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Voice, Storytelling and Agency in Antonella Anedda's 'Residenze invernali' (1989)

*Cada uno tiene una fábula
dentro, que no puede leer
por sí solo.
Necesita a alguien que con
la maravilla y el encanto en
los ojos, la lea y se lo cuente.*

Pablo Neruda

Introduction

In his 1965 essay 'Observations on the Long Take', Pier Paolo Pasolini claimed 'It is absolutely necessary to die because while living we lack meaning. [...] It is thanks to death that our lives become expressive.'¹ In line with existing studies on the philosophy of narration and on the phenomenology of the voice,² this study challenges the metaphysical approach that biography adopts to make sense of the meaning of someone's life by framing it as a written text (*βίος*), particularly when it has been defined by death. By investigating the narrative strategies adopted in Antonella Anedda's long poem 'Residenze invernali' (1989),³ written many years after her mother's experience of a life-threatening illness (tuberculosis), this essay proposes narration as an instrument for 'revealing the meaning without committing the error of defining' someone's unique life (*ζωή*), both physically and spiritually.⁴

Antonella Anedda (born 1955), whose formation is originally in the field of art history, is one of the most well-known Italian contemporary female poets who are shaping new poetic and linguistic landscapes in Italian poetry and, yet, still writing within a strongly recognisable canonical high-brow Italian and European tradition. Her first poetic work, 'Residenze invernali' (1989) was followed by several poetic collections published by leading Italian publishers, such as Einaudi, which secured Anedda important poetic prizes for *Notti di pace occidentale* (2002), *Dal balcone del corpo* (2007) and *Salva con nome* (2012). Although she has been positively received

¹ P.P. Pasolini, 'Observations on the Long Take', trans. Norman MacAfee, Craig Owens, *October*, 13 (Summer, 1980), pp. 3-6 (p. 3). ['Osservazioni sul piano sequenza', in *Empirismo eretico* (Milan: Garzanti, 1972), pp. 237-41.]

² I was particularly influenced by the work conceived and developed by Adriana Cavarero on relational identity and on the philosophy of voice expression. See A. Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). [*Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1997).] A. Cavarero, *For More than one Voice. Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). [*A più voci. Filosofia dell'espressione vocale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003).]

³ 'Residenze invernali' was originally published as a long poem, written between Christmas 1987 and Christmas 1988, published by Studio tipografico di Roma in January 1989, accompanied by two lithographies by Ruggero Savinio. The long poem would later be included in the 1992 homonymous poetry collection, A. Anedda, *Residenze invernali* (Milan: Crocetti, 1992).

⁴ H. Arendt, 'Isak Dinesen: (1885-1962)', *Daguerrotypes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. xx.

and reviewed by critics both in Italy and internationally since her debut, it is only in the last ten years that her poetic work has started to be more widely analysed in academic studies. The readings of her texts have been mostly focussing on genre and gender, the dimension of the tragic and the relationship between art and poetic writing,⁵ however, no-one to date has yet read her poetry through the lens of post-structural theories and in particular from a point of view of voice phenomenology, which is exactly what the present essay intends so as to propose an original analysis of Anedda's first long poem 'Residenze invernali'.

Reading Anedda's poem through the lens of Cavarero's writings on the philosophy of narration and of voice expression offers an understanding of human identity in its corporeality and in its relationality with others, therefore, beyond the linguistic and ontological framing of biography and the written word. It will become clear that Anedda's poetry adopts different genres of writing and blurs the confines between different narrating voices and viewpoints that spatially and temporally allow for the texts to merge more fluidly into a performative narrative able to shift the ill protagonists from a status of 'abject object',⁶ whose ability to desire has been interrupted by illness, to having the uniqueness of their life (*ζωή*) recognised as worthy of being recounted and listened to as a story. It will be exactly the possibility of observing through an intimate gaze and narrating the story of a loved one that will re-activate one's desire to have their story heard, and their actions recognised as subversive and able to re-orient political relations within the poem's semi-fictionalised hospital environment. This, in turn, will transform the space of poetic narration into an in-between dimension, where a 'spatialization of the subject' can take place. Following Walter J. Ong's insights on orality,⁷ poetry, as sounded word strongly connected to the oral nature of storytelling, will be shown as the ideal narrative modality to get as close as possible to the grasping of life, seen as the unfolding of events and occurrences of the protagonists' lives as they happen.

'Residenze invernali', a poem composed of seven shorter texts, is written strictly to elude the genre of biography-in-verse as it chooses to fictionalise the author's memory of her mother's illness that obliged her to spend a long period in a clinic resulting in a long absence from home, which was felt by the author, then still a child, as abandonment. Writing these texts between Christmas 1987 and 1988 coincided with a cathartic poetic journey back into her traumatic experience, which we will analyse from the perspective of voice construction. The *fil rouge* of the present study will be our assessment of Anedda's debut collection from the perspective of establishing her own poetic voice in the attempt to relate to other voices (both within the context of the poetic structure, but also meta-narratively within Italian/European poetic traditions) from a starting position of solitude and inability to be heard ('inascoltata', my change), as the short prefatory poem, 'Ora tutto si quietava, tutto raggiungeva il buio', preannounces: 'Non parlavo che al cappotto disteso / al cestino con ancora una mela / ai miti oggetti legati / a un abbandono fuori di noi / eppure con noi, dentro la notte / inascoltati'.⁸ In doing so, we shall also study the poem as able to give voice to a performative identity that may act politically within the metaphorical dynamics of the hospital institution, so that that voice and the story it narrates may be heard. As Gianluca Manzi notes in his introduction to the first edition of the poem, the living, the dead and

⁵ A. Casadei, 'La poesia-pittura di Antonella Anedda', *Nuovi Argomenti*, 54 (2011): 161-176; P. Hainsworth, 'Stemmens modulationer i Antonella Aneddas *Residenze invernali*' ('Modulations of Voice in Antonella Anedda's *Residenze invernali*'), in B. Grundtvig, H. Jansen, P. Schwarz Lausten (eds), *Stemmer i italiensk Litteratur. Festschrift til Lene Waage Petersen* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2009), pp. 205-17; C. Princiotta, 'La scuola dei viventi. Il tragico in *De Angelis e Anedda*' in B. Alfonzetti, G. Baldassarri and F. Tomasi (eds), *I cantieri dell'italianistica. Ricerca, didattica e organizzazione agli inizi del XXI secolo* (Rome: Adi, 2014); C. Verbaro, 'L'arte dello spazio di Antonella Anedda', in *Arabeschi. Rivista Internazionale di studi su letteratura e visualità*, 5, (2015): 23-35.

