristeva’s feminist theories are still extremely pertinent in the analysis of the work of Amelia Rosselli because they deal specifically with an inherent feminine presence

within the lexicon and its inner mechanisms whereas more contemporary feminist scholars tend to focus more closely on social, racial, class, and intersectionality issues that are not of particular relevance to the work of Amelia Rosselli. Rosselli was marginalized because she was a woman and a political refugee in the 20th century male-dominated Italian literary system, but she was still part of an elite intellectual group like Cixous and Kristeva. My goal is to show Rosselli's attempts to use the potential of language to change the world, to illustrate its performative aspect and its inner fight to innovate itself and therefore to innovate the phallogocentric linguistic realm. In conclusion, in light of Amelia Rosselli's documented interest for feminine writing, her declarations about the interaction between a female specificity and the writing process, and more importantly, the revolution in poetic language that she enacts through the use of musicality, I strongly believe it is important for scholars to investigate in greater depth the significant connections between Amelia Rosselli's experimental language and *écriture féminine*.

Chapter Four

Écriture Féminine in *Sleep*: a Sacrilegious Female Voice

Ma voix repousse la mort; ma mort; ta mort; ma voix est mon autre. J'écris et tu n'es pas mort. Si j'écris, l'autre est sauf.

—Cixous, *La Venue à l'Écriture*

According to Cixous the voice is the privileged medium for women's self-expression — the absolute protagonist of *écriture féminine*. For example, in *Sorties* Cixous claims that “First I sense femininity in writing by: a privilege of *voice*: *writing and voice* are entwined and interwoven and writing’s continuity/voice’s rhythm take each other’s breath away through interchanging” (Cixous and Clément 92). Similarly, in *The Laugh of the Medusa* she argues that “Dans la parole féminine comme dans l’écriture ne cesse jamais de résonner ce qui de nous avoir jadis traversé, touché imperceptiblement, profondément, garde le pouvoir de nous affecter, le chant, la première musique, celle de la première voix d’amour, que toute femme préserve vivante” (*La Jeune née*, 172). The singing poetic voice is an omnipresent and widely celebrated element of *écriture féminine* as Cixous’s scattered text references to the voice, the song, and the organs of speech and listening demonstrate. In its striving for a condition of music, women’s writing is characterized by the constant attempt to reproduce the organic, material quality of the voice through a melodious, rhythmic, and spontaneous torrent of words.

Moreover, the voice is the *medium* through which women can enact a linguistic and social revolution. This is because a feminine voice is necessarily powerful and disruptive – it is “Exclamation, cry, breathlessness, yell, cough, vomit, music” (Cixous and Clément 94). This is why Cixous urges all women “to go completely into voice” (92), in other words, to speak up, get

rid of the gag that imprisoned their tongue and mouth for centuries and throw their voice into the void of phallogentric history to reconstruct their new liberated identity.

Amelia Rosselli's collection of poems in English, *Sleep* (1953-1966), is pervaded by a palpable auditory quality through the amplification of the musical aspects of her poetic language (that will be analysed in detail in the following chapters), but as well through obsessively reiterated references to the voice, the chant, the tongue, and hearing. The voice becomes the emblem of Rosselli's sacrilegious femininity, a disruptive force that erupts on the page through a powerful musical and corporeal-sensual language that cries out its rebellion. It is relevant for my analysis of the musical-feminine component of Rosselli's writing to emphasize the importance of the voice in Amelia Rosselli's poems and to illustrate its innate feminine quality.

As theorized by Cixous, there is a profound relationship between music and femininity that she illustrates by emphasizing the intimate connection between the mother's voice and the daughter's. Cixous claims that "nothing is more powerful than the intimate touch of a veiled voice (...) the first ray of a voice that comes to meet the newly-born heart" (Cixous and Sellers 84). In *La Venue à l'Écriture* she reinforces the connection between the musical maternal language and her own language: "Dans la langue que je parle, vibre la langue maternelle, langue de ma mère, moins longue que musique moins syntaxe que chant de mots" (31). The maternal language is thus a language-non-language, pure music, chant of the heart liberated from the rules of syntax. Theorist Claude Bailble argues that precisely the sounds occurring through the body to body contact of the foetus and the mother — heartbeat, breathing, and especially her voice — establish the subject's consciousness of its mother. In opposition to Lacan's theory of the mirror, Bailble claims that children first build their identities through sonorous impulses (qdt in Andrews 3). Specifically, the voice creates that very first connection with the first *other* — the mother—

and allows the first expansion of individuality through motherly love. In the collection of poems *Sleep*, Amelia Rosselli decides to use the English language instead of French or Italian (the language of her father). This is because English was her mother's language. By choosing English she creates a very powerful relationship with the maternal element and therefore her female essence. In summary, Amelia Rosselli establishes her feminine voice by a preliminary linguistic choice of English. She, like Cixous, writes with white ink her female song of liberation. English is the language of the mother from whom she was brutally separated in her adolescence. English is her first music and the first sonorous language tied to her female self.

In the collection *Sleep*, Amelia Rosselli's voice is not only *feminine* but becomes the emblem of a "dissacrante femminilitá" (Tandello *Sleep* 216) expressed through a demonic disruptive force capable of rivaling the voices of *santi padri* — the established male dominant canon — and annihilating them:

so finally we have reached the level our self had
meant to reach, about a month ago, planning
rack into the future. O sing we, with one
short glance into the
arabic grammar, sing we, then
(i say), sing we uplifted from the
ground and as yet not
quite at the heavens, but indescribable
tension of love fear and all that god
has replenished the world with, time merrily
chirping at the great wide interlaced gates

opening finally at our demonish

will but now it is god's! (*L'Opera Poetica* 872)

This poem represents a revolutionary manifesto in which Amelia Rosselli's poetic voice erupts with all its subversive force. The poet exhorts women to sing, but the song is so powerful and so disruptive that it is able to "plan rack" into the future. The voice is able to open wide the gates, annihilate grammar and language of "potent able men," and uplift that collective buried feminine *we* from the ground to create change in the future. The liberated singing voice is opposed to grammar.

Similarly, in the *Laugh of the Medusa* Cixous claims that "language conceals an invincible adversary, because it's the language of men and their grammar" (887). According to Cixous, grammar is indeed the symbol of men's phallogocentric discourse, its unbreakable base, and therefore the nemesis of an anti-logical, anti-grammatical female voice. Indeed, women's language, on the other hand, will only briefly "glance" at the "arabic grammar" (the adjective arabic might indicate its unintelligibility and remoteness from the opposite point of view of the female lyrical subject) to open the gates and sing its fully vital force. In other words, grammar belongs to the past and a new voice-cry is surpassing it, dismantling it. It is a *voice-cry* that surges from the dust of a history of annihilation: "Voice! That, too, is launching forth and effusion without return. Exclamation, cry, breathlessness, yell, cough, vomit, music. Voice leaves. Voice loses. (...) And that's how she writes, as one throws a voice — forward, into the void" (Cixous and Clément 94). There is also an element of predestination, prefiguration, and inevitability. There is a necessity for revolution to happen as her collective will becomes also god's will at the end of the poem: her-their voices inevitably must sing in order to dismantle, disrupt, deconstruct, launch attacks to the established order of the world and create revolution

through language and love: “they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes. they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse” (Cixous et al. 886).

The voice is not only necessarily revolutionary. It must also express deeply vital and potent emotions, passionately torn between love and fear, and profoundly interconnected with the abundance of life (“everything that God has replenished the world with”), as opposed to a logical, sterile, man-made and grammar-based old language. The fullness and the intensity of feeling of the female *fanciulla* is a leitmotif of *Sleep*: “she understood perhaps/ to have loved all the world with too much/ intensity, and herself, the queen of it” (110). The “tension of love and fear” is described as “innumerable” and “indescribable.” This is because the language through which Rosselli sings and deconstructs pre-established man-made order is neither descriptive nor categorizable. Like music it flows freely in a constant balance between tension and resolution, fear and love and cannot be constrained. It perfectly exemplifies the non-enclosed feminine language Cixous theorizes in the *Laugh of the Medusa*: “Her language can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours (...) her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible” (889). The voice is situated in a sort of in-between space between the earth, usually connected with the female element, and the man-made skies inhabited by a God equation of the male element. The woman writer is able to create through poetry a new free female space in between the earth and the sky where her song, her expression of *jouissance* (the direct reexperience of the physical pleasures of infancy and of later sexuality, which have been repressed yet not obliterated by the Law of the Father) can resonate freely.

Rosselli again establishes her “dissacrante femminilità” in the poem, “So Finally We Have Reached the Level Our Self Had Meant to Reach,” by describing the collective female will

as “demon-ish.” She clearly parodies the common view of woman seen in the phallogocentric western world as the avatar of the devil, a naturally sinful and dangerous seducer of man.

Tertullian, theologian of the first century, writes: “Femme, tu es la porte du diable. Tu as persuadé celui que le diable n’osait attaquer en face. C’est à cause de toi que le fils de Dieu a dû mourir” (qdt in de Beauvoir 159). In *Genesis* God punishes Adam because he listened to Eve’s voice and then ate the forbidden fruit, thus connecting the voice to the idea of sin. “And to Adam he said, because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life” (*Gen.* 3.17). In the poem, the female lyrical subject appropriates her sinful nature to herself, demystifying it and with humour she plays with it as in the following poem:

I fortunately forget
my sins (1012)

In *Sleep* the female subject has to “forget her sins” and re-educate herself to sin like Eve — to escape passivity and sing.

In the poem, “We Have Newly Learned How to Sin,” Rosselli expands the semantic field of sacrilegious femininity by connecting it with the musical realm of the voice. In this way, rebellious femininity and the voice become more and more semantically unified:

we have newly learned to sin, to sing that
is, with the hatchet behind our
shoulders but nevertheless we
sing
wildly

before god discovers our disgrace, quick
hidden in the wings of all
falsehood, joy is an everlasting
sorrow. (904)

Rosselli phonetically plays with the signifiers of the verbs *sin-sing* to create new unexpected semantic associations that challenge linguistic conventions and dismantle traditional semantic links between words: her use of these words makes their meanings disintegrate. The word's apparent representation of an almost self-identical signifier breaks down to reveal new semantic threads between words. Here the verb *sing* is equated to the verb *sin* through a powerful phono-semantic relation. The two verbs become absolute synonyms in Rosselli's *Sleep*. The chant/song is sacrilegious and in the poem Rosselli shifts between two completely different semantic areas almost imperceptibly, almost as if she were mumbling the words, in a sort of *lapsus*. Sinning acquires a new semantic dimension when connected to the word singing.

Women are taught to be quiet, to be passive, to be invisible, yet in *Sorties* Cixous argues that "The hierarchization subjects the entire conceptual organization to man. A male privilege, which can be seen in the opposition by which it sustains itself, between action and passivity. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is coupled with the same opposition: activity/passivity" (288). As Cixous reminds us in the *Laugh of the Medusa*, "Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away-that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for woman to speak – even just open her mouth – in public" (880). If speaking is considered a transgression, singing "wildly" must be transgressive to the nth degree. Her singing is an uncivilized, subversive chant connected with the wild, sinister, sinful world that lies outside the

laws of civilised society and is limited to the world of libidinal drives, the realm of the unconscious, the dark territory of the body.

The wild nature of the female singing voice is reflected in the lexical field of the wilderness, which recurs throughout the entire collection. Indeed, the evocation of wild nature reflects the undomesticated nature of the female subject's inner world, as in "O the trees are wild with winter tension/and the leaves rush upon the big mat/ gallop-horses/and the leaves tumble like wild birds on the heath" (878). The feminine self sings in a non-domesticated, untamed, vital way as opposed to God's angelic chant of adoration. However, the "hatchet" is right behind *her-their* shoulders as a persecutor waiting for the right moment to castrate, slicing the object. The executioner looms above her-them and her-their voices are doomed not to be heard, or better stated, to be heard by a deaf ear: "the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks masculine" (*The Laugh of the Medusa* 881). Therefore, the lyrical collective female subject's wild chant, i.e, one that challenges grammar, logic, societal norms, as well as linguistic routinized practices and hierarchies, is doomed not to be heard because the dominant language is masculine and incapable of understanding it. If singing is freedom, if singing is opening up wings and flying wildly, the female lyrical subject's *vol* is inevitably tainted with failure. Her inevitable flight is doomed to sink into the sea as was the flight of Icarus. The entire endeavour had been impossible, false in its conception. The hatchet, the executioner, is always present, right behind her shoulder. Joy of light is always tainted with the sorrow of failure.

