

SOCIAL IRRELEVANCE AND SELF-GENERATED CANONS. FROM THE 20TH CENTURY TO NEO-ITALIAN POETRY

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Absent Canons - Canoni Assenti



The 2006 «Semicerchio» debate

The comparative poetry journal «Semicerchio» is a privileged platform from which the reader is able to observe different movements and newly forming sensibilities. This is chiefly because the review constantly, and, I would say, systematically monitors the poetic production in various languages and countries – from Germany to China, from Albania to Brazil, and from Australia to, quite obviously – Italy. This broad vision is quite similar to using the television remote control and zapping the screen, dividing it dramatically into several windows: it impedes the viewer from being too drawn into any individual movie, but it allows a more exact and comprehensive view of the television offerings. The view from this lens permits a horizontal exploration and can suggest a kind of textual evaluation that approaches every critical problem through a relative and comparative dimension. Perhaps, most importantly, it makes it possible to observe the object ‘Italian poetry’ from without. This can lead to a muffling of the intensity and the urgency with which one participates in discussions or one shares a critical position. It can also guarantee on the other hand, a more informed knowledge base, if not a greater ‘objectivity’, which can often be an empty term. This greater base is an indispensable factor in the project of perceiving and thinking of poetry in a society that defines itself as ‘globalized’. The 2006 issue of the review tackles an apparently old problem which has also

been raised in an essay that has been much discussed in Italy – *La poesia moderna* by Guido Mazzoni, published in 2005 by il Mulino: it is the problem of the so-called social mandate of the poet, the *gesellschaftlicher Auftrag* mentioned in 1874 by Benjamin with regard to Baudelaire. This issue has been approached in Italy at several times in the previous decades, especially after the famous essay by Fortini¹. There was confusion between this question and the contiguous but absolutely different problem of the social role of the poet, and of the relationship between poetry and reality, or worse yet, between poetry and civil poetry. In the last two chapters of his work, deeply inspired by Benjamin and especially by the artistic sociology of Bourdieu, Mazzoni hints at the question which we will be dealing with in this conference. He speaks of the birth of a new humanistic canon, which, according to the author, would «perhaps be the most important social transformation in Western culture of the past three centuries. This is similar in certain aspects to the metamorphosis of literary genres in the eighteenth century, which led to the creation of a new type of intellectual, causing the development of journalism, the novel, bourgeois drama, and modern poetry.»². Mazzoni sees the signs for this transformation in the *avant-pop* origins of several of the best writers, in the *mid-cult* tastes that progressively occupy the canon of popular art, and in the great development of university programs open to the show-business and TV culture. An eloquent symptom of this transformation, according to the author, is the

«grave crisis of legitimacy» that has hit some sectors of high humanistic culture: from art installations that replicate senseless absurdities 100 years after the 20th century avant-garde movements, to even poetry. Poetry lives – often quite well – in restricted auto-referential circuits, because it has lost the necessary symbolic power needed to address shared values. It has ceded this power to other media such as pop and rock music: these having, according to the author, a greater capacity to express what Mazzoni calls «narrations of states of exception», to occupy the space that epic literature or novel once occupied. Such media receive a devolution of social representation that is much broader and wider than that of poetry. This situation is instrumental in influencing the behavior of poetry groups, of the anthropology of poetry and also to a great extent the stylistic phenomena that one finds in contemporary poetic texts: the fragmentation of language, the manneristic meta-writing, the theatricality, the forceful irony, the minimalist narcissism and the obsession with experimentation.