⁶ Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p.119.

⁷ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1991 [1982]).

⁸ A. Anedda, *Residenze invernali*, 'Ora tutto si quietava, tutto raggiungeva il buio', vv. 2-7.

the ill are characterised by the ‘sospensione dell’agire’ and the ‘edificazione dello sguardo’.⁹ We would like to argue, however, that their ability to see is emphasised alongside their sense of hearing throughout the text as the main sensorial instrument through which the ill’s choral voice tries to relate to both the space politics of the hospital, as well as to the other inmates. It is indeed the excess of ‘gazing’ and the inability to effectively communicate through sounded word that will prevent the oral-aural channel of relationality from creating effective and consequential connections.

Staging One’s Desire: Voice, Storytelling and Relational Identity

As this study deals with the analysis of voices that are directly connected to the auto-biographical experience of illness via the medium of the poetic word – a literary genre that *par excellence* adopts symbolic language in the form of images – central attention will be given to identifying those linguistic units where images create narrative strategies of interrogation and destabilisation of the metaphysical framing of identity as a fixed and measurable text. This will be done by studying identity as an acting performance related to poetry, seen as storytelling, where questions of relationality to otherness emerge, as opposed to using biography as the ‘stable’ ontological instrument that tries to make sense of and record human life as if it were a discrete and objective written text. Narrating one’s story through the use of the poetic word will be construed as a political act, seen as the staging of one’s voice, agency and desire.

For this purpose, in this context, we shall translate the spatio-temporal dimension of the poetic text, seen as an oral-aural exchange, into an imagined theatrical stage, where the very vocal action of telling a story, in this case by the medium of poetic verse, must imply the presence of an actor and a listener. We shall treat storytelling as using exactly the same rhetoric as performance, via the sounded word and the rhythm of breathing, stressed by line breaks.

In his 1982 study *Orality and Literacy*,¹⁰ Walter J. Ong emphasised that the origins of human communication in primary oral cultures (those cultures which were untouched by literacy) lie not in the written-visual word as a sign, but in the ‘word’ as an occurrence, an event. Before the invention of the alphabet (around 1500 B.C.) and of written texts, mnemonic rhythmic formulas were the method to store knowledge which, ‘once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it would be lost: fixed, formulaic thought patterns were essential for wisdom and effective administration.’¹¹ Ancient epic narrations that have reached us through the millennia, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *Bible*, *Beowulf*, or the *Mwindo Epic* from Zaire, were first handed down through the generations via repeated rhythmic narrations by bards and storytellers; these stories were repeated by the power of voices before they became transcribed into alphabetised texts. Whilst the sounded word, delivered by the voice of a storyteller to a community of listeners – an audience – is dynamic and close to the human lifeworld, the written word is static and ‘fosters abstractions that disengage knowledge from the arena where human beings struggle with one another. It separates the knower from the known.’¹² Even Plato, who had excluded poets from his ideal Republic since their use of orality and formulas had started by then to be perceived as clichéd in a new society defined by literacy, condemned writing as ‘inhuman, thing-like, [...] destroying memory’, and in doing so he emphasised its association with death.¹³ And yet Plato decided to

⁹ G. Manzi, ‘Introduction’, *Residenze invernali* (Rome: Studio Tipografico di Roma, 1989). This version of the long poem *Residenze invernali* only contained five of the seven poems which were later published in the second section of the 1992 collection *Residenze invernali* by Crocetti. The 1989 version was printed in a two-hundred-copy limited edition booklet, accompanied by two lithographies by Ruggero Savinio.

¹⁰ W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991 [1982]).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

¹³ Plato, *The Republic*, Introduction by Melissa Lane (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 271.

convey his criticism against writing in writing.¹⁴

Although the poems we shall analyse here have been fixed into written texts so as to endure over time and are firstly available for consumption through our sense of sight, even in our world where aural culture has lost its original power and where our introverted minds have learnt to resort to individual and silenced reading and reflection, immersing oneself in sound can still be a unifying experience. Poetry originates from sound, the sense that wells out of our corporeal interiority and resounds back to it ('sound pours into the hearer')¹⁵ translating very much into the sensual pleasure of voicing thoughts to someone and receiving their vocal reaction back, and yet poetry mostly reaches us not as audiences, but as readers via written texts. Furthermore, poetry originates from rhythmic sound, cadenced by the repeated formulas (including rhymes, repetitions, alliterations, assonances, etc.), but also by the rhythm of breath, just like acting and dancing, and as all forms of human communication.

Ong reiterates that 'sight isolates, sound incorporates',¹⁶ and Merleau-Ponty, in his work on *L'Œil et l'Esprit*, notes that vision dissects.¹⁷ From Cavarero's point of view, 'the acoustic exchange of voices has the value of being more "bodily" than the gaze,'¹⁸ but it is not only the corporeality of the voice that can ground the self in the breathing and physiological body, it is the very uniqueness of the self, represented by the very unique sound of its voice that, according to Cavarero, embodies 'the singularity of the speaker in relation to others.'¹⁹ Someone's voice is therefore a unique breathing and rhythmic sound, and rhythmic sound has an incantatory power. Being able to hear a sound that enchants (like the song of the sirens in the *Odyssey* that Ulysses would not have been able to resist unless his mates had chained him to the mast) is a similar operation to giving back sound to silenced poetry, the poetry that we have turned, through habit, into silent visual signs.

Pablo Neruda's lines, quoted in the epigraph, here become insightful for our reading. Observing someone else's actions or gestures through an enamoured eye ('*con / la maravilla y el encanto en / los ojos*') must be completed by the subsequent action of being able to read and attach a significance to their story and then to recount it to oneself or to others ('*la lea y se lo cuente*') so that the observed subject does not remain inscribed and caged within a platonic image (*βίος*) perceived by the observer, but becomes narratable in their unique identity.²⁰ Rediscovering their own identity as narratable re-kindles their desiring self and allows them to become actors on the theatrical stage of life (*ζωή*). Neruda chooses to travel to the roots of identity by translating an image into an oral-aural fabulation through the genre of poetry, seen from the post-colonial stance on identity, as an ontological hybrid moment where the 'sovereignty' of the logos 'yields to that of the voice'²¹ and '*el encanto en / los ojos*' is completed by '*el encanto*' of the voice because it can return the '*fábula*' to the sound of life. It is through the encounter of the visual perception of someone and the fabulation of their story, as life *in fieri*, that a 'spatialization of the subject' may take place.²²

¹⁴ 'The paradox lies in the fact that the deadness of the text, its removal from the living human lifeworld, its rigid visual fixity, assures its endurance and its potential for being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers.' Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 81.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ 'Voir c'est avoir à distance', M. Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'esprit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 16.