By contrast, in the poem, "Do I Want to Participate" the female poetic subject, "I," is resurrected and establishes her new-found identity in antithesis to the male interlocutor, celebrating her difference and finding strength in her different voice. She is not *he* – he talks whereas she cries and sings:

(...) I am not he I cry and
sing a song of beatitude, quite
unafraid you might come hammer me. (1000)

The female poetic subject affirms herself through a rediscovered, reestablished power of her voice with which she completely identifies. If he talks, she sings, heedless of the consequences of her free self-expression. She cries and sings a song expressing all her bliss. This bliss has nothing to do with the Biblical blessedness of saints. It is simply a mundane form of elation – her *jouissance*. Through her voice-body she is able to escape the condition of “passive flower” and participate actively in the male-dominated literary world, reclaiming her place, crying it out aloud, *unafraid* this time of the hatchet-hammer-phallus looming above her. She is not afraid of being annihilated by him because she owns her voice and will not stop singing.

In the poem, “A Hundred Times Must I Flow O’er the Tiger Trees,” the semantic coupling of *sing-sin* is enriched through another sonorous variation: this time it is associated with the verb *sink*.

(...) the wind sings purple
to my bent ears, the seas turn purple
to my blind eyes, and i sing (i sink) into
night’s black prayer, softer than all the trees, all the skies, all the seas. (906)

The wind sings its purple song, but the ears of the lyrical subject are bent and the eyes are incapable of seeing the outer world. The colour purple, appearing frequently in the *recueil*, is symbolic. The colour is connected again with the religious world, just as in the ancient world, it was the privileged pigment for those of noble or royal birth or those who were high-level officials. Roman emperors wore clothing of purple and Catholic bishops have, for many years,

worn it as well. The female subject shuts out of her life the male-dominated world of religious authority and the false sacredness connected to it and becomes completely detached from it. On the contrary, she finds refuge in the “black prayer” of the night. If purple is the colour of sanctity, she chooses black. The wind’s purple song cannot reach the self who can only *sing-sink*. Singing and sinking become synonyms. The almost imperceptible variation of the sonorous material *sin-sing-sink* again creates important semantic links. She sinks into her own unconscious, the dark and unexplored territory of her mind, the wild scenery of her body, into the soft prayer of the night, softer than all the trees, all the skies, all the seas. Once again, Rosselli uses the religious vocabulary but only to decontextualize it and use it as an empowering tool. The prayer lulls her to sleep. This sleep, the oniric unexplored territory of the night, becomes a way of escaping the constraints of a phallogentric society that has prevented women's writing by censoring her body, her breath, and thus her voice as well.

The lyrical subject’s sleep in the poem “Sleep” is not the one that the virgin watches :“oh the tender dangerous virgins on the mountain top watch a sleep which is not mine since the radiant bed covered me moss like” (938). It is connected to the earth and is fused with the earth. Once women have learned how to harness the power of dreams, their unconscious will become an irrepressible source of inspiration from which *écriture féminine* will freely flow. Women have newly learned how to sing-sin again, meaning to let their voices sing wildly and freely, meaning to sink into the soft night, the unknown dark territory of the unconscious and/or the scary world of the *other*. The reference to the colour black (to night and darkness) resonates as well with Cixous’ words in the *Laugh of the Medusa*. Cixous describes women’s territory as dark:

Your continent is dark. Darkness is dangerous. You can’t see anything in the dark, you’re afraid. Don’t move, you might fall. The continent of women is dark. One must go on

foot, with the body, one has to go away, leave the self. How far must one not arrive in order to write, how far must one wander and wear out and have pleasure? One must walk as far as the night. One's own night. Walking through the self towards the dark. (65)

Amelia Rosselli is not afraid of the darkness and writes about marginalized non-existent voices of brown and black bodies. The pen is virgin because no one has ever talked about them. In the following poem, the man does not have a name, he is just a beautiful black body envied and eroticised by the eyes of society until the female subject writes his name down, giving dignity to the figure of the colonized *other*:

Negro blood flowing on his brown
or black body, grace and length enticing
looks of envy, looks of rapture
records of tolerance

Swimming underwater he saw all
life deformed; a virgin pen wrote
his name down. (970)

Amelia Rosselli's collection of poems in English, *Sleep*, is pervaded by a palpable auditory quality not only through the reference to the singing voice, but also through the obsessively reiterated reference to musical vocabulary. In the following poem, "Upon the Hearing of Certain Dissonances in the Slow Moonlight," the female subject begins her poetical journey after an auditory perception of dissonance:

upon the hearing of certain dissonances in the slow moonlight

as that which frozen neither of us understands
is out and about our hopes, perhaps that
is true love, said the bag-pipes as it froze out.
As slowly with circumvolution the notes spake out
i shut my eyes and sang slowly, slight nip
into the beat of all multitudes. (874)

However, the auditory experience is also accompanied synesthetically by the physical sensation of touch. Aural and tactile sensations are combined in a non-hierarchical way, merging with each other. The poetic self is completely merged with her sensations. Auditory and tactile sensations predominate whereas the eyes are voluntarily closed, thus unseeing. In other words, she is completely immersed in what Cixous calls “the immense material organic sensual universe that we are” (*Sorties* 292). The entire poem is accompanied by the slow “circumvolutions” of the notes of a dissonant Moonlight Sonata and from there, sensations and intuitions appear and trigger the poetic self: “It was enough for me to play a prelude of Bach or Chopin to reinterpret it, almost afterward, in poetic form” (*Locomotrix* 260).

In the poem “Faro,” the monotone scream of the collective voice of patriarchal society, reiterating the refrain “be kind be kind be kind,” is also internalized by the individual female voice that repeats it in order to remind herself of what *she has to be* in order to fit in, a refrain that is opposed to her freely singing voice:

be kind be kind be kind I hear this phrase
screaming in my ear each day, be sweet
be sweet be sweet this is all
I can say (or seem to say). Alas the phrase the

flare the open door the glare the blare the fan
the flight the high tower reaching up towards glaze
are all I am fit to say, to see, to hear to feel
to sway (...). (1006)

In this poem, it is interesting that the voice of the female subject ceases singing to remind herself of what she is supposed to be in order to fit into her predetermined male-imposed female role (“Would you have me fry in my soup? Or be the everlasting damsel in her skirts” (1040)). She *says* the words “be sweet, be sweet, be sweet.” The verb *say* is clearly opposed to the verb *sing*. It is all she can say, all she is allowed to say or at least *seems* to say in the eyes of society. As Cixous states: “On one hand she has constituted herself necessarily as that ‘person’ capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity. But secretly, silently, deep down inside, she grows and multiplies, for, on the other hand, she knows far more about living and about the relation between the economy of the drives and the management of the ego than a man” (*Laugh of the Medusa* 888).

Again, in the poem “Ye Who Do Batter Me with Wordes,” words are weapons in the binary struggle man-woman, words-silence. They never stop battering the female subject, they scream in her ears (“be kind be kind be kind, be sweet, be sweet, be sweet”):

Ye who do Batter me with Wordes
be Still: my Soul does rise in Silence
up the Sordid Moon. (870)

The female poetic subject orders the male-adversary to be still, i.e, to stop imposing his phallic dominating power on her voice, while the female soul freely rises in a place of silence, where words are quiet. Words do not categorize, classify, objectify nor ask the female subject to

conform to their laws. Instead of the logical, rational realm of the sun, she chooses the quiet and “sordid” way of the moon. The moon has always been mythologically connected with the feminine, together with the night and the darkness whereas the sun is traditionally connected with the masculine.

In *Sorties*, Cixous asks herself “Where is she?” and then enumerates the main binary oppositions that classify the Western world: “Activity/passivity, Surya/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/ Night, Father/Mother, Head/ Heart, Intelligible/Sensitive, Logo/Pathos” (287). These binary oppositions serve to relegate the feminine aspects to a position of inferiority and affirm the position of male superiority. This is because binary phallogocentric discourse presupposes a hierarchization and a common denominator for all oppositions, which is the couple activity-passivity: “The hierarchization subjects the entire conceptual organization to man. A male privilege, which can be seen in the opposition by which it sustains itself, between action and passivity. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is coupled with the same opposition: activity/passivity” (287). Rosselli is able to dismantle the opposition and celebrate the feminine element imposing her fierce femininity. The adjective *sordid* is again associated with the thematic area of sacrilegious femininity, and again the female subject chooses her ‘immorality,’ or better said the *new morality*, her personal woman-made hell opposed to the man-made heaven, where she is the absolute queen, the natural wild world where her passion and sexual drives are expressed freely through the power of the poetic singing voice. She voluntarily chooses the moon over the sun and from there rises from the *dust*, from the *ground* and she finds her God. In the tripartition of godly love represented by the trinity – the father, the son and the holy spirit – she has been arbitrarily excluded and after bowing and looking for approval, she goes back home, to a new woman-made morality.

We saw the king: we bowed, turned our back hesitantly
but finding no approval, swam back home: to the
new morality: a squirt to chance, a spirit forlorn
when the sky at its most purple point trebled the
irradiation of love.

In conclusion, although the idea of sleep is usually connected with silence, passivity, and death, sleep can also be symbolic of the rebirth and awakening of a sacrilegious, disruptive, and revolutionary voice. Not surprisingly, *Sleep* begins with the poem, “What Woke those Tender Fat Heavy Hands.” The idea of awakening is present from the very first poem: the awakening of the body and the awakening of the voice. The woman who has learned to *sin-sing* like Eve has explored the dark territory of her unconscious and is now able to produce a liberated text that expresses her voice. Her voice is different from the man’s because she does not “say,” she “sings,” and she does it wildly because she does not know conventions or categorization. She does not describe. She sings.

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Chapter Five

Writing the Body: Amelia Rosselli's Bodily Writing in *Sleep*

We must move on to the rhetoric of women, one that is anchored in the organism, in the body.

–Marguerite Duras

Another important element of *écriture féminine* is the body. Cixous repeatedly urges women to *speak their body*, i.e, to inscribe themselves within their physicality and to re-discover their confiscated bodily nature as the main substance and source of inspiration of their writing. In particular, Cixous claims that a woman's "flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. In fact, she physically materializes what she's thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she's saying" (*The Laugh of the Medusa* 881). The intermingling between body and text is an essential element of Amelia Rosselli's writing. According to Mengaldo, her language is like a biologic organism whose cells proliferate uncontrollably: "la Rosselli sente agire la lingua, letteralmente, in quanto corpo, organismo biologico, le cui cellule proliferano incontrollate in una vitalità riproduttiva che, come nella crescita tumorale, diviene patogena e mortale" (993).

Amelia Rosselli herself distinguishes a controversial but existing biologically and chemically feminine aspect of her writing: "rintracciare, per la donna, forme artistiche sue originarie e perfino chimicamente più sue, resta problema aperto. Ma se la donna ne è conscia, il suo scrivere si fa davvero più laborioso" (Frambotta 160). Rosselli was also deeply aware of female physiology and argues that this specificity can influence the content of her poetry. She does so by using a vocabulary of the body recognizing that "con la sua fisiologia corporale che ha qualcosa non di diverso da scrivere, ma di più fisiologico da distinguere anche sul piano contenutistico" (136). Her language is literally *body*, meaning that Amelia Rosselli inscribes

herself in the body, not only using it thematically and metaphorically, but also, and more importantly, through the inherent corporeality of language itself just as theorized by Cixous.

Women have been disconnected from their bodies for centuries through the annihilating power of the male's gaze. Thus Cixous claims in the *Laugh of the Medusa* that: "By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display-the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" (888). Cixous argues that it is only by re-discovering and re-experiencing the multifaceted possibilities of the female body that a corresponding textual body can be produced. And it is through the body that *écriture féminine* can dismantle patriarchal language, and, through language, dismantle the social and cultural oppression of women.

For Cixous the repression of the female body in the phallogocentric society is deeply connected to the suppression of the female voice. Cixous calls upon women to write and in so doing addresses the body as it relates to the voice while also stressing the importance of reclaiming the two simultaneously. This is because the voice has a bodily, tactile, corporeal quality to it. Not surprisingly, music is also deeply related to touch as Ryan Bishop explains in his essay "The Force of Noise, or Touching Music." For example, Bishop points out that sound is already touch, as he refers to the physical quality of sound (composed of waves that physically and invisibly touch our ears and body). Cixous synesthetically connects hearing and tactile experiences: "Curiously, hearing is a way of touching and being touched by one's space. Text: my body-shot through with streams of song" (*The Laugh of the Medusa* 882). Again Bishop stresses the relation between touch and listening by connecting it to intrauterine and infantile life: "In the intense experiences of listening, hearing cooperates with touch to recall the eyeless

belongingness of intrauterine life, when we are given our own shape by the shape of that which surrounds and accommodates us, and early infant life when we are bathed and caressed as much by voices as by hands and fingers” (Bishop 25). Therefore, the body, or better said a certain material quality of language, can be also found in the vocal and musical aspects of *écriture féminine*. Bishop and Cixous provide additional support for creating a *fil rouge* among the main elements of *écriture féminine*: voice-body-music.