Our first impression is that Mazzoni's irreverent analysis, although making acute observations, has reversed the direction of factors: the loss of mandate is not the sign but the cause of this dislocation, and is not caused by linguistic choices or behaviors of certain groups, as described in the book. The loss is a consequence of socio-cultural changes that are independent of the wills of individuals or collective literary lobbies. Our second impression is that one is dealing with a very recent phenomenon, at least in Italy. In the preface of an anthology of contemporary Italian poetry in 1996³, Stefano Giovanardi acknowledges the existence of the problem right from the second page. He, however, pre-dates the problem, perhaps following Benjamin, speaking of a «brusque cessation of the social mandate of the poet» in reference to the *fin de siècle* change between symbolism and the avant-garde, between Mallarmé and Apollinaire. According to Giovanardi, even from Pascoli's time, the poet is no longer «the intellectual or the collective voice», but only possesses a mere ambition of it. And yet we all know how important a personality such as D'Annunzio was for Italian national culture, what oracle-like suggestion inspired televised readings by Ungaretti even in the seventies. Not to mention the charisma exuded by Pasolini's every word: until his death and even after, they remained not only the objects of discussion but also an element of identification and of representation of opinions and of common language. At least in Florence, the personality of Mario Luzi represented the only high point of unity just until last years. The phenomenon is therefore very recent, as Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo has observed in an interview few months ago⁴. It has manifested itself only in the past 20-25 years: so we cannot affront the question by backdating it, or by using the convenient formula of auto-referentiality and detachment from social dialogue, from the so-called reality.

We have planned, therefore, that «Semicerchio» would propose a discussion about the clinical observations of Mazzoni, between very important poets from all parts of the world: from Dieter Gräf to Jorie Graham, from Gozo Yoshimashu to Yves Bonnefoy, from Antonis Fostieris to José Munarriz and Jaroslaw Mikolajewski and others; a truly international network for which I have to thank our terrific editors⁵. Now the picture is completed («Semicerchio» 35, 2006, *The Tired Troubadour: On the social mandate of the poet*), and the numerous contributions that have arrived delineate a tough and compact front of resistance. They represent a uniform and almost “corporative” reaction to the warnings given by Mazzoni. I cannot list all the argumentations here, but almost everywhere one could see an absolute trust in the continuity of poetic expression, the conviction of the long lifespan of the genre and its prestige, the certainty that its specific means of communication acts on a social level even in instances where the poetry might not seem to be connected to any external reference. In some of the cases, the answers even express a disgusted refusal of formulae such as «social legitimization» which, although coming from the Frankfurt school, have been oddly connected by some poets even to Stalin and to Socialist realism, while the French poets did not have difficulties in acknowledging these ideas as the Bourdieu approach.

The negation of a crisis of poetry is unanimous, and is based on both the enthusiasm with which many environments in all parts of the world enjoy and encourage poetry – editors, reviews, cultural centers, anthologies, prizes, schools, etc.- as well as on the sensation of aesthetic vitality of production, especially in the postcolonial countries where many poets with absolute stylistic personalities have continued to emerge. The answers of the poets go as far as to negate the existence itself of a social question, noting that poetry has never had many readers, and the points made by the respondents are almost as many as the respondents themselves: some bring back the ancient argument that poetry is, in any case, a social phenomenon, in the sense that it is in dialogue and it interacts with society independently from the degree of communicability of its language. Still others negate that poetry's relationship with society should be posed as a problem, while others point to the testimony of the great durability of the literary canon as proof of the independence of the poet's text from social controls. All of the poets refute the function of the poem as song, with the exception of the New Yorker Anglo-Indian poet Meena Alexander, who says, «There is a truth here, that songs have taken over the space that traditionally was the reserve of poetry»⁶. But she contradicts this lucid observation when she declares that she restores this dimension in her poetry when she allows herself to be influenced by the traditional songs of her land of origin: she thus shows that it has not been understood that the problem is not one of expressive or rhythmic genre but of social credit. Not one poet, it seems to me, has taken note that ‘social mandate’, in English and Italian, more than in the original Ger-