¹⁸ Kottman, 'Introduction', *For More than One Voice*, p. xix.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

²⁰ 'Every human being, without even wanting to know it, is aware of being a *narratable self* – immersed in the spontaneous auto-narration of memory.' See Cavarero, *Relating Narratives*, p. 33.

²¹ Cavarero indicates poetry as 'the realm of speech in which the sovereignty of language yields to that of the voice.' A. Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, p. 10.

²² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 71. 'Spatialization' is an apt attribute in this context as it can be interpreted as a dilation of a two-dimensional platonic image of the 'other', on whom we may construe or misconstrue our own reflection/interpretation of them, into a full multifaceted embracing of their real unique identity by actively engaging in an exchange with them. 'Spatialization' is also fitting in this instance, as both acting and dancing depend on

Adriana Cavarero, in the wake of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas,²³ assigns to the voice the very source for rooting identity to its uniqueness because, unlike a face, it cannot be masked.²⁴ The voice becomes the resource to support an ontology of identity in its uniqueness by re-rooting knowledge of the human subject to its very corporeality and away from the disembodiment of the metaphysical visual approach.²⁵ The sonorous sphere is the stage where the embodied singularity of a speaker comes into contact with others through the power of the voice. This stage is a 'space of interaction [...] created whenever at least two actors actively communicate themselves to one another, bringing into being a relationship between them.'²⁶ It is the same space of interaction that Bhabha refers to as the 'hybrid moment of political change', referring to the transformational value that lies in the 'articulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the one [...] nor the other [...] but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both' and that in the context of this study we can re-conduct to the vocal interaction of dialogue.²⁷

It is through the interaction of dialogue that antagonisms can be overcome. The antagonistic dimension in the field of the ontology of identity is precisely what Bhabha critiques in the discourses on poststructuralism for their 'unresolved, even erased, [...] *perspective of depth* through which the authenticity of identity comes to be reflected in the glassy metaphors of the mirror and its mimetic or realist narratives' – a *depth* that fails to grasp and understand the questioning of identity.²⁸ This is an impasse that Bhabha tentatively proposes to resolve by resorting to a strategy of 'doubling' and the 'invisible presence' by studying the in-between space of 'inscription or writing of identity' that he calls the 'third dimension.'²⁹ This dynamic concept allows an insight into the complexity of identity and opens up territory for a horizontal re-orientation of the relationships in the form of 'dialogic rituals so that spectators acquire the active role of participants in collective processes which are sometimes cathartic and which may symbolize or even create a community.'³⁰

The poetic text itself will be the stage where such an encounter can take place so that the 'true' identity of the subject can 'exceed the frame of the image', and leave 'a sign of resistance' strong enough to subvert the readers'/audience's political expectations.³¹ This perspective of human identity as resistant to any limiting linguistic system or image – an identity that eludes the eye – 'discovers how rich and manifold the hidden can be under conditions of intimacy' and how incomplete and peremptory is each moment within an artificially closed measurable unit of space-and-time, whenever we attempt to write a history of any human being as biography.

There is a paradox which must be resolved at this stage. In this study, we are going to privilege the voice and hearing as corporeal phenomena directly connected to the re-kindling of

successful, meaningful and exhilarating travelling across the space on the stage. We can also maybe translate this as exploratory travel across identity.

²³ 'In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world', H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 176. See also E. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (La Haye: Nijhoff, 1978), p. 230.

²⁴ Kottman, 'Introduction', *For More than One Voice*, p. xvi.

²⁵ Cavarero claims that 'the acoustic exchange of voices has the value of being more "bodily" than the gaze.' P.A. Kottman, 'Introduction', *For More than One Voice*, p. xviii.

²⁶ Kottman, 'Introduction', *For More than One Voice*, p. xvi.

²⁷ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 41.

²⁸ Bhabha's critique is based on the unconvincing effectiveness that the 'metaphors of the mirror', based on a mirror-like resemblance between signifier and signified and put forward by the poststructuralist discourse, had on studying and sufficiently explaining the complexity of human identity. These were also seen by Barthes as 'arresting the linguistic sign in its *symbolic* function' and re-proposing an ontological system where the 'signifier is always predetermined by the signified' or, in other words where the *what* category remains as a label beyond which one cannot perceive the *who*: the real essence of the subject. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 40-65 (p. 48-50); R. Barthes, 'The imagination of the Sign' in *Critical Essays* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 206-07. [R. Barthes, 'L'imagination du signe', dans *Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1991)]

²⁹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 68, 70.

³⁰ P. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 290.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

one's desire and agency within a third space encounter with the 'other'; however, poetry, as perceived in our modern times, is not always thought of as a genre for oral-aural consumption. It is not systematically read aloud, except at specific public readings, such as poetry festivals; like all other text-based genres, poetry, in our modern times, is thought of as a visual literary genre, it tends to be read silently to oneself, thus performing the inward action of folding consciousness back on itself, of separating the individual from a group, or an audience. Nevertheless, poetry originates from orality, and the power of its language does not lie in the realm of images, but in that of sound.

We can then perhaps make final sense of Neruda's words (*con / la maravilla y el encanto en / los ojos*) as encouraging the eye, our main sense of perception in interpreting poetry as modern literates, whilst reading someone's *fábula*, as unique bodily and sound patterns (*la lea*), to become immersed in its/their rhythm and to let us be enchanted by its/their sound so as to regain the ability to recount that story to ourselves or to others (*y se lo cuente*), an operation which is very similar to falling in love, to un-resist and give in to the 'other'. It is not a process we can control rationally, it just happens, through our senses, to our phenomenological body. And then, once again, if becoming immersed in someone else's voice and life (ζωή) is to enter a 'third space' where antagonism is no longer necessary, as under these conditions 'the Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse',³² then a truly political encounter and mutual change can take place. Poetry itself, as a genre, but also as oral-aural-visual texts, will turn, in this study, into our platform on which staging voice, desire, storytelling and life are possible all at once with no solution of continuity.

The power of writing as 'the most momentous of all human technological inventions'³³ will remain part of the political transformations that poetry can perform on the human consciousness and on the elaboration of thought. The texts under analysis are, after all, written texts for a readership. As Ong maintains, 'writing heightens consciousness. [...] Technology, properly interiorized, does not degrade human life but, on the contrary enhances it.'³⁴ Overall, storytelling as poetry in its restored voices and orality, but still making sense to our meditative and introverted modern consciousness as a written visual genre, through eyes that can hear and ears that can see, will be part of that transforming action that allows for mutual encounter, to return the poetic voice to its embodiment. The incantatory rhythm of poetry, like the rhythm of the breath, may also function as a means of quietening the mind, equating immersion in poetry (both visually as well as aurally) to meditation and therapy. It is this dynamic concept of poetry as sounded word and as a powerful instrument of human encounter that will allow us to open up 'an ontological horizon founded on the material, contextual relation of embodied unique existents'³⁵ for our reading of Antonella Anedda's unique and narratable *fábula*.