Women writing through and from the body is considered a primary source of inspiration, an endless depository of *jouissance* and creative power to give access to the unconscious. The body is intimately connected with the female self and participates actively in the writing process: “touch me, caress me, you the living no-name, give me myself as myself” (*The Laugh of the Medusa* 881). At the same time a textual body is capable of touching readers through its palpable sonorous musical words and reaching their body in a mutual corporeal exchange. Poetic language is “a language of materiality” where the words “draw attention to themselves rather than inscribing an easy, transparent relationship between words and the world” (Robbins 128). That is precisely the power of *écriture féminine* as described by Cixous: “the power of writing: move me, touch me, strike me with blows of the axe” (*The Laugh of the Medusa* 882). Through the access to the multiform and endless space of the female body from which the woman has been brutally disconnected and the exploration of the “untouchably interiors,” the realm of the unconscious, the sonorous origin of thoughts and concepts, the irrational, the limitless world of physicality and sublimated erotic pulsions, women can produce texts that escape the logic of rational-phallogocentric discourse and access unexplored revolutionary resources.

Amelia Rosselli is able to speak the body through the emphasis on the sonorous aspect of language. The body is already present in the language itself and is ineffable in the same way as Cixous claims that: “body (body? bodies?), no more describable than god, the soul, or the Other; that part of you that leaves a space between yourself and urges you to inscribe in language your woman's style” (882). Through the experimentalism of her language, (particularly through musicality) that allows Rosselli to overcome the binary opposition between body and mind, she creates a semantic-sonorous *continuum* between the two. In other words, through the reference to the body and the use of a sonorous-corporeal-musical language, she is able to connect and therefore annihilate the patriarchal distinction between *bios* and *logos*.

The English *Canzoniere*, *Sleep*, again represents an excellent example of *écriture féminine* because of the representation of a subversive feminine body, an endless source of inspiration for the female poetic voice through an utterly corporeal-sonorous language. Again the protagonists of *écriture féminine* voice-body-music are deeply interconnected in Rosselli's poetic style and play with each other to revolutionize patriarchal language. From the opening of *Sleep*, in the poem, “What Woke those Tender Heavy Fat Hands,” Rosselli denounces the confiscation of women's bodies by patriarchal society. As soon as women awoke their voice-body (“tender heavy fat hands”) — woke up from an induced sleep — the man-executioner reminded her-them of their subordinated position and their innate condition of estrangement and exclusion. The female collective self is defined in opposition to male authority, as an alienated bodiless being, a stranger that will never belong and has never belonged to the list of “potent able men.” The poet parodically uses religious vocabulary to define her sacrilegious femininity and presents women as subversive martyrs in opposition to the tradition of *santi padri* or the Lacanian *loi du père*.

What woke those tender heavy fat hands

said the executioner as the hatchet fell
down upon their bodily stripped souls
fermenting in the dust. You are a stranger here
and have no place among us. We would have you off our list
of potent able men

were it not that you've never belonged to it. Smell
the cool sweet fragrance of the incense burnt, in honour
of some secret soul gone off to enjoy an hour's agony
with our saintly Maker. Pray be away
sang the hatchet as it cut slittingly
purpled with blood. The earth is made nearly
round, and fuel is burnt every day of our lives. (856)

Women are indeed described as “bodily stripped souls” which resonates with Dante’s description of souls wandering in *Purgatorio*: “spogliatesi dal mortal corpo” (Purg. II, 46). However, Dantean and Christian vocabulary is blasphemously used to denounce the murder of women’s bodies. Women are victims of a brutal deprivation rather than a Christian liberation from the mortal apparatus of the body. The confiscation of the body does not elevate the souls; but it brings her-them back to the ground instead, where their souls “ferment” forgotten in the dust. Clearly the executioner armed with his hatchet, stands for the patriarchal tradition that brutally cuts women out of society, out of the literary world, out of their body and their voice, out of the list of those who have power, i.e, those who are able to express themselves. In every monotheistic religion, after the creation of the world, God cedes the word to Adam, and therefore the power to name, categorize and differentiate things. Adam, the first man is the first

nominateur and therefore symbolically the depository of the *verbum*. Ever since Adam, man has been identified as the able-body possessor of the word, the creator of grammar, the dominator of the world through verbal mastery. Man has been the absolute center of religion, philosophy and language whereas women's voices have always been connected with the idea of sin, as I illustrated in the previous chapter. The hatchet (leitmotiv of the collection) symbolically representing the phallus, sings, (because the man is the only one allowed to, whereas the woman is muted) while castrating women's voices and blood is burnt every day like fuel. Through the reference to castration, she also parodies the common view of women from Plato to Freud, seen through the phallogocentric lens, as invisible, imperfect, incomplete, "castrated men."

Interestingly, it seems that Rosselli predicted how she would have been completely marginalized in the Italian academic institution when she wrote the poem. The executioner and the hatchet are eager to marginalize Rosselli "because her linguistic flexibility denies categorization and challenges conventions and normative codes of language" (Nelson 35). Her language is an anti-logos: expression of a feared *other* for its deconstructing and disruptive power. By the evocation of Christianity ("the incense burnt" and "our saintly Maker") Rosselli parodies Western traditions of religion, and patriarchal hierarchy, and inscribes her female sacrilegious identity as its antithesis. Indeed the female self is built in opposition to the tradition of the *santi padri* and the "Arabic grammar" from which she completely detaches herself. She expresses this again in the short poem, "La Libellula:" "La santità dei santi padri era un prodotto sì cangiante ch'io decisi di allontanare ogni dubbio dalla mia testa purtroppo troppo chiara e prendere il salto per un addio più difficile" (*L'Opera Poetica* 195).

In the poem “You Would not Take Responsibility,” the subversive female poetic self assimilates itself completely to a body that does not accept its destiny of passivity and that revokes its right to be an actual body:

You would not take responsibility: you would not
wipe the hinge clean, you would not be a body
rocking through life, or slenderly rapping out
withering tunes. You would be a body, meddling
with traps, and sorrows overshadowing your
own traps.

You would be a body tenderly terrifying the
mice, and your soft heart is struck through
sunk quietly.

You would sink quietly, ring bells with beards
and beard mice through to not-shadow,
not willingness, to testify that you were
Born. (1038)

The verb *sink* resonates with the powerful phono-semantic related verbs *sing-sin-sink* that I already illustrated in the previous chapter. The feminine lyrical subject rejects its role: she refuses to be a passive lifeless “body rocking through life;” she wants to live, she wants to desire, and to express “the tentacles of her passion.” She refuses to be a “passive flower” singing “withering tunes.” She wants to sing her wild song. She refuses to take responsibility, she wants

to sin. She wants to *sing-sin*. However, instead of affirming her bodily nature and her desire, in all its splendour, she is inevitably doomed to *sink* into a state of shadow and unwillingness, to refuse to testify that she was born. She has to be passive. She has to sleep in order to affirm her existence. According to Cixous, “She sleeps, she is intact, eternal, absolutely powerless” and “she is beautiful but passive; hence desirable” (*Sorties* 66). This is because female desire is not permitted to play an active role nor even to be openly expressed. Cixous argues that the woman’s allure – and thus her value – depends on her remaining passive, silent, and horizontal. Not only must she be passive, the female subject of *Sleep* presents herself as “handicapped by life,” in clear opposition to the “able potent men” of the poem “What Woke Those Fat Heavy Hands”:

(...) handicapped by life nevertheless
fiercely ready for action: yet; with our
souls; with our hands and our shoes; we
see there is hope for a strong new tie
ready for delivery. (988)

Men are able-bodied, ‘able-voiced’ whereas the woman is made disabled by life. The woman is again portrayed as lacking something: the cut inflicted by the man-executioner has transformed her into an incomplete object. She is “handicapped,” affected by a condition that restrains her ability to function. Physically, she is deprived of her body. Mentally, she cannot express her thoughts freely; she is censored and dominated by the phallogocentric discourse from which she is excluded. Socially, she is the stranger *par excellence*, she does not belong. However, even though handicapped in life, she is ready to act and plan “rack into the future.”

In *Sleep* Rosselli’s language becomes deeply sensual, an expression of explosive libidinal drives. The body becomes the *locus* of desire and unquenchable thirst for passion. The Rosselian

body becomes an expression of: “oral drive, anal drive, vocal drive - all these drives are our strengths, and among them is the gestation drive-just like the desire to write: a desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language, for blood” (*The Laugh of the Medusa* 891). The poetic self is a body, *locus* of an explosive visceral passion that like lava erupts and cannot and does not want to be restrained. Not only the body, but the soul is torn by passion. Indeed both the body and the soul are deeply material and sensually connoted:

(...) Tentacles of passion run rose-wise
like flaming strands of opaque red lava. Our soul
tears with passion, its chimney (...). (860)

It is a “magmatic passion” expressed by a “magmatic language” (Giudici IX) where the palpable words are like gunpowder animated by a centripetal force that pushes them out of the *contours* of the line. A redundant, germinating explosion of words attempts to push the limits of words themselves.

In the following examples, Rosselli describes a repressed, incarcerated body imprisoned by a tight belt that squeezes the woman’s swollen, blood-thirsty belly:

(...) ringingly she
surprised herself saying: brush the
belt on: it squeezes too tight, and rounds
a belly too thirsty for languor. Yes (1042)

She returned head lowered and a bordered belt
on the sides, a trifle blowsy, but perhaps moderate
enough in her judgment. (952)

(...) her belted waist in accordance
with the laws of speed. (1000)

And tie yourself to this chair balanced
On its poised ugly legs; tie them fast
Hold them together (...) (1018)

The repressed woman is thirsty for life, for love, for “all that God replenished the world with:”

(...) She understood perhaps
to have beloved all the world with too much
intensity, and herself, the queen of it (...) (110)

Again, the woman is blood-thirsty because of centuries of passivity, of being a passive
wall-flower:

(...) Am I this passive
flower curving for wood and salt
to ground pestering its strings
of roots: or am I blood-thirsty
for cringing for propriety. (1000)

Here the body is the object of oppression. It is reduced to a fragile “sprig” and is the victim of an
overwhelming storm of sensations:

(...) hangs noise, sound, matter, all
sorts of things round your sprig
of a body – it withstands all.

turning to its own turnpike. (976)

In the following poem, the female subject is assimilated to the cherry-bee in the process of pollination, sexual impregnation on *the* apple tree evoking original sin:

the cherry bee stands on the apple tree
in full bloom; I cut a road to hell
with my own footing. Drones the humming-bee;
it never sought God, nor found it. (862)

The female subject is assimilated to a new Eve unconcerned with God, neither searching, nor finding Him. She responds to her multiple drives and consciously cuts a road to *hell*. She takes responsibility and celebrates her sin, thus entering the natural luxuriant world of passion and sexuality. She creates her own hell by getting rid of God. No longer doomed to hell: she consciously chooses it. The female subject accepts the phallogocentric religious stigma against women but uses it consciously to empower her rebellious voice and strengthen her sacrilegious identity. Sin becomes an empowering element of her womanly identification, not the traditionally inferiorizing tool to relegate women to non-existence. As Cixous argues, writing becomes a way to appropriate her “decensored relation (...) to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories... she has always occupied the space reserved for the guilty... she must urgently learn to speak. A woman without a body, dumb, blind, can't possibly be a good fighter” (*The Laugh of the Medusa* 880).

The woman consciously chooses her path and by the act of choosing, conquers her stolen free-will. God made men free and gave them free will. God gave men the right to choose, but the woman must always re-conquer her free-will and her right to choose. She has been encapsulated

within a logical binary linguistic apparatus that marginalizes her and abases her into a state of subordination and often non-existence. Her free-will is a “demon-ish will.” Through the original sin, the woman chose:

(...) silver knot of choice i
have followed you without a doubt you were
work of the devil yet you have brought me
reeling into god the moon and the stars (1016)

In the poem, “Well, so, Patience to our Souls,” the female self is completely identified and inscribed within her bodily essence, particularly in her nudity. However, this physical nudity becomes the site and the inspiration for the creation of a naked *word* — a language stripped of any veil of masculine rhetoric.