man, is a concept that points to the social representativeness of the poet and not to his or her social role. The problem is not how much the poet is (or feels that his or her writing is) in agreement or in dialogue with society or with historic reality. The question is about *the degree to which society recognizes the figure of the poet as a source of expression of collective sentiments and languages, and of identification of symbolic values*. Mazzoni, in his study, begins with a test that is analogous to that recounted in the 2006 issue of the journal «Atelier» by Alberto Bertoni, in which it was found that in one of the big University halls of an Italian department, only 2 or 3 students out of about 100 were able to cite the names of living Italian poets. The phenomenon seems even more dramatic when any young person is asked if he or she, in order to express a concept or an emotion in a stylistically efficient and citable formula, would make use of a verse by a contemporary poet. The answer is unanimous: the formation of a bank of memorable expressions, the phraseological and proverbial vocabulary of a community, is no longer the function of literature, and especially of poetry. One is found to repeat either the clichés of the cultural patrimony, such as Petrarch or the *Divine Comedy* – or else one resorts to songs (or worse, to advertisement slogans). In the same way, the construction of grand identifiable narrations is, for some decades, at least since the Vietnam War, the role given to cinema.

The poets that we questioned, eluded all this probably also because of some lack of clarity in our questions. Or perhaps all these phenomena were not considered to be a sufficient reason to justify the definition of a crisis of poetic prestige. And yet, in order to reflect upon the possibility of a canon, a central, and I would say preliminary point of consideration would be the legitimacy of a canon in itself.

Mazzoni is certainly very clear at least in one aspect of his deconstruction: with the coldness comparable to the pre-Bloom English and American criticism from Kermodé and after, he analyses the reasons for which hundreds and thousands of people in schools must read Leopardi's *L'infinito*, a text of 15 verses that describes the short experience of an individual who meditates behind a hedge. The reason for this, if one has to avoid consolatory assessments, is that the hegemonic circles of our society had decided to attribute to this Leopardi text, the function of a symbolic representation. It is an almost fetishistic representation of a value that is considered fit to enter into the formative patrimony of an Italian citizen, and hence enter within the repertory of that which is unquestionably seen to produce valuable meaning: the text has been endowed, in other words, with authority. This poetic value does not depend only upon the vitality or the quality of production of a single person or a group, but upon broader cultural or even social dynamics. The argument that there are always more and more poets, who are writing better and better works, and that there are always more editors who appreciate this output seems to reassure so many of the world's

poets. But these factors do not have any decisive effect, since these are not the aspects that will decide the role of poetry in tomorrow's culture, just in the same way as, let's say a bigger success of the bonsai clubs will not be sufficient to influence the scholastic canons leading them to substitute a teaching of bonsai instead of an hour of mathematics or computer-literacy.

The absence of the poetry from the cultural canons

The theme of the absence of a canon can be translated into the theme of the future absence of contemporary poetry from the canons of cultural works that have influenced our times since approximately 1970. As Mazzoni puts it in raw but effective terms, cynically playing with a paradox, one can hardly compare the cultural impact exercised in our times by two artists of the same age, Seamus Heaney, born in 1939, and Paul McCartney, born in 1940.

The second aspect of the problem is the absence of a universally accepted canon of twentieth century Italian poetry, especially concerning the second half of the twentieth century. The journal «Semicerchio» did not state a position on this problem: some of its editors and collaborators independently participated in 2005 on a kind of philological repertory of contemporary poetic activity, entitled *Parola plurale* ('Plural word'). Coordinated by Andrea Cortellesa, the project was never discussed by the journal before it was released in print. The comments by Pierluigi Pellini, which were published in «Semicerchio»⁷ kindly but also severely diagnosed both the ambitions and the limits of the undertaking.

In general, the question of the canon has been at the center of attention in Italy more than in some other places. This is both because of the publication of *The Western Canon* by Bloom, which led to a series of theoretical debates and publications of a high academic quality during the last ten years⁸, as well as because of the necessity of making visible the values of groups that contend with each other in Italy, thus leading to a proliferation of anthologies. Due to these situations, the debate, instead of maturing, became paralyzed. This silence was created not by absence, but by the excess of canons and maps, and in the absence, instead, of any kind of authority. Perhaps, as Berardinelli wrote in 1999, «just as everything was being relativized, the need for absolutes increased»⁹. Or perhaps, more probably, the easily diffused creativity and the immediate access by aspiring poets to publication led to a need for tools that would somehow regulate the excessive quantities of information.