'Ora tutto si quieta, tutto raggiunge il buio'. Silence, Voice and the Subversive Disembodied Eye in 'Residenze invernali'

In this section of the study, our intention is that of studying Anedda's subtle, but apt, construction of a poetic narrative which challenges the readership's political expectations within the poem's semi-fictional environment of the polyclinic. We shall see that 'Residenze invernali' attempts through the power of vocalisation of the poetic word to destabilise a system of bio-political control over the ill body.

Anedda's 'Residenze invernali' portrays the various poetic 'subjects', seen to share one year of residence, as separated into different categories divided by an asymmetrical line which is

³² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 46.

³³ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 82.

³⁴ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 82-83.

³⁵ P.A. Kottman, 'Introduction', *For More than One Voice*, p. xix.

clearly set between those that are described as the living ('i vivi'), the ill ('i malati') and, in the final poem, also the dead ('i morti'). The origin of this asymmetrical dividing line between those who are the ministers and administrators of the 'cure' (as opposed to the 'care') and those who receive it, can be reconducted to the 'birth of the clinic' that Michel Foucault traces back to the end of the eighteenth century in his homonymous study. According to Foucault it was then when the 'clinic experience', which pivoted around a doctor-patient relationship (*le couple médecin-malade*), lost its compassionate nature by changing the concept of a unique and meaningful encounter from a dialogue to a monologue conducted by a doctor, who took over agency from the sick-and-silenced body-object.³⁶ The previous reciprocal exchange was transformed into a 'confrontation of a gaze and a face, or a glance and a silent body' and lost its vocal dimension.³⁷

As we read through the poem, it becomes immediately clear that the seven texts that form the poem present a common narrating trait: they are all narrated from a mobile viewpoint which shifts fluidly between an inclusive choral 'we', from whose perspective the events within the clinic are observed, and a marginal observing 'I', who participates emotionally in the narration and unfolding of events. The main narrating voice is that of the ill, which, in most of the seven poems, acts as a choral voice. Both narrating origins, the 'I' and the choral 'we', offer a viewpoint which remains marginal and can be identified as a 'disembodied eye' or an 'invisible' viewer. Although Peter Hainsworth rightly claims that Anedda's poetry, like that of other recently-emerged contemporary Italian women poets, addresses the 'experience of marginalisation' and the 'search for alternatives to patriarchal language and thought' to comment on the critical 'state in which contemporary poetry finds itself' in Italy,³⁸ we shall consider the narrating point of view of the 'invisible' viewer, who can be present 'through absence', as part of an aptly-constructed narrative strategy that may be able to question identity and move invisibly through opposing spatial and temporal dimensions.³⁹

The first poem, 'Le nostre anime dovrebbero dormire',⁴⁰ opens with the plural poetic voice which immediately identifies itself as a chorus of 'souls' ('le nostre anime', I, v. 1), who are able to detach from their own bodies, in their poetic and political ability to act as a mobile mind, and to observe from an objective viewpoint the state of their own ill bodies as well as the bodies and actions of the living. The ill are portrayed as devoid of any agency ('pochi riescono ad alzarsi sulla schiena / come nelle malattie di casa', I, vv. 31-32), deprived of a distinct identity ('I malati dormono gli uni / vicini agli altri posati^[SEP]/ su letti uguali', I, vv. 23-25) and are 'posati' ('poised' but also 'laid' like objects) on their beds. Christmas is marked by impersonal blueish decorative lights on doors and steps, and by inaction, with human contact restricted to family visits that end at four o'clock, after which an eerie silence falls over the ward ('Nei corridoi vuoti scende una pace d'acquario', I, v. 19). Their emaciated, nearly transparent status is indeed that of 'abjects', relegated to a marginalised space within the political structure of the clinic – face to the wall ('Lente^[SEP]/ le fronti si voltano verso le pareti', I, vv. 17-18) and excluded from the Christmas celebrations, such a central festive season within a Christian community. Solitude and silence seem to be the status quo of the patients and life in the hospital – it is portrayed as a condition of life-in-death for the patients, paralysed and unattended to within an uncaring and impersonal medical

³⁶ This new structure is indicated—but not, of course, exhausted—by the minute but decisive change, whereby the question: 'What is the matter with you?', with which the eighteenth-century dialogue between doctor and patient began (a dialogue possessing its own grammar and style), was replaced by that other question: 'Where does it hurt?', in which we recognize the operation of the clinic and the principle of its entire discourse. (Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, p. xviii).

³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. from French by A.M. Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2003).

³⁸ P. Hainsworth, 'Modulations of Voice in Antonella Anedda's *Residenze invernali*', p. 205.

³⁹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 52.

⁴⁰ All quotations from 'Residenze invernali' will appear by citing the number of the poem analysed (I to VII) followed by the relevant verse numbers.

environment: they seem to be devoid of any matter, transparent ‘corpi sottili. [...] come un foglio’ (I, vv. 2-3), unable to sleep and rest. However, the ill are not the only ones to be excluded from community life. In the closing verse of the poem, it becomes clear that the living (‘i vivi’) are not celebrating Christmas either. The food prepared for their dinner waits abandoned on the table: ‘Le dieci. Sulla tovaglia un coniglio rovesciato di fianco / patate bollite, asparagi passati in casseruola. / Nella stanza regna una solenne miseria’ (I, vv. 52-54), with silence also heavily occupying the interstices that isolate the living from one another, as their voices reach for each other as if from far away barges: ‘I vivi si chiamano come da barche lontane’, I, v. 56).⁴¹