Well, so, patience to our souls
the seas run cold, ‘pon our bare necks
shivered. We shall eat out of our bare hand
smiling vainly.

(...). Tentacles of passion run-rose wise
like flaming strands of opaque red lava. Our soul
tears with passion, its chimney. The wind cries oof!
and goes off. We were left alone with our sister
navel. Good, so we’ll learn to
ravish it. Alone. words in their forge. (860)

The neck is bare, the hand is bare — *she lays herself bare* — she produces a naked word, an anti-word. Nudity is an important symbolic concept in feminine writing. For example, Cixous often associates the empowering mother with nudity: “She is: naked ... I mean: nudity [...] [Our] mother, she who breaks every muteness and makes all cries flow [...]. I know her name: nudity of nudity” (*Souffles* 50). According to Cixous, the feminine can only speak in a language stripped of clothing, stripped of veils, a new language. However, there is “no word strong enough to make the impossible nudity burst out, every word adding to it without grace” (*Souffles* 52). Cixous thus makes explicit yet another unresolvable contradiction at the heart of feminine writing: it is an impossibility, but the woman writer must strive for it.

That is precisely what Amelia Rosselli means by “words in their forge.” In a language created by men and constituted for the supremacy of man (Adam being the first depository of the *verbum*), words are necessarily forged and shaped by men for men. Women are eternally excluded by the very mechanisms of language itself. The final possessive adjective “their” is strongly opposed to the initial “our.” Again there are two collective subjects in the poem, one is animated by the most virulent fiery passion (“flaming strands of opaque lava”) completely identified with her naked body-soul and the other is the depository of language. Here the poet has dismantled the traditional binary opposition mind-body. The female voice is left alone with her body — her sister's navel (the navel is traditionally a symbol of immodesty and indecency in western culture, but it also has important relations with the umbilical cord and therefore maternity) and she is fine with it. She will learn how to “ravish it” *herself*. The verb ravish, typically attributed to men, is here powerfully attributed to women. She will not be forced into sexual discourse and she will not be forced to participate in the realm of words. She will learn

how to find pleasure, *jouissance*, herself by herself through the rejection of the realm of words and through the creation of a *new word* that comes from her naked desiring body.

Here is a complete anatomical geography of the body in *Sleep*. The body is omnipresent in the *recueil* as the following list of body parts demonstrate. I have included the soul in the vast territory of Rosselli's body since in Rosselli's world the soul is always connected to the sensory more than the spiritual world. The female subject inscribes herself within her symbolic bodily parts and expresses her voice, her sexuality, her explosive desire through them. Furthermore, the male interlocutor is symbolically evoked through reiterated reference to the body as the fierce adversary in an erotic verbal war where the female subject, both sexually attracted yet repelled by the male, attempts to affirm her voice-body, finally emancipating herself through the creation of a new language.

ANKLE: the naked ankle (*Sleep* 186)

ARMS: Collapse into my brother's arms (100) A weary maiden quivered slight into arms softer than her brother's arms (100), wash arms, legs, then your whole body (139)

BACK: I hear (...) the wind arch its back (38), turned our backs (106), potting cream into our backs (186), we've broken our backs a-flirting (198), broken-backed men (198)

BELLY: a belly jarred to full stop (166) belly-ache (172), softness in your belly which will not come out (178), my belly's harm, this is my belly's harm (186), slander the bellies of weapons (202), a belly too thirsty for languor (204), my round body, its belly-fare (204), the belly-boats (206).

BLOOD: hatchet purpled with blood (8), turmoil in my blood, the blood might run fresh (54), blood turmoiled (102), negro blood (128), am I blood-thirsty for cringing for propriety (162)

BODY: his brown or black body (128), surrounding its body with mist (130), freedom exorbitant of your body (136), your sprig of a body - it withstands all (136) wash arms, legs, then your whole body (139), you would not be a body rocking through life (...) you would be a body, meddling with traps (...) you would be a body tenderly terrifying the mice (200), my round body, its belly-fare (204)

BONES: pressing bones, their bones grew to them huge (74)

BOWELS: he lies within your deepest bowels (176)

BRAIN: rapid brain (85), brain radiant with multitudes (90), actions in my brain, spices too dull for any brain (126)

CHEEKS: come see my poetry demand it sit for a portrait in silence recalling all past experiences with no boredom enslaving its cheeks which wait (144)

EARS: I hear the wind whisper my ears (38), the wind sings purple to my bent ears (58), crashed ears (60), screaming in my ear (168)

EYES: I shut my eyes (26), the seas turn purple to my blind eyes (26), the distraught eye (92), the soft agate eye of the neighbor (94), the hard eyes of the lucky few (98), a monster, hard eyed (98) pause then my heart in search of livery (106), battles roving in our eyes (122), strong eyes (140), your new principles stares you in the eyes (146), fire is the light in my dandy's eye (148), their bended eyes (160), distances from her eyes (166), those terrible scarecrows, they're her eyes (170), our mind's eye (198), surveillance in your eyes (202), onions scratching out the eyes (206)

FACE: God was not in my face (88)

FEET: the winter callum on my feet (106), why stamp your feet, why stamp your feet (156) has it hands and feet? (196), to stamp my feet (202)

FINGERS: his broken fingers icily clasp the silver pumice (18), trembling fingers (80), gallant fingers (84), the meat on your fingers (168)

FIST: marking the time with your fist (182), I cannot place my fist

HANDS: tender heavy fat hands (8), perfect hands (10), our bare hand (12), Otello has taken the wheel in hand (18), perfect hands (66), your tender hands (80), too strange a coincidence your hand on mine (120), tawny hands (130), in the tremulous wave of the hand (136), inflationated hands (152), its unwithheld hand (152), your cold and warm hands (156), you'll never have me out of your hand (160), in your hands really (170), hold fast your hands (178), hold out your hands (180), large fat hands (194) has it hands and feet? (196), careless hands (204)

HEAD: beheaded head (71) she returned head lowered (110), hangs clatter round the head (136)

HEART: my heart is sick sick hoping (18) I do find my heart fundamentally cold (42) hidden heart (50) long before my heart and yours had played out, my heart had given out (62) as our hearts sank (64), cut a slice into the heart of the matter (80), the heart attacks (86), the lights warm in a heart (90) my heart's play (88) the broken boned part of the heart (90), forgetful heart (94), the shoes that stamp on her heart (98), a rough river divided their hearts (98), forever attending the revolution of the heart (102), the straight heart (104), cutting straight into the heart (136), their hearts gave bent to long sighs (140), you self-taught heart (154), if angels stamp their feet on the bottom of your heart (156), marauding in her heart (166), the poor troublesome semi-tired heart of her apparel (166), oh you sweet heart (172), my tuberculous heart (172), nestled heart (172), oh heart of steel (172), you shaped my heart (172), your heart melting again to fight for a good cause (180), ringing or wringing hearts (182), carrying the fire into the heart,

the waste and the corruption (188), my heart is of such soft stuff, I am not my heart's champion (188), your soft heart (200)

HIPS: And bent to ground your hips devout verify there is no lightning (1)

LEGS: wash arms, legs, then your whole body (139), poised ugly legs (180)

LIMBS: a solace to warm limbs (126), limbs too weak to protest (148)

LIPS: The lips of the child (88), the child's lips.

MOUTH: his hoary carven mouth (20) foam at your mouth (106), your mouth twists out of order (118), hangs water in your mouth (136), gunpowdering your mouth (162), larger than your mouth (196).

NAVEL: our sister navel (12)

NECK: our bare-necks (12), this ever-precious stone on your neck (80),

NOSTRILS: crackling in the dust filling your nostrils (180), your gaping nostrils (202)

PALM: your swollen palm (204)

SHOULDERS: the hatchet behind our shoulders (56)

SKIN: onions scratching out the eyes, the places on my skin (206)

SOUL: bodily stripped souls (8), patience to our soul, our soul tears with passion (12), our souls cut by three giant trees (76), the iced river which flows beneath your soul (98), the scarlet letter written to my soul (102), free intermission of the soul (102), with our souls, with our hands, with our shoes (151), oh my hot soul (156), oh why oh why then let my soul (...) have its fling (192), the mortified soul (194)

TONGUE: pardon in the shape of mother with her pale pink lipstick sticks out its tongue at me (160) friends whose double tongue holds fast (178)

In conclusion, the idea of sleep becomes closely connected to an oneiric world in Rosselli's writing, which represents for her an act of liberation, exploration, and discovery of the body, and physical desire and a subsequent expression of all these through language. The female body left its "interminable sick-bed" and, consequently, the sick crazy woman who has been put to sleep is resurrected through the power of her female voice: "And then she left the convent (the interminable sick-bed). Then she left charity! Then she found hope. Then she left." (62). The Sleeping Beauty left ("Se tu apri una porta che socchiude un istante e non trovi la bella addormentata" (*Variazioni Belliche* 264)) and chooses to reconnect with the natural element of the earth, the wild territory of the nature-body where the voice can sing her wild song. It is an earthly, body-centered almost pan-like spirituality. In the poem "Sleep," the female lyrical subject clarifies that her sleep is not the one of the virgins on the top of the mountain, "her bed is radiant," completely immersed in the earth like moss. There is a metamorphosis of the body that partakes in a panic union with nature: "I fell into bemused sleep, oh the tender dangerous virgins on the mountain top watch a sleep which is not mine since the radiant bed of earth covered me moss like" (*Sleep* 96). "Sleep fell on, the reason went" (96). As a symbol of an oniric realm, Sleep is thus transformed into a site where wild desires, passions, voices, bodily pulsions, and creative forces of the unconscious can be freely expressed.

Chapter Six

La Musiques des Lettres in Amelia Rosselli's *Variazioni Belliche*:

Écriture féminine and Music

What remains of music in writing, and which exists also in music properly speaking, is indeed that scansion which also does its work on the body of the reader. The texts that touch me most strongly, to the point of making me shiver or laugh, are those that have not repressed their musical structure.

—Cixous, *Rootprints*

Psychoanalysis since Freud has traced a *fil rouge* linking music, the unconscious and the feminine. This is because “pure” instrumental music (as opposed to opera or song) consists in the “play of tonal moving forms” (Robinson 13) that have no immediate reference to the extra-musical word-dominated world. Because of instrumental music’s lack of linguistic meaning, music has also been theorized as a “metaphorically feminine object, in a negative or surplus relation to language. In other words, music has continually been regarded in the negative sense, as other, desired yet feared” (Andrews 2). Carol Flinn further emphasizes the revolutionary force of music because “in its so-called failure to produce concrete meaning, in its inability to conduct the listener to fixed references, its irrationality and emotionalism, its very invisibility, music challenges some of dominant representation's most cherished axioms” (61). French feminist theorists Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva celebrate the relationship among music, the feminine, and the unconscious and see music and musicality in language as a disruptive force, an endless source of creative inspiration, as well as an ideal to strive for in the *semiotic* revolution of patriarchal language.

According to Kristeva, poetic language is constructed on the basis of two opposing modalities: the symbolic and the semiotic. The semiotic precedes and goes beyond signification and any social logical formation whereas the symbolic is pre and extra-linguistic, associated with musicality, intonation, sonority, and rhythm with the body and its drives. On the other hand, the symbolic “is the language of transparency, power and conformity, and, as such, is aligned with patriarchal functions in culture – le non/nom du père – which signals the father’s name and the father’s prohibitions in social and psychic formations” (Robbins 128). In the *Revolution of Poetic Language* Kristeva claims that music and poetic language are heterogeneous to signification and that are connected with the pre-oedipal phase of the child’s development. The two remain disconnected even though not completely separated from the symbolic order. Indeed, even though both poetic language and music recur in both modalities – the semiotic and the symbolic – given that the listener has both semiotic and symbolic structures of perception and “no signifying system [...] can be either ‘exclusively’ semiotic or ‘exclusively’ symbolic” (Kristeva 92), the semiotic is definitely predominant.

When asked about her conception of music and poetry, Kristeva again emphasizes the similarities between poetic language and music, claiming that in poetic language music is often more important than the meaning of the poem:

En m’intéressant au langage poétique j’ai eu le sentiment qu’il était dominé par des particularités qu’on rencontre dans les écholalies des enfants c’est à dire le rythme, les allitérations (...) il y a souvent une dominance de la musique sur le sens (...). La dominance du musical m’a fait penser à une résurgence du pré-langage, de la musicalité des écholalies enfantines.