It is evident that from the point of view of the reader, anthology does not immediately signify 'canon', but from the point of view of the editor of the anthology, it certainly represents a proposal of values that would hopefully be considered as common values. Beginning from the times of the violent Sanguineti/Mengaldo opposition there were

distinctions created between single and multiple author anthologies, the anthology as manifesto and as museum, philological criteria versus philosophical criteria, company canons versus ideological ones, militant canons versus scholastic ones, we arrived at Stefano Verdino's coining of the term «polycentric canon»¹⁰. This was a proposal that has already been formulated in the 1999 conference by Roberto Deidier, Guido Guglielmi and many others¹¹; an essay by Rakefet Sheffy explicated the concept in 1998 in *The Concept of Canonicity in the Polysystem Theory*, a work evidently inspired by the poly-systemic theory of Even-Zohar¹². This is a solution that continues to re-appear, and it seems to be, at first sight, the most ecumenical and elastic, and especially, the least evitable one. Each pressure group or lobby that acts upon an editorial power or holds an academic or journalistic visibility and is referred to a literary or ideological community, if not a specific or distinct culture, proposes its own divisions that concede space to its recognized masters. It positions the canon in formation to poetics or personalities that respond to the criteria with which the group is most closely identified¹³. Thus the canon continues to carry out the identification functions of communities, but it carries out its function upon more limited communities: a kind of federalist canon. These mobile and juxtaposed canons encounter each other apparently in order to undertake critical dialogue, but they also seek to penetrate the reality of the school, the editorial boards, and the universities in order to impress upon these their legitimate convictions.

The mobility of the Italian canon and the migration poetry

The absence of a unique authoritative anthology, such as that of Mengaldo¹⁴ has been around for twenty years, can be the only way to avoid anthologies that exclude women or dialect writers (such as that of Sanguineti¹⁵), or the avant-gardists (like *La parola innamorata* did¹⁶) or the neo-romantics (like *Parola plurale* does), or authors from minor editorial houses, like the Mondadori anthology, or those that avoid male writers, such as the anthologies of Laura di Nola¹⁷ and Biancamaria Frabotta¹⁸, or the poets of different ethnicities or any majority or minority that would like to have a valid literary recognition. And yet this apparent opening of the canon continued to base itself upon exclusions, which would not be noticed and perceived until the appearance of another pressure group or lobby. Until 2006 there still lacked an element that would have allowed for a more dynamic situation of the Italian poetic system – that of Italoophone poetry. Now this element is present, thanks to the anthology by Mia Lecomte for *Le Lettere*, which is almost ready to be published in English too¹⁹. This anthology was created after a decade-long work of selection started by the series called «Cittadini della poesia». These poets probably make up a transitory phenomenon, since second-generation immi-

grants in Italy would be completely immersed in the Italian school-system. It would be difficult for them to develop, as in the USA or other places, the feeling of belonging to a *different* canon than the Italian scholastic one. Instead, these first generation immigrants have arrived in Italy with a usually mature external formation, followed by a quick Italian immersion, producing works that are of extraordinary interest to us, although the quality is inevitably uneven. One can find a novelty of certain modes of expression, an experimentation of genres that are unknown to Italian poetry or lost in a dried-up tradition, an introduction of an exotic imaginary in the formulae of Pavese or Montale, a choice of certain models in the Italian tradition that we would perhaps hesitate to recognize, a recovery of compositional figures that are ancient or foreign to the national tradition, but also an authentic urgency to have a dramatic relationship with history that the lounges of the literary republics in Europe have lost since the Second World War. If this neo-Italian poetry should enter the schools, if it should create new tendencies by interacting with already present eclecticism, the Italian canon would finally be forced to deal with a big jolt – that which Lotman in his essay on the *semiosphere* defines as an acceleration produced by the entry of an external text into the system – which one retains as a necessary event to exit from the stagnation of good poetry that does not say anything anymore, or of a poetry that has distanced itself from dialogue with society. For the moment, this is only the last of the possible pressure groups. It is as of yet devoid of political weight and has been perceived until now by the establishment mostly as a phenomenon that merits only charitable attention²⁰. Up till now, this neo-Italian poetry has not interacted with the classic national poetic production, and is not seen by any one of the other organized groups as an interlocutor, not even in a polemical sense. It hence, has not been seen to influence modes of writing. But this marginal canon is poised to add itself to the sequence of plural canons that flow within the Italian panorama, and has the potential of being a factor that will heal the rigor mortis of the post-Italian, post-twentieth century tradition, and thus inaugurate new paths of communication and new dialects that have not existed till now, opening up Italy to a stylistic vision that is more globalized.