The very fact that the poet fictionalises a narrative strategy by which the patients’ ‘souls’ are able to separate from their bodies and wander the clinic at night, instead of ‘dormire / come dormono i corpi sottili / stare tra le lenzuola come un foglio’, I, vv. 1-3), allows them to start engaging in the language of desire, and in doing so they acquire political agency and self-empowerment to ‘initiate the possibility of political subversion’ within the Manichean structure of the hospital.⁴² What this allows is the splitting of the subject, or the separation between the abject physical body of the ill and their empowered subjects symbolised by their ‘souls’, which, thanks to their voice, are able to act so as to create a double movement, or as Bhabha puts it, to ‘outstare linear, continuist history and turn its progressive dream into nightmarish chaos.’⁴³ The illusory order guaranteed by the vertical hierarchies that govern the clinic soon reveals its Moloch-like face where ‘ogni letto ha grandi ruote di metallo dentate / molle che di scatto^[SEP]/ serrano il materasso^[SEP]/ o di colpo lo innalzano. / Il letto stride, si placa’ (I, vv. 33-37). Objects are shown to possess a mechanical agency of their own, independently from human control, in this way subverting the order of subjects over objects, which anticipates some of the more nightmarish events that will occur later on in the ensuing poems. As well as revealing their mechanical inhuman face, other objects also reveal themselves to be the only caring presence on the premises, like in the first poem’s closing lines (‘Quali misteriosi cenni fanno i lampioni ai moribondi, / quante ombre lasciano i corpi’, I, vv. 51-52) highlighting that care and communication are only possible through gestural signs from the world of objects towards the abjects: the dying patients (‘I moribondi’, I, v. 52). The human presences, ‘i vivi’, are simply present to maintain the status quo within the narrative of the western clinic written by abiding to criteria of illusory space control and ‘homogeneous and serial time’,⁴⁴ a status quo that the poetic choral voice is able to disrupt by its subversive whispering, by activating its desire to narrate, through the power of the sounded poetic word, feeble as it may seem, the story of their abjection within the hospital residence. ‘Action’, Kottman adds,

‘is not a given – it entails a certain risk or initiative on the part of the agents themselves. [...] The risk of speaking up is, finally, inseparable from the freedom that such action might bring about. [...] Using one’s voice is a risk that adheres to the radical contingency of action.’⁴⁵

The agency that the ‘souls’ assume by narrating their and the other patients’ stories, thanks to the very use of the poetic word that breaks the silence of abjection, makes it possible for them to find a freedom that turns them into liberatory agents ‘who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change’ within the system of the hospital. The souls become ‘themselves

⁴¹ The melancholic intonation of this final closing scene of ‘Le nostre anime dovrebbero dormire...’ connects intertextually to another poem by Giovanni Pascoli, ‘La tovaglia’, the tablecloth on the dining table around which no-one gathers except for the souls and ghosts of family members who return to visit the poetic voice’s house, the only company she has in her silent and domestic lonely life. Anedda’s whispering voice tries to find her own space within the Italian tradition by connecting to Pascoli’s poetry, one of the founding voices of the early 20th century canon. See Giovanni Pascoli, *Canti di Castelvecchio* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1982 [1903]), p. 32.

⁴² H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 55.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 54. See also B. Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p.185.

⁴⁵ P.A. Kottman, ‘Introduction’, *For More than One Voice*, p. xxv.

the bearers of a hybrid identity, caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation.⁴⁶ It is in this hybrid moment where we can inscribe within the written poetic text, poetry as voice expression and political act, and the poetic voice as an expression of its embodied subject.

In terms of voice construction, as Hainsworth notes,

‘Anedda’s voice is a quiet, if often troubled one, which emerges in broad terms from the hermetic tradition of modern Italian poetry, but is by no means defined or limited by it. Following that tradition, it eschews poetic fireworks such as novel rhymes or striking metaphors, it does not preach or hector, nor does it play with postmodern ironies.’⁴⁷

It is the very feebleness of the poetic voice, if matched with the disembodied concept of the invisible subject, that allows for a narrating strategy which can use this very quiet nature as a means of empowerment through its near-invisibility in order for it to travel through the interstices between space and time and to subvert their ‘artificial’ appearance of linear order. The invisible bearers of the poetic voice can, in fact, borrow the very ‘magical nature’ of the poetic word, as sounded and evanescent⁴⁸ of voice, to subvert the illusory control that the sign would like to exert on the fluidity of time. The choral voice in ‘Residenze invernali’ is an example of a voice that ‘in all its fragility, confounds the limits and conditions of its own resonance.’⁴⁹ In this way, the poetic word is given back its power and freedom to whisper agency into objects and abjects and, through the evanescence and humbleness of its true oral nature as borrowed language or ‘flatus vocis’,⁵⁰ to turn crystallised time and space into fluid hybrid moments of encounter, where there may be an opening up to the equivalent of the Montalean miracle.⁵¹ This is the moment when the visual sign that isolates, judges and marginalises turns into the sounded voice that becomes incorporated, or embodied.⁵²

Nightmarish events start disrupting the apparent orderly veneer of the hospital context in the ensuing poems, particularly in the third, fourth and fifth poems, ‘Prima di cena’, ‘Col cuore pieno di freddezza’ and ‘Storditi dalla nostalgia’, where the choral voice recounts instances of events that disturb the quietness of the routine-ruled clinic, already anticipated by the occurrence of a disquieting signal in the opening lines of the second poem, ‘Sui vetri appannati dal freddo’: the sinister laughter (‘una breve risata infelice’, II, v. 2) that breaks the silence of the New Year’s midnight, the interstitial moment in our serial calendar-controlled time when time is traditionally and illusorily stopped to mark the end of one year and transition into the beginning of the next. Once again, the poetic whisper of the choral voice is able to penetrate that interstice to challenge and destabilise spatio-temporal dimensions and reveal them in their true chaotic nature, uncontrollable by hierarchical western order, and announce an uncomfortable presence, that of the suffering abject in whose nightmare one can identify their rancour, their perverse and anti-social behaviour, in a Kristevan sense,⁵³ to rebel against the repression within the clinic. The abject patients, in their attempt to rebel, are asked by a secondary poetic narrator (the witnessing first-

⁴⁶ H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 55.

⁴⁷ P. Hainsworth, ‘Modulations of Voice in Antonella Anedda’s *Residenze invernali*’, p. 206.

⁴⁸ W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ P.A. Kottman, ‘Introduction’, *For More than One Voice*, p. xiii.

⁵⁰ Grignani (1987)

⁵¹ Eugenio Montale’s poetry is haunted by the search for what he calls the ‘miracle’, which in his modernist viewpoint of the world and reality comes to be identified with the dissolution of spatio-temporal boundaries that constrain his subjects and their voice within an existential inescapable cage. In his poem, ‘Carnevale di Gerti’, Gerti, the protagonist, is able to perform a white magic trick which melts the very solid boundaries of her story and life events, behind which she encounters the nightmarish reality of another possible dimension in which space and time no longer exist. See in particular R.M. Riccobono, ‘The Question of Liminality and the Dissolution of Spatio-temporal Dimensions in Montale’s Poetry: “Sul limite,” “Vasca,” and “Carnevale di Gerti”’, *The Italianist*, 17 (1997), 74-98.