(Kristeva on ‘Pre-Oedipal’ Language 0:07-0:29)

In summary, the revolution of patriarchal language is seen by Kristeva as a semiotic linguistic liberation from the realm of the symbolic and the establishment of a pre-referential, rhythmic and corporeal new language that exploits the *jouissance* of bodily drives that survive cultural repression and sublimate them in poetry. Music is central in the elaboration of this semiotic-centered liberated writing.

Musicality of *la parole femme* is not only a way of entering the realm of non-meaning, emotionality, and irrationality in order to challenge the patriarchal axioms of logic and grammar and gain access to the female multifaceted realm of the unconscious. Musicality is also a way of touching, speaking, and reaching the body. Kristeva claims that musicality is the physical embodiment of the word: “c’est dans le langage que je me surprends d’entendre des fréquences et des intensités des rythmes et des mélodies qui habitent les mots sous-jacent à leur signification et qui leur confère cette intensité, cette incarnation, dans lesquels s’accomplit la poésie” (Définition du Mot Musique 1:39-2:00). Through musicality, the word acquires *body*, as well as intensity, and thereby meaning is reinforced. Through the aural, palpable, physical quality of language, and through the contraction and relaxation of the breath, the writer is able to *speak her body* and reach the reader’s body, letting the reader feel and touch “the body of the instant with the tips of words” (Cixous *Stigmata* 146). This is why Cixous claims that “what remains of music in writing, and which exists also in music properly speaking, is indeed that scansion which also does its work on the body of the reader. The texts that touch me most strongly, to the point of making me shiver or laugh, are those that have not repressed their musical structure” (Rosselli and Calle-Gruber 64).

Rosselli’s poetic world is deeply rooted and inspired by musical structures. Indeed, one cannot conceive of Amelia Rosselli’s poetic language without taking into account the fusion

between music and poetry brilliantly enacted in her entire *corpus*. We should remember as stated above that Amelia Rosselli habitually moved back and forth between the keyboard and the typewriter while composing her poems: “It was enough for me to play a prelude of Bach or Chopin to reinterpret it, almost afterward, in poetic form” (*Locomotrix* 260). Often a purely musical intuition was at the very origin of a poem: “Ci fu questa strana coincidenza che mi portava a tentare di tradurre una intuizione musicale in parole” (Rosselli et al. 49).

The musicality of Rosselli’s poems has been routinely mentioned and appreciated by critics. Among the most significant contributions, the research of Valentina Peleggi, Chiara Carpita and Laura Barile on the interdisciplinary nature of Amelia Rosselli’s poetic world merits special mention. In addition, I claim that poetic musicality, particularly enacted through the amplification of the signifier over the signified through various poetic compositional techniques like the use of theme and variation, together with the importance of the voice and the body, which I have analysed in the previous chapters, makes Amelia Rosselli’s writing an incredibly successful exemplification of a purely feminine revolutionary form of writing, one that challenges the axioms of phallographic language through the absolute predominance of the semiotic over the symbolic.

Rosselli’s musical sensitivity intimately influences her creative writing process and makes it very similar to various compositional practices. Above all, the musical compositional technique of theme and variation is experimentally translated into her poetic language. In the notes to the short poem *la Libellula* she mentions how natural the use of the theme and variation compositional technique was for her: “il procedimento di sviluppo e variazione su un tema o su temi, era in realtà del tutto spontaneo nel mio scrivere” (29). The collection of poems *Variazioni*

Belliche (1964) offers the best examples of her mastery of this technique, but examples can be found throughout her entire *corpus*.

Musical variation is the formal technique in which a melodic, harmonic or rhythmic motif is susceptible to subtle permutations once repeated throughout the musical composition. By varying the structural material and actualizing it at each repetition, the composer is able to continuously renovate the material, thereby creating dynamism in the composition. The technique has been employed and developed from Renaissance music to serialism. Serialism is another musical compositional technique that presupposes the use of a serial pattern in music repeated over and over for a significant stretch of a composition. Even though serial music was a movement that originated from dodecaphonic music at the beginning of the 20th century, musical repetition has been an extremely common compositional technique since the Middle Ages. Indeed medieval composers wrote a sort of serial music, because they made use of isorhythm, which is a distinct rhythmic pattern that repeats many times regardless of what melodies it belongs to. Another pre-20th-century example of serialism is the ground bass, a pattern of harmonies or of a melody that repeats, most often in the lower vocal or instrumental parts of a composition. Countless composers have written music with a ground bass.

Rosselli's use of the poetic and musical technique of variation was deeply influenced by serial music. She acknowledges this in *Spazi Metrici* where she describes her poetic rhythm connecting it with the experimentations of post-Webern serialism: "la mia ritmica era musicale sino agli ultimi esperimenti del post-webernismo" (*L'Opera* 187). In the same way as serial music is structured on a series of repeated patterns, Rosselli's poems are built upon phonic groups that are recursively and almost imperceptibly modified throughout the poem, each of

them modulating from the previous one. In this way, the amplification of the sonorous signifier through patterns of repetition and variation, becomes the absolute axis of the poem.

Another important influence in Rosselli's musical writing is certainly the metrical form of the sonnet. In particular, she is inspired by Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and the Elizabethan sonnets. In *Spazi Metrici* she clarifies her poetic agenda: "Ma ritentare l'equilibrio del sonetto trecentesco è anch'esso un ideale reale. La realtà è così pesante che la mano si stanca, e nessuna forma la può contenere. La memoria corre allora alle più fantastiche imprese (spazi versi rime)" (189). She wants to recreate the equilibrium of the sonnet. One aspect of the Elizabethan era is certainly that music and poetry were an indistinguishable whole: the sonnets used to be accompanied by the sound of the lute, and poets would always compose keeping in mind the successive musical performance of their work to the point that the sonnet was often considered a musical genre. There were numerous structural parallels between music and poetry and poets used musical and poetic compositional technique based on variation and repetition (through rhymes, internal rhymes, assonances, alliterations, and other figures of speech based on repetition). All these techniques were able to create, maintain, and reinforce the sonorous internal balance and cohesion in the condensed, fixed structure of the sonnet. Rosselli was certainly familiar with these techniques and I would argue that in her elaboration of the variation, she has the musicality of the sonnet in mind.

Of course, musical variation has many more possibilities than poetic variation because it can involve melody, rhythm, harmony, counterpoint, timbre, orchestration or any combination of these. However, Amelia Rosselli masters the technique of variation in her poetry by playing with the reiteration of images, rhythmical particles, prosodic and lexical motives, but also by using micro sonorities (even a letter or a syllable) that become the unifying elements of the poem. The reiterated variations of a basic auditory pattern within the enclosed structure of a single poem (also observable in the entire collection of poems) enriches their homophonic structure. These

auditory variations multiply the echo effects, which are also capable of creating internal semantic correspondences between different poems within the collection. In other words, the various poems that I will analyze from the Italian collection of poems, *Variazioni Belliche*, are built upon the repetition of sounds, but these sounds are always slightly modified through germinating variants and re-iterated in succeeding poems. In this way, variants of the same basic sonorous cell resonate with each other and the poet is able to maintain internal balance. At the same time, by adding a few subtle modifications for each repetition, she is able to create dynamism in a tight and condensed metrical space.

Indeed, Rosselli's "magmatica" and "sismica" (Giudici IX) corporeal word inhabits a very condensed space: a metrical space fixed by the first *rigo musicale* (musical staff) that will establish the length of all the subsequent musical poetic and musical "phrases." In *Spazi Metrici*, Rosselli explains the creation of a self-contained metrical space: "Line lengths were thus approximately equal, and their reading times along with them; they had the word and orthographic nexus as metrical and spatial unity, and graphic space or time as a containing form, with the latter laid out not in a mechanical or entirely visual manner, but as a presupposition in scanning, and as an agent in writing and thinking" (Rosselli and Scappettone 41). In this way, her poetic verse is self-contained within the self-imposed graphic and auditory space, but at the same time it is torn between two forces: a centrifugal tension of the word that wants to explode, go beyond the limits of the verse, and at the same time a centripetal force that is able to contain, restrain, and condense the erupting verbal flow in the tight schema of her metrical form.

Repetition and variation are the main poetic and musical compositional techniques of *Variazioni Belliche*. Rosselli reiterates phonetic-semantic units like letters, syllables, words, syntagms and sometimes entire sentences that act like musical motifs:

Per trovare queste cercai da prima il mio (occidentale e razionale) elemento organizzativo minimo dello scrivere. E questo risultava chiaramente essere la “lettera,” sonora o no, timbrica o no, grafica o formale, simbolica e funzionale insieme. Questa lettera, sonora ma egualmente “rumore,” creava nodi fonetici (chl, str; sta, biv) non necessariamente sillabici, ed erano infatti soltanto forme funzionali o grafiche, e rumore. Per una classificazione non grafica o formale era necessario, nel cercare i fondi della forma poetica, parlare invece della sillaba, intesa non troppo scolasticamente, ma piuttosto come particella ritmica. (338)

Therefore, after a careful ‘listening’ to the poem, a few motifs (fundamental themes made of “nodi fonetici,” [phonetic knots], “fonosillabe,” [phonetic syllables], but also “parole-idee” [“words-ideas”] or even entire sentences) are first presented and then reappear throughout the work in surprising and refreshing permutations.

Rosselli uses various typologies of variation and repetition in *Variazioni Belliche* (1960-1961) like variation and repetition of *micro-sounds* (consonant phonetic groups, “nodi fonetici,” and modulating “fonosillabe”) through assonances, consonances, alliterations and internal rhymes. Rosselli also uses variation and repetition of sonorous words-themes (“parole-idee”) through the massive use of figures of speech based on the repetition such as anadiplosis, epanalepsis, chiasmus, correctia, pure repetition, epistrophe, polyptoton, anaphora, epiphora, epanalepsis, tautology, pleonasm, paronomasia etc. All these patterns of repetition and variation allow Amelia Rosselli to create a deeply musical poetic language that challenges the semantically pre-established limits of words, always privileging and stressing the sonorous signifier over the signified. Through the use of various musical repetition techniques, I argue that Rosselli is able to create a revolutionary musical-poetic language, one that is capable of

challenging the logical structures of thought that – through musicality – resists any symbolic systematization as theorized by Kristeva and Cixous.

The first poem of *Variazioni Belliche*, “Se nella Notte Sorgeva un Dubbio su dell’Essenza del Mio,” offers multiple examples of musical *repetitio* and *variatio* through an obsessive use of poetic-musical devices like syntactic anaphora, pure *repetitio*, alliteration and anadiplosis:

Se nella notte sorgeva un dubbio su dell’essenza del mio
cristianesimo, esso svaniva con la lacrima della canzonetta
del bar vicino. Se dalla notte sorgeva il dubbio dello
etnisfero cangiante e sproporzionato, allora richiedevo
aiuto. Se nell’inferno delle ore notturne richiamo a me
gli angioi e le protettrici che salpavano per sponde
molto più dirette delle mie,
se dalle lacrime che sgorgavano
diramavo missili e pedate inconscie agli amici che mal
tenevano le loro parti di soldati amorosi, se dalle finezze
del mio spirito nascevano battaglie e contraddizioni, –
allora moriva in me la noia, scombinava l’allegria il mio
malanno insoddisfatto; continuava l’aria fine e le canzoni
attorno attorno svolgevano attività febbrili, cantonate
disperse, ultime lacrime di cristo che non si muoveva per
sì picciol cosa, piccola parte della notte nella mia prigionia. (41)

Starting from the very first line, the fundamental unvoiced sibilant sound-note [s] modulates through alliteration and different combinations with all the Italian vowels thereby creating a

subtle almost imperceptible variation of *fonosillabe*. The fundamental sound [s] is first introduced and successively gradually modified through a gradual germination of the phonetic material. Let us have a closer look at the phonetic syllabic sequence: [se]-[so]-[su]-[es]-[sɛ]-[stja]-[zi]-[es] [so]-[zva]. In two verses Rosselli is able to exploit all the potential of the sonorous unit, [s] (micro-sounds), combining it with different sonorous contamination through vocalic association and phonetic proximity (voiced sibilant [s] modulating to its counterpart, the unvoiced sibilant [z]) and mixing it with different consonant groups (“nodi consonantici”). In this way Rosselli amplifies the sonorous substratum of the words: “Se nella notte sorgeva un dubbio su dell’essenza del mio cristianesimo, esso svaniva.” This is an example of how Rosselli is capable of making the signifier resonating, acquiring substance, “incarnation.”