A different line of discourse must be made when we would like to speak about the song, one of the sectors which «Semicerchio» decided since 1986 that it would write about, with reviews, metrical analyses, readings and lessons. For the moment, we are dealing with a genre that cannot be superimposed on the genre of poetry, if not with regard to some functions that were once a prerogative of poetry, such as social representation, and some formal characteristics, such as the need to incorporate stylistic and metrical elements that are derived from a necessity of connecting social representation to texts that will be memorable – quite the elements that present-day poetry has renounced. We know that many scholastic anthologies for

many years now have included the texts of some songs. People who have edited anthologies know that this phenomenon has not become very common due to the enormous costs of procuring the rights of the songs – to such a level that the cost for reproduce a single song by Vasco Rossi would cost the same as reprint a collection of Montale's verses. A third element that is being absorbed by songs from poetry is the awareness of an internal tradition – so much alive that it is producing in songs many qualities of allusion, rewriting and imitation that are akin to the troubadour tradition.

The role of the popular song: a medieval paradigm

A fourth element, which can be derived from the previous ones, is the influence upon the innovation of the commonly used languages and also of the literature. In this case, the influence of the song is at its peak and that of poetry has almost disappeared. A medievalist, such as I am, would know that this phenomenon has already existed in the cultural history of Europe, between the fourth and the ninth centuries, when quantitative classical poetry began to survive only in schools, while in the churches, in the monasteries and in the piazzas, a new kind of poetry was being formed. It was a rhythmic and syllabic poetry, used for hymns, for the funerary *planctus*, for songs of war and love. Slowly, these songs, of which we are lastly editing the first textual and musical edition²¹, began to be written, and began to be measured against the rhetorical systems of high literature, and this gave life to modern European poetry. Meanwhile in the schools, quantitative verses, often beautiful ones, continued to be written. But the people sang the other ones, because the linguistic systems lent them higher naturalness. Thus, centuries later, Baudelaire will write in these rhythmic verses and not in quantitative ones. I cannot say if we are at the threshold of such a large change: it would depend on other factors, such as the measure in which the market would be able to influence or determine the choices of the intellectuals and of the schools. For the moment, it seems that we are at a point of equilibrium, at which poetry still conserves an academic prestige that continues to protect it from rapid substitutions, and has ceded the elements of its own expressive system only gradually to the song. We can however accept the idea that the song is now acting upon the literary system as another of those pressure groups, but from below rather than from above. It acts in some way on the modification of the canon and has begun to propose a canon of its own. The song is thus another one of those forces that the system needs in order to exit the expressive universe that has died with the passing of the twentieth century.

It is therefore this auto-genesis of new canons that gives an impression of an absence of a canon, of the impossibility of a single canon, and consequently of the irrelevance of any canon. This situation is well reflected by

theories about the historicity of the canon before and after Bloom: including those created by Kermode or by Hallberg, by Herrnstein Smith and by Lucia Re²².