⁵² See Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 72.

⁵³ J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 15. [Pouvoirs de l’horreur (Paris: Seuil, 1983)]. Available: <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/burt/touchyfeelingsmaliciousobjects/Kristevapowersofhorrorabjection.pdf>. Accessed 22 June 2018.

person voice that may be more directly conflated into Anedda's voice, equally as feeble and politically engaged as that of the choral souls) to find the courage to abate spatio-temporal barriers in their dreams. By doing so, the ill, as the embodiment of the repressed 'other', may 'lose their power to signify, to negate, to initiate their historic desire, to establish their own institutional and oppositional discourse'⁵⁴ ('Vi chiedo coraggio, sognate / con la dignità degli esuli / e non con il rancore dei malati / cancellando la visione dei muri e della neve', II, vv. 28-31) and instead become the political invisible subversive agents that may be able to negotiate an encounter in order to actively manifest themselves in their true identity.

From the second poem, the texts are written in a combination of two genres (verse and prose) that identify the texts as prose-poems, a style that blurs the genre boundaries. Alongside the blurring of the narrating voice boundaries (the disembodied choral poetic voice and the first-person poetic voice), space-time boundaries are also blurred, as present events within the clinic are recounted next to remote events that happened historically in other contexts. It is worth reiterating that the choral voice is indeed able to move smoothly between space and time in a performative type narration. 'Prima di cena' opens with an ominous spring storm, resonating very much like Montale's 'La bufera', where the real nightmarish face of the clinic is revealed within the first few verses of the second stanza: 'Ci sarà un incubo peggiore / socchiuso tra i fogli dei giorni non sbatterà nessuna porta e i chiodi piantati all'inizio della vita si piegheranno appena. Ci sarà un assassino disteso sul ballatoio / il viso tra le lenzuola l'arma posata di lato' (III, vv. 6-12). The reference to a murder which is being preannounced in this poem, framed within the hospital night environment where the murderer is opening up their own way to the victims without forcing any passageway and in complete ghost-like silence, is later reprised in the next poem 'Col cuore pieno di freddezza'. Here the patients are seen to be standing ('desolati, nonostante il sollievo di essere in piedi', IV, v. 4) despite their feeling of desolation, whilst they carry the sacrificial Easter lamb to the hospital chapel. In this poem, for the first time within 'Residenze invernali', the reader comes across the presence of the professional staff, in this case a nurse, who are not described only by metonymy (as in 'Le nostre anime dovrebbero dormire', 'il rullio dei letti / spostati dalle braccia dei vivi', I, vv. 14-15), or through their absence ('I vivi si chiamano come da barche lontane', I, v. 56). 'E l'infermiera spalancò la vetrata' (IV, v. 11), introduces a professional member of staff whose physical strength and violence, implied in her action by the verb 'spalancare', far from exposes a more humane presence within the hospital institution as she is not engaged in the care of the ill, or in any relational action with them. The reference to the hospital windows that are opened wide by the nurse ('E l'infermiera spalancò la vetrata', IV, v. 11) is immediately compared to the tradition of opening church doors in Spanish churches at Easter, as the image is returned to a nocturnal environment in Madrid cathedrals 'Colme di vento notturno le cattedrali madrilene' (IV, v. 13) during a stormy night, reconnecting the nurse's action of 'opening the windows wide' to the hallucinating stormy night of the previous poem, where murder lurked along the corridors of the hospital wards.

The feeble voice of the patients' souls has now become embodied; the subversive act of the invisible bearer of freedom has allowed the patients to gain some agency as they are actively walking through the ward's corridors down to the hospital chapel, but they are carrying a lamb that has been sown together using material found on the ward: the body made from their pyjama cloth, its eyes made of buttons and its face of cotton wool. Furthermore, the ill are described in their political weakness within the institution, as defeated soldiers: 'Siamo scesi fino alla cappella dell'ospedale: stretti nelle vestaglie, senza scarpe, i piedi avvolti come soldati in ritirata' (IV, vv. 5). Despite the preparation for the Easter celebrations, the smell of food and the cooking going on in the kitchen, just like at Christmastime in the first poem, the choral voice of the ill is portrayed as if they are averting their eyes from the other inmates as 'survivors' ('sopravvissuti', IV, v. 8): little relation is established with the surrounding environment, and as their condition is compared to that of 'defeated soldiers', their place remains problematic within the language of the institution.

⁵⁴ H. Bhabha, *The location of culture*, p. 46.

The Easter sacrificial lamb, to be offered at the chapel as a symbol of Christian sacrifice, will be slaughtered, clearly anticipating another metaphorical sacrifice: that of the patients. The symbolic meaning of Easter is therefore emptied out and reversed – it is an Easter of death with no resurrection referring to a symbolic deletion from the language of the institution. However, the lamb that the ill have sown up in the ward, thus using a very visible and recognisable Christian religious symbol within the language of the Church institution (the hospital and the Church are both seen as symbolic of the language of western institutional interests) becomes the metonymic representing the body of the ill, the sign of a political agency that puts the norms of the language of the institution in crisis. The lamb is the very symbol of the ill's presence and it narrates their condition by the very symbolic manner of being made from their pyjamas, of representing their repressed, medicalised, victimised story that would otherwise remain untold. Once the lamb has been laid on the altar, ready to be sacrificed, it is shown to be large, so much so as to hide the candles and obfuscate the meaning of the altar, taking over the symbolic language of the religious ceremony. 'L'agnello schermava i ceri / il suo grosso corpo offuscava l'altare' (IV, vv. 21-22). It is a lamb that is very similar to the roasted rabbit laid on the Christmas table in the first poem, around which no human presence was celebrating the festivity. The altar in this poem is the locus of the sacrifice within the institution (both religious as well as medical) as if the hospital assumes a metaphorical religious meaning within which both the living and the ill are reduced to objects. It is through the symbolic sacrificial offering of their repressed condition, actualized within the visual language of the Christian sacrifice, that the ill are able to become visible and to respond to the language of the institution. It is at that very moment that they are able to lift their heads in an attempt of recognition of their own dignity 'Abbiamo sollevato il mento / lampade legno e vuoto^[SEP] gambe intorpidite dai letti / miseria' (IV, vv. 22-25).