The anaphoric syntactic repetition (se + preposition + “notte” + “sorgeva”+ article + “dubbio”) structures the whole poem, creating metrical and rhythmic regularity. The initial syntactic structure (se + preposition + “notte” + “sorgeva”+ article + “dubbio”), motif A, is at the beginning only slightly modified by the use of the definite article “il” instead of the initial indefinite article “un” and the change of preposition preceding the word “notte.” Syntactically and tonally the first two syntagmas are therefore almost unvaried: “se nella notte sorgeva un dubbio su dell”(A), “se dalla notte sorgeva il dubbio dello.” (A1). In the third hypothetical syntagma, the variation is more pronounced “Se nell’inferno delle ore notturne,” (A2) but yet the anaphora of “se nell” and the use of the adjective “notturno,” adjectival variation of the noun “notte,” create a tight connection with the previous phonic and semantic material. A slightly different variation of the same motive will be then introduced “se + dalle + noun,” “se dalle lacrime,” (A3) “se dalle finezze” (A4). Rosselli plays like a composer with the same sonorous material, rearranging it in different combinations, variants of the basic thematic units, but always

ensuring a phonic continuity through repetition. On the other hand, the perfect anaphora of “se” creates metrical and rhythmic regularity, and internal sonorous coherence. The recurrence of the *fonosillaba* produces what Lucia Re refers to as “carpet of sound,” that in this case acts like a sort of disillusioned sigh that accompanies each and every sentence to express her anguished nocturnal soliloquy.

Other examples of repetition are the word “attorno attorno,” in the last verse and the figura etymologica “picciol cosa, piccola parte.” Moreover, Rosselli creates internal semantic and auditory unity through the repetition of certain *parole-idee* that connect the first lines of the poems with the last ones:

- 1) “lacrime” (line 14) that echo “lacrima” (line 2),
- 2) “cristo”(line 14) echoing “cristianesimo” (line 2)
- 3) “canzoni” (line 12) etymological variation of the initial “canzonetta” (line 2)
- 4) “notte” (repeated three times in the poem and varied in “notturmo” in the 5th line)

These repetitions-with-variations create important auditory and semantic links between the beginning and the end of the poem. Therefore, if the syntactic repetition structures and provides internal balance and metrical regularity in the first half of the poem, the recurrence of words-themes (“notte,” “cristianesimo,” “canzone,” “lacrima”) ensures semantic and sonorous coherence between different sections of the poem. In particular, the reference to “notte” at the end of the poem circularly closes the poem through a rotary movement, a proceeding often used by Amelia. For example, that is how Rosselli conceived the short poem “La Libellula,” where “fine e principio dovrebbero infatti ricongiungersi.” Like in a musical composition where the composer begins and usually returns to the same tonality at the end of a composition after multiple modulations in different tonalities, Rosselli comes back again to the night. However, if

usually the return to the main key offers a sense of relief, the final return to night is nothing, but an inescapable prison (“prigionia”) for Rosselli. Indeed, all the struggles of the psyche (“battaglie,” “dubbi” and “contraddizioni”) torment the lyrical self, and neither the songs (“canzoni”) nor the tears of Christ (“lacrime di Cristo”) can save her. The night becomes Rosselli’s personal “inferno.”

The second poem of *Variazioni Belliche*, “Per le Cantate che si Svolgevano nell’Aria Io Rimavo,” creates a new orchestration and echo to the first poem. Indeed, the word-theme “canzone” keeps resonating like in a Theme and Variation musical composition. This demonstrates how the poems are intimately interrelated and the whole collection, not just the individual poem, is based on the compositional technique of musical variation. The analysis of the intrinsic melody of the poem allows us to examine the incredibly rich system of phonetic stylistic devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and anadiplosis that produce a real *partition musicale-verbale*:

Per le cantate che si svolgevano nell’aria io rimavo
ancora pienamente. Per l’avvoltoio che era la tua sinistra
figura io ero decisa a combattere. Per i poveri ed i malati
di mente che avvolgevano le loro sinistre figure di tra
le strade malate io cantavo ancora tarantella la tua camicia
è la più bella canzone della strada. Per le strade odoranti
di benzina cercavamo nell’occhio del vicino la canzone
preferita. Per quel tuo cuore che io largamente preferisco
ad ogni altra burrasca io vado cantando amenamente delle
canzoni che non sono per il tuo orecchio casto da cantante

a divieto. Per il divieto che ci impedisce di continuare
forse io perderò te ancora ed ancora – sinché le maree
del bene e del male e di tutte le fandonie di cui è ricoperto
questo vasto mondo avranno terminato il loro fischiare. (42)

Here the “canzone-canzonetta,” word-theme that has been briefly anticipated in the first poem of the collection that I just analysed, now becomes the phonetic and thematic center of the second poem. The musical motif undergoes a plethora of subtle modifications, derivations of the same etymological root (*figura etymologica*). Here are all the variants originating from the leitmotif “canzone-canzonetta” exposed in the previous poem:

“cantate”-“cantavo”-“canzone” (repeated twice) -“cantando”- “canzoni”- “cantante.”

The variants of the word act like variations of musical motifs, small pieces of melody that will appear again and again in musical composition, sometimes exactly the same and sometimes changed. This reflects Rosselli’s typical use of a distinct musical-poetic figure that is subsequently altered, repeated, or sequenced throughout a poem or poems.

However, if the word-theme guarantees unity between different poems, it is again syntactic anaphora that provides internal structure and metrical regularity. The anaphora “per + definite article + noun + relative syntagma + io + verb imperfect form” is the fundamental theme of the poem: the main melody subject to a plethora of variations. The theme structures the poem by creating internal cohesion and rhythmic regularity where the meaning of the poem is sometimes anti-logical and obscure. The structure created by the repetition of the theme provides clarity and regularity in the poem whereas the variation of this same structure creates dynamism and actualization of the sonorous material in the same way as a composer varies the sonorous ideas each time he or she presents them. Structural and rhythmic regularity are provided by the

obsessive perfect anaphora of “per,” consistent throughout the entire poem, with small variations of the definite article that acts like a *fonosillaba* varying at each repetition: “Per le”-”per l”-”per i”- “per le”-“per quel” etc.

Similarly to the previous poem, the composer-Rosselli creates internal cohesion by the repetition of several words that act as melodic ideas-motifs. For example, there is a sonorous link between the first three sentences through the sonorous proximity between the words “svolgevano,””avvoltoio” and ”avvolgevano.” In particular, the choice of the verb “avvolgevano” in the fourth line is particularly interesting because it combines the sonorous material anticipated previously by “svolgevano” and “avvoltoio” of the previous two words. Also, the figure of speech based on repetition, epanalepsis and anadiplosis, ensures internal sonorous unity:

- 1) Epanalepsis: “la tua sinistra/ figura [...]. [...] loro sinistre figure/.”
- 2) Anadiplosis: “per il tuo orecchio casto da cantante/ a divieto. Per il divieto.”
- 3) Poliptoton: “la canzone preferita/ Per quel tuo cuore che io largamente preferisco.”
- 4) Continued anadiplosis: “di tra/ le strade malate io cantavo [...]/ è la più bella canzone della strada. Per le strade odoranti.”
- 5) Repetition: “ancora ed ancora.”

Rosselli is able to create a sonorous link between sentences: a sort of concatenation through anaphora and anadiplosis etc. In this way, every element is perfectly integrated in the sonorous carpet and perfectly orchestrated with one another.

In the next poem, “Se non è Noia è Amore” the anaphora of the two fundamental motives “se non è” (A) and “se per + definite article” (B) phonetically unified by the presence of “se” undergoes a series of permutations:

Se non è noia è amore. L'intero mondo carpiva da me i suoi
 sensi cari. Se per la notte che mi porta il tuo oblio
 io dimentico di frenarmi, se per le tue evanescenti braccia
 io cerco un'altra foresta, un parco, o una avventura: –
se per le strade che conducono al paradiso io perdo la
 tua bellezza: se per i canili ed i vescovadi del prato
della grande città io cerco la tua ombra: – se per tutto
 questo io cerco ancora e ancora: – non è per la tua fierezza,
non è per la mia povertà: – è per il tuo sorriso obliquo
è per la tua maniera di amare. Entro della grande città
 cadevano oblique ancora e ancora le maniere di amare
le delusioni amare. (136)

First of all, the syllable “se” is sonorously emphasized through alliteration of the unvoiced sibilant sound-note [s] in “i suoi sensi.” The two motives “se non è” (A) and “se per la” (B) are then first introduced in the first two verses then combined together in “non è per” (AB) reiterated twice in the eighth and ninth verses and then varied again in “è per,” where the sonorous unit undergoes a sonorous impoverishment through the loss of “se.” The two motives are almost never repeated in the same exact way:

- 1) Motive A: “se non è”
- 2) Motive B and variation: “se per la”- “se per le-” “se per i”- “se per tutto”
- 3) Motive AB: “non è per” (repeated twice)
- 4) Variations of motive AB: “è per il tuo” - “è per la tua.”

At the end of the poem, Amelia plays with the double meaning of the word “amare” (the verb to love and the adjective bitter) creating other variations of the formula: “Maniera di amare”- “Maniere di amare”-”Delusioni amare.”

First, Rosselli introduces the motive “maniera di amare” (A) in line 10. Then, she repeats it at the end of the following verse varying the number “maniere di amare” (A1) and at the end of the poem she paranomastically repeats the same exact auditory material “amare” in “delusioni amare” (A2) where this time is the adjective “bitter” through which the word acquires a totally different semantic connotation. Indeed, in *Variazioni Belliche*, love is always connected with bitter disillusionment. In this way, the last lines, where the structural and sonorous unifying element of “se per” varied in “non e’ per” disappears, the auditory link between the different sections of the poems is provided by the word-theme “amare” reiterated three times.

In the poem, “Contiamo Infiniti Cadaveri. Siamo L’ultima Specie Umana,” Amelia Rosselli again uses a plethora of words-themes that act as thematic units of significance every time semantically enriched and re-actualized through their repetition in different places:

Contiamo infiniti cadaveri. Siamo l’ultima specie umana.

Siamo il cadavere che flotta putrefatto su della sua passione!

La calma non mi nutriva il solleone era il mio desiderio.

Il mio pio desiderio era di vincere la battaglia, il male,

la tristezza, le fandonie, l’incoscienza, la pluralità

dei mali le fandonie le incoscienze le somministrazioni

d’ogni male, d’ogni bene, d’ogni battaglia, d’ogni dovere

d’ogni fandonia: la crudeltà a parte il gioco riposto attraverso

il filtro dell’incoscienza. Amore amore che cadi e giaci

supino la tua stella è la mia dimora.

Caduta sulla linea di battaglia. La bontà era un ritornello
che non mi fregava ma ero fregata da essa! La linea della
demarcazione tra poveri e ricchi. (45)

The poem is built through the obstinate accumulation of words — *parole-idee* — reiterated in different positions and oftentimes with minuscule variations that create a concatenation of words-sound that are emphatically repeated via anadiplosis, chiasmus, repetitio, epanalepsis, paronomasia in different syntactic locations. In *Spazi Metrici*, Rosselli explains that “L’unità base del verso non era né la lettera, disgregatrice e insignificante, né la sillaba, ritmica e mordace ma pur sempre senza idealità, ma piuttosto la parola intera, di qualsiasi genere indifferentemente, le parole essendo considerate tutte di egual valore e peso, e tutte da manipolare come idee concrete ed astratte” (187). If the words are all equally important (she “considered even “il,” “la,” and “come” to be “ideas,”), their resonance in the mind through obstinate repetition is the way in which the word acquires semantic value.

Every word-theme (such as “cadaveri,” “desiderio,” “battaglia,” “fandonie,” “inconscienza, amore”) is exposed first and then semantically re-actualized after each repetition, thus acquiring a new nuance of meaning. The process of signification is enriched through repetition and the signifier is amplified through the repetition of the same sonorous units that resonate powerfully in the mind of the reader. For instance, the “cadaveri” (repeated two times) that the collective lyrical subject counts in the first verse of the poem becomes the subject itself in the next verse: the lyrical singular subject is equated to the corpse consumed by passion. In the “democratization of words” (Lucia Re) enacted by Rosselli, the repetition of words ensures the

mise en relief of certain semantic areas. “Battaglia” is repeated three times together with “fandonie” and “incoscienza.” The lyrical subject points out the uselessness of the fight.