But is it really true that no *one* canon exists? All the studies – from among the latest one by Cesare Segre in the journal «Allegoria» dedicated to the idea of canon²³ – underline the *exemplarity* and the *authority* inside a given culture as conditions under which one can recognize the canonic status of a work: in a case in which these conditions do not exist, the work would lose its sacred aura that is so much associated with the idea of the canon, right from the times of the selection of the biblical texts. This aura also gives weight to the canon's function as a factor of identity within a community. So anthologies do not form the canon, but the continuity of a widespread perception of an aura does, as does especially the scholastic tradition that helps create it. A canonic work becomes recognizable, according to Segre, by its inclusion into school textbooks, by the intertextual references it generates in other works, by the creation of more editions and comments; that is to say, when the work becomes a «Text of Culture» to use the terms of Lotman and Uspenskij. No single lobby, by itself, is capable of creating a canon that will withstand the passage of time in these terms.

And yet, we realize that even Segre's discourse functions within paradigms that do not exist anymore. Firstly, identification does not exist – as Segre seems to hint at – between schools (that is to say, academia) and Culture. Secondly, there no longer exists a unitary culture within a complex nation such as ours. Nonetheless, the logic of discourse remains valid: a canon is not an operation of literary marketing, but a process of sedimentation that no institution can control on its own²⁴. But the recognition of a unitary authority has diminished. In our societies, the prestige given to power positions in editorial and economic sectors has freed, or one can say popularized the function of authority, once an exclusive right of the philological scholars and the university. This new situation has fragmented the authority into a series of multiple and diffuse entities, putting it thus into the 'market' so to speak, and allowing it to be influenced by incessant contractual games. A comprehensive effect of authority is produced partly due to the ability of the community to operate a kind of abstract synthesis of various common points between the various stances, those recognized by different groups. This is dramatically described by Barbara Herrnstein Smith: «the 'survival' or 'endurance' of a text [...] is the product neither of the objectively [...] conspiratorial force of establishment institutions nor of the continuous appreciation of the timeless virtues of a fixed object by succeeding generations of isolated readers, but rather a series of continuous interactions among a variably constituted objects, emergent conditions, and mechanisms of cultural selection and transmission. These interactions are, in certain respects, analogous to those by virtue of which biological species evolve and survive [...]»²⁵. So the

canon exists, it is not absent; and the existence of multiple, partially conflicting canons does not hinder the formation of a single implicit canon, which would always allow for some local variations, to specific environmental adaptations, but would conserve a permanent nucleus. This nucleus would be determined by the selection of works that have time and again demonstrated a poly-functionality, a possibility of satisfying the need and the interpretations of different audiences and diverse institutions in different times. A proof of this phenomenon lies in the fact that all the anthologies of the past 10 years, notwithstanding their sometimes radical and

polemical counter-positions, nevertheless share, besides the masters of the early twentieth century, the names of younger writers that evidently do respond to the prerequisites of poly-functionality and the satisfaction of multiple identity needs. Find those names (beginning for example from Magrelli and de Angelis), and you will find the canon that the community of poetry lovers, as few as they might be, does recognize quite unanimously as such.

But the problem can be posed on another level: will this poetic canon, whatever it might contain, still have any weight within the cultural canon of the twenty-first century?

NOTE

¹ F. Fortini, *Al di là del mandato sociale*, in *Verifica dei poteri. Scritti di critica e di istituzioni letterarie*, Milano 1965.

² Mazzoni 2005, p. 229.

³ *Poeti italiani del secondo Novecento*, a cura di Maurizio Cucchi e Stefano Giovanardi, Milano, Mondadori 1996, seconda ed. 2004, p. VIII.

⁴ Interview to P.V. M., by Andrea Afriso, in «Nuova Corrente» 51 (2005), p. 118: «è cambiato il ruolo della poesia. Ancora a quell'epoca [quella della mia antologia, n.d.r.] credo che tutti avessero l'impressione che un'antologia poetica del Novecento italiano costituisse una angolatura visuale particolarmente significativa sulla cultura italiana in genere. Ma oggi non è più così. Per usare una categoria famosa: se già allora il *mandato* concesso ai poeti era traballante, oggi non esiste più».