At this point of the poem, a blurring with an alternative past temporal dimension occurs when an image of a centurion, a professional Roman soldier, lifting a spear and slaughtering human beings ('Il centurione sollevò la lancia^[SEP] e prese a piovere sulla pelle nuda dei corpi', IV, vv. 43-44), reinforces, within the context of the sacrificial lamb laid on the altar, manslaughter within the clinic.⁵⁵ The clinic therefore assumes the dimension of an inhumane violating institution where the ill live a condition of death-in-life and are destined not to leave it alive, as the previous lines tell us: 'Cinta di giovani pini la collina del policlinico / chiusa d'ombra come le mura di Gezer^[SEP] verde-tomba tra palazzi appuntiti', IV, vv. 40-43.

The invisible, immaterial condition of the ill's souls, which is used strategically by Anedda to construct the hybrid identity of the invisible whispering and subverting voice within the repressing institution, is countered by the very material and visible objects that surround the ill and the living. In 'Storditi dalla nostalgia' corporeality is given emphasis through the material presence of objects and bodies that are handled heavily by the impersonal staff: 'Laggiù nell'aria il ronziò dell'aspirapolvere sui tappeti e i tonfi dei tappeti contro i muri. Nelle lunghe ore di un temporale di aprile prima che vengano a voltarci di fianco e che spalanchino le vetrate alle visite.' (V, vv. 2-3). Reference to the bodies that are passively turned on their side, like the rabbit roasted for Christmas dinner, continues the theme of victimisation of the ill within the institution. However, their current passive condition is starkly contrasted with their past vitality and agency, when desire was part of their language, as hinted in 'L'erba verde sui tetti', 'Anche noi una sera abbiamo percorso il lungomare voltando la testa verso caffè illuminati con la mente intenta a piccole cose fischiando nel buio come uccelli' (VI, vv. 28-31).

Within the boundaries of their medicalised condition in the clinic, their bodies now supine, the only vitality is seen to belong to objects that acquire agency and appear to be governed by

⁵⁵ We are compelled, at this point of the text, to turn to another intertextual reference – another hospital environment in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. 'Part II: East Coker', where a 'wounded surgeon plies the steel' (IV, v. 1) during another Eastertime, where the patients refer to themselves as 'sound, substantial flesh and blood -- / Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday Good' (IV, vv. 24-25). See T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001 [1943]).

chaos: an opening out of the orderly routine imposed by the language of the colonising medical institution, onto the real face of the phenomenological world: ‘Il disordine era altrove / negli occhiali rovesciati sul comodino / nelle briciole sparse sul letto.’ (V, vv.21-123). The disorder that adds a living connotation to the hospital environment, is contrasted with the coldness and loveless busy metallic noise (like knitting needles) of the steps of the living, the staff and the relatives, heard by the ill patients: ‘Come presenze senza amore / fitte intorno ai nostri corpi supini / come i ferri con cui si fanno i maglioni / con lo stesso remoto tintinnare / scricchiolano i passi / nel pomeriggio primaverile’ (V, vv. 24-29). It is the same metallic noise that closes the poem on a scene of death and burial, once more indicating the destiny that the hospital institution promises them within its repressive system of illness, ‘cure’ and death: ‘Appoggia la schiena sul cuscino e ricorda la brocca sul marmo, la terra [...] ferro di pala tra le zolle’ (V, vv. 31-34).

The circle closes at the end of the year, one December morning, ‘nell’ora incerta del solstizio d’inverno’ (VII, v. 26), a time which again is chosen, like New Year Eve, for its symbolic moment of passage from one season to the next, for its hybrid fluidity when the patients’ moment of passage from life to death occurs. The final poem, ‘Ecco lì c’era una crepa’, opens by contextualising the new events: both routine hospital tasks – the cleaning of hospital wards once the patients have died and the preparation to receive new patients – as well as preparation for their journey into death when the souls of the choral voice finally and forever have left their bodies and prepare to depart the hospital like morning travellers, with the same courage and dignity that exiles had been shown to have in the second poem, ‘Sui vetri appannati dal freddo’.

Ecco lì c’era una crepa, laggiù una macchia e oltre la finestra chiusa il profilo del mare. Là dove si appoggiavano le ringhiere dei letti / un rettangolo scuro di sporco, là sulle reti materassi voltati e di nuovo luce di nevischio sull’albero che ondeggia, livida e calma luce / intorno alle coperte piegate. Ora prima di andare, per un attimo sostiamo silenziosi sotto la porta, lasciamo correre lo sguardo dal soffitto / ai corpi. Poi ci incamminiamo con sacchi leggeri sulle spalle, con lo stupore dei viaggiatori mattutini. (VII, vv. 1-4)

This prefatory contextualisation is followed by a poem in verse which is written in the form of a prayer-poem to the Virgin Mary ‘that reaches in Italian back to Petrarch and beyond and the natural and geographic imagery’ in which, Peter Hainsworth continues, Anedda ‘concludes the sequence [...] introducing into what is plainly poetic contemporary discourse echoes of areas of the high literary tradition which modern poetry has generally shied away from’.⁵⁶ In doing so, Anedda is not only able to reconnect her voice to the Italian and, as we have seen, also to the European poetic tradition in an attempt to create a stable voice, but she is also able to move beyond and open up a real liberating ‘spiritual’ dimension towards which the choral voice of the now-dead patients is able to travel, having regained through their voice, feeble as it may have been, the agency and dignity that ‘con lo stupore dei viaggiatori mattutini’ (VII, v. 4) has enable them to break out of the controlling limitations, beyond the fake and constraining walls of the colonising medical institution.

Conclusions

Let us now return to our opening sentences by adapting an Eliotian citation ‘in our beginning is our end’, in this way closing the loop of our argument as the poem opens and closes on a December winter’s day: ‘noi siamo morti / ¹in questa mattina di dicembre’ (‘Ecco lì c’è una crepa...’, VII, vv. 19-20).⁵⁷ Our study started from a quote by Pasolini, ‘It is absolutely necessary to die because while living we lack meaning. [...] It is thanks to death that our lives become expressive’,⁵⁸ which we have constantly tried to disprove. We have argued that it is exactly the fact that we are alive,

⁵⁶ P. Hainsworth, ‘Modulations of Voice in Antonella Anedda’s *Residenze invernali*’, p. 210.

⁵⁷ ‘In my beginning is my end’ (v.1), T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, Part II: East Coker., p. 31.

⁵⁸ P.P. Pasolini, ‘Observations on the Long Take’, p. 3.

that we have a distinct voice which makes us unique and gives us freedom to act, that makes us expressive beings. In ‘Residenze invernali’, death is not necessary for the patients’ lives to gain completeness and therefore to become expressive, because death is fictionalised as a bridging *rite de passage* (as other events – New Year, for example in the second poem, ‘Sui vetri appannati dal freddo...’). Death is a moment of passage from one dimension to another, from the end of one journey to the beginning of a surprising new one ‘con lo stupore dei viaggiatori mattutini’ (VII, v. 4). It is within these moments of passage that the poetic personae, as well as we as readers of the texts, can enter, even if only momentarily, a hybrid ‘third space’ of encounter where illusory ends and new beginnings can merge with no solution of continuity. It is indeed the subversive nature of their whispering voices that allows them to cross those fluid confines.