As I showed in the previous poems, the different lines are sonorously and intimately connected through different poetic strategies in order to create internal cohesion and balance:

- 1) Internal rhymes like “contiamo-siamo,” (line 1) or “passione-solleone,” (1-2) where the sonorous link is also amplified by the alliteration of the sibilant s.
- 2) Alliteration: “su della sua passione” (2)
- 3) The perfect anaphoras: “siamo-siamo” (1-2) and “d’ogni” (7-8)
- 4) Repetition: “Amore Amore” (9)
- 5) Anadiplosis with small *variatio*: “era il mio desiderio. Il mio pio desiderio.” (3-4)
- 6) Polyptoton: “Cadi”- “caduta” and “fregava” “fregata”(12)
- 7) Paronomasia: “flotta”- “putrefatto”(2)

In the following poems, “Per la Tua Pelle Olivastra per la Tua Mascella Cadente,” *per la tua-le tue-il tuo* is the main theme of the poem, the main structural element that gives unity and cohesion to the poem:

Per la tua pelle olivastra per la tua mascella cadente
per le tue virginee denta per il tuo pelo bruno per il
tuo amore impossibile per il tuo sangue olivastro e la
mascella inferiore cadente per l’amministrazione dei beni
che non consiglia altre armonie, per l’amore e per il mistero
per la tua voracità e per la mia per il tuo sondare impossibile
abissi - per la mia mania di grandezza per il tuo irrobustire
per la mia debolezza per il tuo cadere e risolleverti

sempre si chiamerà chimera il breve viaggio fatto alle
Stelle. (79)

This poem again offers structural parallels between music and poetry: an obsessive repetition of the same motif acts like a *basso ostinato* (ground bass) which in music is a short, recurring melodic pattern in the bass part of the composition that serves as the principal structural element. In the poem, the peremptory repetition of the motif acts like a musical bass line from which everything else originates: the different parts of the body are the elements, musical ideas that Rosselli, poet and musician, improvises with. In other words, from the ground bass the other words seem to arise and resonate with each other like improvised chords over the same bass root. Interestingly, the body elements are also musically connected to the main structural motive “per la tua” through a complex system of repetitions, assonances, alliterations, internal rhymes and paronomasia:

1) Alliteration of the liquid [l] in the sonorous subtle modulation of *fonosillabe*:

[la]-[elle]-[li]-[la]-[ella] in the first line, “Per la tua pelle olivastra. Per la tua mascella cadente.” (1) that continues also in the second line “Per il tuo pelo bruno per il tuo amore impossibile/per il tuo sangue olivastro e la mascella” (2)

2) Phonetic association, almost internal rhyme: “Cadente”(1) - “denta” (2)

3) Repetition with gender variation of “olivastro-olivastra”(1-3)

4) Repetition of “mascella,” “amore” and “cadente” (each repeated twice) (1-4)

5) Consonance [s] and assonance [i]: “Sondare impossibili abissi” (6-7)

6) Paronomasia: “Chiamerà” and “Chimera” (9)

7) Internal rhyme and consonance [m]: “Mia mania” (7)

Moreover, similar to the first poem that I analyzed, at the end of the poem Rosselli goes back to the first dominant liquid sonority [l] (tonality of the poem) and creates a powerful sonorous link (through internal rhyme) between the beginning and the end of the poem. “Per la tua pelle” resonates clearly with “alle stelle” again through a circular movement that is typical in Rosselli’s poetic world.

The poem “Tutto il Mondo è Vedovo se è Vero che Tu Cammini Ancora” represents for Rosselli the ultimate attempt to create a perfect rhythmical regularity. In *Spazi Metrici* Rosselli recounts the process that led her to the composition of this last poem: “a volte il ritmo fisso predominava ed ossessionava, ed in fine volli ritrovare anche la perfetta regolarità ritmica di questo sentimento, e non potendo, chiusi il libro al suo unico tentativo di astratto ordinamento, cioè l’ultima poesia” (188):

Tutto il mondo è vedovo se è vero che tu cammini ancora
tutto il mondo è vedovo se è vero! Tutto il mondo
è vero se è vero che tu cammini ancora, tutto il
mondo è vedovo se tu non muori! Tutto il mondo
è mio se è vero che tu non sei vivo ma solo
una lanterna per i miei occhi obliqui. Cieca rimasi
dalla tua nascita e l’importanza del nuovo giorno
non è che notte per la tua distanza. Cieca sono
ché tu cammini ancora! cieca sono che tu cammini
e il mondo è vedovo e il mondo è cieco se tu cammini
ancora aggrappato ai miei occhi celestiali. (179)

The poem is structured around the repetitions-with-variations of a series of motifs:

- 1) Tutto il mondo è vedovo (A)
- 2) Tutto il mondo è mio (A1)
- 3) Tutto il mondo è vero (A2)

Literally translating from the text, the poet's world is a widow, the world belongs to her, the world is true only if the beloved interlocutor of the poem is walking or if he is not dead (motif B):

- 1) che tu cammini (B)
- 2) se tu non muori (B1)
- 3) che tu non sei vivo (B2)

The same concept is again obsessively reiterated through different formulations of the same concept (tautology) and of the same sonorous material. The lyrical subject expresses the paradox of a widowhood that is related to the life of the beloved.

In the sixth verse, she introduces another semantic area, the theme of blindness connected semantically with the "lanterna" and the "occhi obliqui" that varies into "occhi celestiali" at the end of the poem. Again, paradoxically, the lyrical subject is blind if the beloved *tu* is alive and walks. The second half of the poem is therefore structured around the third motive:

- 1) "Cieca rimasi" (C)
- 2) "Cieca sono" (C1) (anaphora of "cieca sono.")

The poem is structured around tautological repetition: the same concept is re-explained oftentimes anti-logically through repetition of almost identical sentences. The main concept is that paradoxically the whole world is a widow and the lyrical subject is blind if the beloved walks or if he is not dead. In other words, the lyrical *io* and the interlocutor *tu* cannot coexist in the world. One of them has to necessarily perish in order for the other one to survive. This

obsessive repetition creates a phonic redundancy, where the words resound in the mind of the reader-listener hypnotically like a hysterical lullaby.

In conclusion, the poems of *Variazioni Belliche* that I just analyzed offer multiple examples of extreme musicality of poetic language. Rosselli is able to produce a textual body that is “musique avant toute chose” just as Verlaine suggested in “Art Poétique.” This is possible through the paroxysmal repetition and variation of word-themes and the alliterative recurrence of micro-sounds, and *fonosillabe*. In other words, through the absolute amplification of the signifier over the signified, Rosselli’s poetic language resonates just as Cixous and Kristeva suggested. Indeed, feminine writing is not “muette, elle n’est pas aphone, elle est quelque chose qui doit retenir, qui doit faire résonner, c’est une histoire d’écoute. Si bien que tout ce que j’écris est pris dans des scansion, dans des rythmes, dans une certaine musique” (Van Rossum-Guyon 209). Through the analysed patterns of repetition and variation and the amplification of the sonorous signifier, Rosselli’s poetic language is able to open the gates to a new revolutionary poetic language that is predominantly semiotic, i.e, that puts focus upon sound and rhythm that exist prior to language and that therefore strips language of its symbolic significance that manufactures ideologies and identity as theorized by Kristeva.

Chapter Seven

A Universal Poetic Language:

the Dream of *Pannmusic*, the Dream of *Panlanguage*

To write is to note down the music of the world, the music of the body, the music of time.
–Hélène Cixous, *Rootprints*

What does music represent in the world of a poet? Why would the artist aspire towards a state of music when writing poetry? Amelia Rosselli's lifelong experimentation with language, metrical forms and musical structures does not only originate from a purely stylistic avant-gardist need for linguistic innovation. On the contrary, her urge to find a new metrical space and the desire to translate music in and through language comes from a very personal philosophical quest. Striving towards a state of music in Rosselli's world means first of all overcoming the subjective constraints of language and reaching for universality of expression. Similarly, for prose theorists Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, music represents a metaphorical and philosophical ideal to strive for and the musical world provides the writer with an endless reservoir of inspiration to perform a semiotic liberation from the phallogocentric prison of language. Music and its formal transposition into poetry is the privileged gate to the universal. But what is the universal meaning of music and how can it be applied to poetry? What is the correlation between form and content? And also, what are the ontological implications of poetic musicality?

Adorno says that the difference between music and language is that we cannot assign lexical meaning to sounds. However, even though listeners cannot ascribe a specific linguistic referential meaning to music, both listeners and readers are nonetheless deeply affected and

almost always try to produce meaning out of their interaction with sonorous entities – words and notes. This is because music is able to convey meaning through its form, through its very structure. It does not signify something other than itself; and although it conveys feelings, it does not do so through metaphor, but through its very structural essence. This is why one can directly experience emotions carried by music. No metaphorical filter is necessary to engage the mind and therefore we escape logical traps. The body feels the music through its receptor channels and that produces an emotional reaction that cannot be captured by words or at least only vaguely and imprecisely if we try. This is because “the qualities expressed or exemplified by music are *in* the music itself” (Robinson 5). Treitler argues that “the sign is not absorbed by the signifying process” and if one experiences mournfulness, the experience is not mediated by thoughts of “some other objects out in the world that are mournful” (qdt. In Robison 5). In its absence of extra-referential meaning, music is universal.

Philosophers, poets, and musicians have praised its qualities for centuries. For example, Schopenhauer considered absolute music as the expression of the Will itself. In the *World as Will and Representation* (1819) and *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851), Schopenhauer dedicates a few pages to the sublime art of music: “the metaphorless language of the heart” (*Parerga and Paralipomena* 224). He defines music as the non-mediated expression of the Will, the transcendental essence of the universe. He also connects music with his philosophy of language by affirming that musical experience is unutterable just as the Will itself cannot be expressed through the limited medium of ordinary human language. As such, musical experience seems completely non-communicable and each attempt to connect music with words like opera and programmatic music is purely superfluous since the universal language of music is

“self-sufficient” and untranslatable. The language of music is an “unmediated objectification or copy of the entire Will, just as the world itself is” (*World as Will* 333):

Music is the true universal language understood everywhere, which is why it is spoken incessantly in all countries and throughout the centuries with great earnestness and enthusiasm, and a significant, promising melody soon makes its way around the entire globe, whereas one poor in meaning and insignificant immediately dies out and disappears, proving that the content of melody is something very easily understood. (*Parerga and Paralipomena* 387)

No other language can attain the same degree of universality as music. As such, it is the perfect language: untranslatable, unutterable, ineffable and yet clearly comprehensible everywhere because it speaks “so strongly to the heart, whereas it has nothing immediate to say to the head” (387).

In similar fashion, the composer Felix Mendelssohn dismantles the common assumption that music is ambiguous whereas words are intelligible:

People always complain that music is too ambiguous; (...) whereas everyone understands words. With me it is exactly the reverse, and not only with regard to an entire speech, but also individual words. These, too, seem to me too ambiguous, so vague, so easily misunderstood in comparison to genuine music... the thoughts which are expressed to me by music that I love are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary too definite... The same words never mean the same to different people. Only the song can say the same thing, can arouse the same feelings in one person as in another, a feeling which is not expressed, however, by the same words... words have many meanings, but music we could both understand correctly. (qdt. in Robinson 27)

So, if music lacks semantic content, if it lacks denotative relation to an extra-musical realm and if it carries meaning through its very structure, and literally and not metaphorically, what about language then? Can poetry truly achieve universality of expression? What can poetry learn from music? Can a pan-language exist or will language always *fail* poets by its subjective limited nature?

Language, as we know, is limited, given its attachment to the objects it represents. Language, with its phenomenal referent, remains so inaccurate and clumsy in reaching the core, the essence of things. The limitation of language as a semiotic system is a lifelong deep concern for many writers. For instance, Virginia Woolf writes in her diary: “(Obviously I grope for words) [...] still I cannot get what I mean” (Woolf 75). Words constantly *fail her*. However, from Renaissance writers like Pierre de Ronsard and Louise Labé to the 19th century’s Paul Verlaine and Stephane Mallarmé all poets have attempted, through the emphasis on the signifier, to escape from the chains of the signifying process and achieve music’s immediacy and universality of expression through language.

Specifically, Amelia Rosselli’s natural inclination to find structural links between the realms of music and poetry was nurtured by the strong belief that both disciplines are built upon universal categories: “and it is with these preoccupations that I set out at a certain point in my adolescence to seek universal forms” (Rosselli and Scappetone 38). This argument derives from the assumption that there are some general aesthetic norms that can be applied to each and every art, that there is a “valid concept of art *per se*.” Amelia longed for linguistic universality from a very young age. The author’s library mirrors her lifelong search for “forme universali:”

Rosselli studia grammatiche di varie lingue (italiano, inglese, spagnolo, tedesco, ebraico, arabo, persiano, provenzale, sanscrito), letteratura comparata, architettura e arte

comparata (Fletcher, Dorflès), acustica, teoria musicale – in particolare etnomusicologia (Daniélou, Sachs), antropologia comparata (Lévi-Strauss), filosofia europea ed extra-europea (asiatica, indiana), critica letteraria e linguistica, psicologia, politica, fisica dei quanti (Carpita 62).