⁵ Martha Canfield, Annalisa Cosentino, Antonella Francini, Michela Landi, Gabriella Macri, Marco Mazzi, Andrea Sirotti, Paolo Scotini, Lucia Valori.

⁶ *Il trovatore stanco. Sul mandato sociale del poeta – The tired troubadour. On the social mandate of the poet*, «Semicerchio. Rivista di poesia comparata» 35 (2006/2) p. 42.

⁷ P. Pellini, *Parola plurale*, «Semicerchio. Rivista di poesia comparata» 34 (2006/1), pp. 49-52.

⁸ Penso al convegno *Il canone letterario del Novecento*, tenuto ad Arcavacata fra 11 e 13 novembre 1999, i cui atti sono stati pubblicati da Nicola Merola nel 2000 per Rubbettino Editore, e al numero di «Allegoria» 29-30 a. X del maggio-dicembre del 1998 dedicato alla discussione sul canone.

⁹ A. Berardinelli, *Alla ricerca di un canone novecentesco*, in *Il canone letterario* cit., pp. 93-103, p. 94.

¹⁰ S. Verdino, *Le antologie di poesia del Novecento. Primi appunti e materiali*, «Nuova corrente» 51 (2004) pp. 67-94.

¹¹ *Il canone letterario* cit.

¹² I. Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Theory* in «Poetics Today» 1 (1979), pp. 287-362 e Id., *Polysystem Theory*, in «Poetics Today» 11 (1990), pp. 9-26; R. Sheffy, *The Concept of Canonicity in Polysystem Theory*, in «Poetics Today» 11/3 (1990), pp. 511-22.

¹³ 1992 on «The Modern Language Review» 87 (July 1992), pp. 585-602 Lucia Re wrote that «the fragmentation that has always been a part of Italian literary culture manifests itself increasingly in

politically partisan anthologies, women's anthologies, and regional anthologies, and in an unprecedented number of revisionist anthologies» (p. 602).

¹⁴ *Poeti italiani del Novecento*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, Milano, Mondadori 1978, followed by numerous reprints.

¹⁵ *Poesia italiana del Novecento*, Torino, Einaudi 1969.

¹⁶ *La parola innamorata. I poeti nuovi 1976-1978*, ed. by Giancarlo Pontiggia and Enzo Di Mauro, Milano, Feltrinelli 1978.

¹⁷ *Di donna a donna. Poesie d'amore d'amicizia*, Roma 1977.

¹⁸ *Donne in poesia. Antologia della poesia femminile in Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, Roma 1976.

¹⁹ *Ai confini del verso. Poesia della migrazione in italiano*, ed. by Mia Lecomte, Firenze, Le Lettere 2006, with a foreword by Franca Sinopoli.

²⁰ To this point, I would mention a patronizing article by Raboni in the «Corriere della Sera» written a few years ago.

²¹ *Corpus rhythmorum musicum I Songs from non-liturgical sources I Lyrics*, dir. by Francesco Stella, musical edition by Sam Barrett, Firenze, SISMEL 2007, with cd-rom.

²² B. Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value*, in *Canons*, ed. by R. von Hallberg, Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1984, pp. 5-39.

²³ C. Segre, *Il canone e la culturologia*, in *Il canone*: see above, footnote 8.

²⁴ History demonstrated that Tinyanov's theory on the formation of the canon as output of the power-relationships between center and peripheries is not a sufficient explanation, because the continuity of reading, imposed by the school or sustained by the literary imitation, produces an inertial force against which it is hard and slow to develop an opposition. As already Goethe wrote, «all has already exerted an influence can never more be properly judged»: quoted by Walter Benjamin in *Eduard Fuchs, il collezionista e lo storico*, in *L'opera d'arte al tempo della sua riproducibilità tecnica*, trad. it Torino 1984, 1991, p. 82. The dialectic formation-canonization-decline does not concern all people and everything and it is not actual only in the present time but undergoes the time factor, that multiplies the effect of a position.

²⁵ Article quoted above, p. 30.