Several areas of discussion in this essay have strengthened the view that Anedda’s narration strategy in her debut long poem ‘Residenze invernali’ is performative both from a voice construction point of view, in search of a stable poetic voice within the context of an Italian and European tradition, and in its ability to open interstices within and subvert the political order of the hospital environment to show its nightmarish and inhuman face. The doubling of her voice into mobile narrative viewpoints, alternating between the choral voice of the ill’s souls and a first-person ‘I’, more closely conflated with the poet’s voice, is in itself a powerful instrument of storytelling of both the vulnerability of the patients who have been silenced by the mechanised medical institution, and the vulnerability of the poetic voice which, in the process of listening to those very stories, attempts to perform its own catharsis,⁵⁹ now as an adult to make peace with the trauma of the abandonment she felt as a child due to her mother’s illness. It is the choral voice that is able to function as the observing ‘other’ who can read the poet’s *fabula* and narrate it back to Anedda’s first-person poetic persona: Neruda’s ‘*alguien que [...] / [...] la lea y se lo cuente*’.

The unstable voices that narrate the story of the patients and their almost pre-destined death by the very hands of the institution belong to the ‘silenced’, never to the perpetrators. The language of the medicalised system, which we have compared in postcolonial terms to the language of the colonising medical institution, is inscribed within the visual sign which turns the ill, the colonised, into invisible and silent ‘abjects’. It is this very powerless, voiceless and vulnerable condition that turns the colonised ill back into subjects able to desire: through the ability to tell their own story to themselves, to the listening ‘I’, but also, meta-textually, to their readership, mixing both the poetic word as sounded word (the stories whispered within the semi-fictional context of the hospital wards) and the written poetic word, thanks to the poet’s act of narration, as legacy of their sacrifice but also their own agency. If, as Cavarero highlights, ‘the acoustic exchange of voices has the value of being more “bodily” than the gaze’,⁶⁰ Anedda has shown to us that it is the very characteristics of feebleness and invisibility of the choral voice that give it its power to subvert the political space of the medical institution, to open up new dimensions of significance that may overcome the colonising language of the gaze of the medic over the colonised patient. The ghostly voice of the patients, able to detach from their bodies, itself carries a hybrid identity able to facilitate through its political act the blurring of spatio-temporal dimensions – travelling through time and space boundaries whilst telling the story of the patients and their abjection (both ‘i vivi’ and ‘i malati’) within the Manichean model of the western clinic. Allowing the ghost-memories of her mother’s experience within the sanatorium to become narratable, telling her mother’s story while employing empathy and forgiveness, at the same time, are acts of courage because they allow Anedda to re-live her own fears and vulnerability from an adult perspective so that contact can be made with the child within herself. In this way, her traumas as a witness, but also her mother’s traumas as an ill patient within the medical institution are interrogated, problematized and re-dimensioned through a newly found self whose desire is re-kindled during the act of storytelling. It is in this way that ‘Residenze invernali’ can be seen as a first platform where the

⁵⁹ R.M. Riccobono, ‘Intervista con Antonella Anedda. “Residenze invernali” e la vita nella clinica’ (Il Pietrisco Poetry, 2022).

⁶⁰ A. Cavarero, *For more than One Voice*, p. xviii.

young poet Anedda can stage her desire to act out and empower her still delicately young poetic voice by attempting to come to terms with her past traumas and engage in a dialogue with her inner child, searching for her identity as a woman and as a poet.

Poetry, as the privileged depository of the formulaic sounded word, is aptly employed for its magical power to conjure up phantasmal dimensions where Anedda places the choral whispering voice to seamlessly conciliate past and present, the conditions of the ill and the living, life and death. In her latest volume, *Salva con nome*, Anedda claims that ‘Il tempo mentre scriviamo vola, noi moriamo a noi stessi’⁶¹ – within the evanescent time and the provisional space of oral storytelling, poetry as the chosen narrating genre is able to get close to the very essence of identity in its fragmentary and ever-changing nature, where life as ζωή can be best grasped in its fluidity and impermanence.

L’identità si definisce unicamente nella relazione tensiva che intercorre tra desiderio e mancanza e che attraversa uno spazio soggiogato dall’eterogeneità e dalla pluralità, cioè gli elementi scomposti o del corpo individuale o della natura: spine, ossa, foglie, pelle, ecc., tracciando in maniera ancora più netta la dissoluzione, non solo emotiva, ma anche fisica apportata dalla morte.⁶²

In her search for an identity as a woman and as a poet, Anedda is able to disembody her own voice in order to travel seamlessly across space and time and to find a new anchor to her own corporeal poetic voice and language of desire. A voice that in this first long poem is shown to be feeble and unstable, yet already powerful in its own dialogical acting with other voices both within the text and meta-textually with other national and international poets. Anedda is, however, also committed to leaving a legacy through the poetic written word in which she, as well as her readers, may re-read the stories she has shared through a more permanent medium, that of the fluid written verse that in its origins in oral storytelling become an instrument of transformation of consciousness, which may aid the process of listening to others’ stories and traumas in order to contextualise one’s own and hopefully heal.

The poem ‘Residenze invernali’ (1989), later incorporated in her first poetic collection *Residenze invernali* (1992), may, after all, be read as a poetic coming of age, where the poet is able to make peace with her past and start the difficult and yet positive journey, as foretold in the closing prayer-poem, ‘Ecco lì c’era una crepa...’ (‘Poi ci incamminiamo con sacchi leggeri sulle spalle, con lo stupore dei viaggiatori mattutini’, VII, v. 4) towards the more mature later poetic collections of *Notti di pace occidentale* (2002), *Dal balcone del corpo* (2007) and *Salva con nome* (2012), where her voice will show itself in its full embodiment and maturity.

⁶¹ A. Anedda, ‘Cuci una foglia vicino alle parole, cuci le parole tra loro’, in *Salva con nome* (Milan: Mondadori, 2012).

⁶² F. Greco, ‘Cucire parole. Lo spazio poetico di Antonella Anedda’, www.centropens.eu, (17 December 2016). Available: <https://www.centropens.eu/materiali/articoli/item/30-cucire-parole-antonella-anedda>. Accessed: 22 June 2018.