In other words: “L’opera rosselliana fin dalle sue origini si sviluppa come un tentativo di arte totale, un’arte in grado di fondere linguaggio letterario, musicale, artistico ecc” (62). Amelia tries to create a universal poetry first of all through the elaboration of a rigorous metrical form, the application of musical structures, and the exacerbated emphasis on the sonorous aspect of the signifier illustrated above.

In an interview with Giacinto Spagnoletti when asked about the composition of the short poem *la Libellula* Rosselli describes in detail the 10-year-long process that led her to finally find an absolute metrical form and the inner philosophical struggle that accompanied her search: “da forse dieci anni mi rompevo la testa nel tentare varie possibili formulazioni metriche, mai abbastanza rigorose, dal mio punto di vista, da potersi considerare come “sistemi” non solo metrici ma anche o quasi filosofici, e storicamente “necessari,” inevitabili” (Rosselli, *È Vostra* 85). Finding a new metrical form becomes for Rosselli not only a poetic but also a philosophical and historical necessity for an inevitable revolution in language itself. In this way, Amelia tries to reproduce the collective sonorous association of people’s thoughts in order to escape the limit of subjectivity in language: “the language which I write at isolated moments is only one, while my sonorous, logical, and associative experience is certainly that of all peoples, and reflectable in all languages” (Rosselli and Scappettone 38) — a panlanguage.

In *Spazi Metrici* Rosselli consistently describes her dream of a pan language as a common sonorous substratum present in every language contained in an universal form overcoming the subjectivity of free verse:

È così che trovandomi dinnanzi ad una materia sonora o logica o associativa nello scrivere, sin'ora classificata o astrattamente o fantasticamente, ma mai sistematicamente, mi si parla di “piedi” e di frasi, senza dirmi cosa sia una vocale. Non solo: la lingua in cui scrivo di volta in volta è una sola, mentre la mia esperienza sonora logica e associativa è certamente quella di tutti i popoli, e riflettibile in tutte le lingue. Ed è con queste preoccupazioni ch'io mi misi ad un certo punto della mia adolescenza a cercare le forme universali. (184)

In *Impromptu*, as well, Rosselli attempts to eliminate any traces of subjectivity in poetry. She tries to be both the I – female lyrical subject – and concurrently the male interlocutor of that dialogue women writers have eternally engaged in: “Il tu diventa un tu altrui, non una persona. Le donne hanno la tendenza a parlare del tu amoroso, del tu amichevole o tu fantasticato, non dico che non l'ho usato, ma con il tempo maturando cerco di essere tu e me insieme” (De March and Giovannuzzi CXXII). She strives for overcoming the separation between the I and the other, trying to englobe the other within the I and find a universal all-encompassing objective voice that would be an expression of humanity, an expression of a *corpo universale*.

Moreover, Rosselli recounts that “nello scrivere sino ad allora la mia complessità o completezza riguardo alla realtà era stata soggettivamente limitata: la realtà era mia, non anche degli altri scrivevo versi liberi” (186). Free verse appears as a limiting expression of poetic subjectivity; thus, even though in her search for universality she has to deal paradoxically with the purely subjective means of language, by dismantling it, the geometrical graphical space of

the cube offers a limited space of self-regulation and self-sublimation. Words can circulate freely in a delimited space that encapsulates the sonorous and anti-logic of the poets' psychic eruption. The form helps the poet opposing resistance to the "dominion of chaos" (Carpita 77).

Cairolì claims that the Rosselli's rejection of the subjective free verse and aspiration for universal metrical form is clearly inspired by the post Webern musical *avant garde* movement to which Rosselli was certainly close:

La forma consunta del verso libero e il soggettivismo che esso fatalmente veicola sono dunque negati radicalmente, in favore di un costruttivismo di matrice geometrico-spaziale, che garantisca una coerenza formale e un rigore strutturale capaci di soddisfare le aspirazioni universali del poeta. Un tale programma sarebbe inscrivibile senza alcuna forzatura nell'enorme mole di considerazioni che i musicisti dell'avanguardia postweberniana hanno prodotto intorno alla loro opera. Le riflessioni sulla possibilità di istituire un linguaggio assoluto, che presieda ad una creazione musicale oggettivamente intesa, sono il nodo speculativo centrale dei giovani compositori che da tutta Europa si riuniscono a partire dai primi anni '50 a Darmstadt. (292)

Cairolì traces the relationship between structure and universality of poetic expression as well:

Le esperienze dell'avanguardia postweberniana e della poesia di Amelia Rosselli dimostrano come l'ideale dell'assolutezza scientifica in arte possa essere un ideale utopico, ma anche un prezioso stimolo capace di costringere a nuove svolte la sperimentazione linguistica e di garantire al soggetto, pur relegato in posizione secondaria, la possibilità di comunicarsi universalmente agendo in una struttura oggettiva, e di elevarsi così dallo stadio estetico a quello etico, ormai indistinguibili. (300)

Rosselli pushes the limits of language even further, even beyond music. Indeed, she aspires to a particular kind of music — a panmusic: “Io aspiravo alla pan musica, alla musica di tutti, della terra e dell’universo, in cui non ci sia più una mano individuale che la regoli” (Rosselli and Caputo 38). Thus, in her research for objective metrical forms, music is seen philosophically by Amelia Rosselli as the realm of no-meaning encapsulated in strict structure, a beautiful escape into the creative void of non-referentiality but always self-contained through musical recurrence and variation that provides internal balance. In other words, the stream of thought, the disruptive flow of the psyche, is always centrifugally contained and brought into the delimited, internally organized structure of the *forma-cubo*. Music, or better stated, pan-music is therefore an ideal to strive for because it represents a world of non-significance that can escape the logic and the rationality of western phallogentric language – the utopian world of no-significance, the realm of the signifier in all its disruptive sonorous power. However, music like poetry needs to be structured. It implies form – a universal form. The universal metric space of “forma cubo” becomes then an absolute space where the sonorous psychic verbal flow that contains every language can freely express itself both subjectively because of its inevitable connection with the author’s self from which it pours out and objectively through the universal structure that englobes it.

In *Rootprints* Cixous claims that “the texts that touch me more strongly, to the point of making me shiver or laugh, are those that have not repressed their musical structure” (Cixous and Calle-Gruber 64). She also describes the act of writing as profoundly intertwined with music and the body: “To write is to note down the music of the world, the music of the body, the music of time” (46). Or again in *So Close*, “One has to imagine the music. Astonished voice, rising, come from the depths of time, attaining the high pitch of incredulity” (30). For both Cixous and

Rosselli, imagining the music when writing means, destroying the *contours* of the words, pushing their semantic regions and opening up their immense sonorous potential. Through the emphasis on sound and through the associations between sounds, words escape the logic of phallogocentric language through the access to the semiotic and reach the realm of liberation. By escaping denotation and by emphasizing the link between the unconscious and sound, language is able to present itself more directly, without filters, without logical attachments, without genders, without limits. Through music language can liberate itself from the imprisonment of phallogocentrism, and attain freedom of expression, and ideally become universal.

In conclusion, Amelia Rosselli attempts to translate what Schopenhauer would call the untranslatable and to proclaim the universal through a new metrical formulation and a “new language” that through recurrence and variation, through an utterly musical language is able to immerse the reader in the same palpable sonorous flow of music without needing music. In other words, she effectively increases the expressiveness of words, through the modalities analysed in the previous chapters, by reproducing the same intensive and immediate power of music, its directness, its immediacy but enclosing the eruptive flow of the mind within a strict structure. In this way, she powerfully “fills the mind” and at the same time “speaks the body” and reaches the “body” of the reader/listener with words/sounds in the same way as music.

Universal language is the expression of a *universal body*, a sort of androgynous body that has lost its gender differentiation, and that speaks a language that includes all and touches all bodies. There is a total interpenetration of readers and the flow of words/sounds thanks to the emphasis on the sonorous aspect of language: a total involvement of him/her. Through the amplification of the sonorous aspect, language becomes corporeal, becomes the body, and is therefore able to reach immediately and powerfully the body of the listener-reader, to reach their

senses before their mind. That is how meaning is created. Roman Jakobson points out that poetry “is the province where the internal nexus between sound and meaning changes from latent into patent and manifests itself most palpably and intensely” (Jakobson et al. 88). The reader can hear the music beyond the veil of words through the acoustic affectivity of the words themselves. In this way, words lose their denotative veil, since they are completely detached from their external referent, and become pure music, pure expressiveness, pure body-feeling.

Even though Rosselli was probably never able to achieve the impossible dream of a pan-language, her strenuous and extremely passionate effort towards a condition of music in language and the universality of expression allowed her to produce an incredible artistic result. Indeed, through the conscious use of musical devices, Amelia Rosselli is able to create a potent poetic-musical form of expression where shape and content lose their boundaries and melt into each other in order to “rendre plus immédiate la relation de l’esprit au monde, plus intime son accession à l’unité” (Bonney 16). On the 11th of February, 1996, (the same day as Sylvia Plath) Rosselli decided to end her life. She left us with an incredibly vast *corpus poeticus* that is the story of a passionate and extremely intense spirit, a unique and disruptive female voice:

Non pensavo di vivere a lungo, credevo romanticamente di bruciarmi entro i quarant'anni al fuoco di un rischio troppo grosso, quale e' stata la scelta della mia vita. La scelta della poesia come l'ho vissuta, voluta, io. Quasi spaccavo la macchina a volte per l'intensità con cui scrivevo. Ora mi trovo ad affrontare una seconda meta dell'esistenza a cui sono completamente impreparata e che mi interessa fino a un certo punto. La poesia non si addice alla vita normale, quella di tutti i giorni. Ora mi dibatto nella realtà, la osservo con altri occhi. Scrivere è chiedersi com'è fatto il mondo: quando sai com'è fatto forse non ha più bisogno di scrivere. Per questo tanti poeti muoiono giovani o suicidi. E

come se lo scrivere dovesse essere legato a una visione adolescenziale del mondo, e quando si raggiunge la cosiddetta maturità il desiderio di vivere viene meno. E una tesi impossibile. (qdt in De March and Giovannuzzi CXLIII)

Conclusion

In conclusion, Amelia Rosselli is able to realize an incredibly successful example of *écriture féminine* as theorized by Cixous and Kristeva. Through the analysis of two collections of poems, *Sleep* and *Variazioni Belliche*, we have encountered the absolute protagonists of *écriture féminine*: voice-body-music. In the collection of poems in English, *Sleep*, Rosselli's female voice is the expression of a "femminilità dissacrante," (sacrilegious femininity), a disruptive voice-cry that can rival the catatonic voices of "santi padri," the old male dominant canon. The female voice can fiercely dismantle patriarchal language while proclaiming a new language. The female lyrical voice is also able to re-conquer her repressed body and *speak the body* through the thematic recurrence of the different anatomic sections of the female body and its male counterpart. The body becomes the *locus of jouissance* where unconstrained passions and desires can freely circulate, and language itself becomes *body* through the amplification of its sonorous aspect (music).

As I illustrated in the analysis of the poems from *Variazioni Belliche*, Rosselli is able to effectively increase the expressiveness of words through a plethora of musical-poetic devices based on various compositional techniques from the world of music. By reproducing the same intense, immediate and direct power of music, Rosselli is able to create a language that is "musique avant toute chose," through the amplification of the sonorous signifier over the signified, through patterns of repetition and variation, and thereby liberates language from the symbolic chains and freely open the gates to a predominantly semiotic revolutionary poetic language as theorized by Kristeva. Through the conscious amplification of a sonorous signifier, Rosselli powerfully "fills the mind" of the reader and at the same time "speaks the body" and

reaches the “body” of the reader/listener with words/sounds in the same way as music. There is a total interpenetration of readers and the flow of words/sounds thanks to the emphasis on the sonorous aspect of language: a total involvement of him/her.

Rosselli attempts to translate what Schopenhauer would call the untranslatable language of music and to reach for the universal through a new metrical formulation and a new musical language. Through recurrence and variation, through an utterly musical language, the poet may be able to immerse the reader in the same palpable sonorous flow of music without actually needing music. That is how meaning is created and that is what music represents for Rosselli, Cixous, and Kristeva. The reader can hear the music beyond the veil of words through the acoustic affectivity of the words themselves. In this way, words lose their denotative veil, since they are completely detached from their external referent, and become pure music, pure expressiveness, pure body-feeling.

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