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ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

*Into the poetry of Amelia Rosselli:
plurilingualism among her "Primi scritti" and the role of the "Diario in tre lingue"*

The starting point of this research was suggested by a recurring statement among Rosselli's criticism: the acknowledgment of the peculiarity of her writing, which brings her at the same time closer and different from other contemporary literary experiences. This peculiarity is especially based on the linguistic pattern of her writing, which is strictly linked to her biographical experience: Rosselli was born both as a stateless person and as a trilingual, a situation that deeply influenced her poetry, especially the early works written in Italian, English, and French before she opted for Italian in her later writing.

The dissertation focuses on a crucial point of Rosselli's poetry: the plurilingualism which stands at the very heart of her writing, and which remains a constant not only when she actually writes in more than one language – as it happens in the early works – but especially when her language becomes one, but at the same time it remains essentially what could be defined as a "plurilingual monolingualism".

The main claim of this research is that the writing of Amelia Rosselli never loses its multiplicity, even and even more when it becomes essentially monolingual. Indeed, at the moment that the poetical language approximates to become only one, then the plurilingualism of her verses seems to be even enriched.

To verify how this paradoxical situation could happen, the analysis focuses on the early works of Amelia Rosselli, collected and published in the so-called *Primi scritti*, which include several works of the period 1952-1963. The reason for the analysis of this specific phase of Rosselli's production lies in the fact that in these early works all the three main languages of her writing appear simultaneously and all play an active role. Within this context, the analysis aims to focus on the turning point in which Rosselli's writing switches from the phase of plurilingualism to what has been defined as "plurilingual monolingualism".

The dissertation starts with a theoretical introduction, in order to frame the specific topic of the study. The introduction focuses on the history of the critical debate about plurilingualism. In this context, the development of such a wide concept is shortly reviewed, from the several meanings of the term to the analysis of the different critical theories. Starting from the studies on plurilingualism in the psychoanalytic field, the chapter develops a reflection on the deep relationship between

language and identity, from the point of view of the individual and the social existence. Then, the dissertation moves on to a short overview of plurilingualism in the literary field, focusing on the Italian poetry of the 20th century.

The first chapter of the research opens with an in-depth analysis of Rosselli's biography – also including the family correspondence – because the complicated story of her existence is essential to fully understand the development of her poetry. Then, in order to frame this research in a well-defined methodological context, the chapter moves on to a general examination of Rosselli's criticism, highlighting the most relevant studies from a historical point of view. The first chapter ends with a discussion of the specific characteristics of Rosselli's writing, focusing on her way of relating to the linguistic medium. This analysis aims one hand to define the general coordinates of Rosselli's plurilingualism, and on the other hand to outline the research methodology of the thesis, mainly focused on a plurilingual and translingual approach to the poetry of Amelia Rosselli.

As a first focal point of the dissertation stands the analysis of *Primi scritti*, which starts, in the second chapter, from a study of every single work of the *corpus*. Due to methodological reasons, the analysis does not follow the chronological organization established by the author, but it proceeds according to a linguistic progression. This different approach in the study of these early works allowed to uncover important links between the single works of the *corpus* which were not fully explained so far. However, this study plays just a preparatory role for the subsequent comparative analysis. At the end of this preliminary study, the research proceeds towards an attempt to classify these works. The question at this stage of research is: is there any common data – other than linguistic – which associates the works written in the same language and at the same time distinguishes them from the others? According to this purpose, the research focuses on the role that each language plays both in the single work in which it appears and in the whole *corpus*. The first evidence is that the role played by *Primi scritti* seems to go far beyond the boundaries of a collection of juvenilia: the analysis shows how these works have a crucial role in the whole production of Amelia Rosselli. Several times during the analysis have emerged many themes that will recur in the poetry of her later works, that we can find in these early writings. To conclude the overview on *Primi scritti* stands an analysis of crucial themes and figures which are typical of Rosselli's writing since her first works and will contribute to shaping the rest of her future poetry.

In the third chapter, a separate study is dedicated to the *Diario in tre lingue*, despite the work itself is part of the *corpus*. The reason for this choice lies both in the evidence of its complexity and in its central role among the author's poetry. *Diario in tre lingue* is the only work of Amelia Rosselli in which Italian, English, and French all play an active role at the same time. Moreover, this work is unique not only from a linguistic point of view, because it represents a crucial moment of Rosselli's

poetic path, especially concerning her later works, deeply influenced by those early trilingual verses. For this reason, the analysis of the *Diario* represents the second and the main focus around which the research moves.

This analysis of *Primi scritti* contributed to modify the point of view on the whole writing of Amelia Rosselli, also providing the opportunity to question the author's choice of Italian as the main language of poetry, starting from the end of the 1950s. From this study of her early works, we can see how Rosselli's choice to write in a specific language rather than in another one loses its value in itself. Although Italian is certainly the privileged language of her poetry, this code represents just a synthesis of all the other languages used, a synthesis that goes beyond the simple evidence of the traces of English and French that we can find in the Italian writing. At a certain point in her career, the author was able to develop a language that is both unique and multiple and this could have been impossible without the plurilingualism and multiculturalism of *Primi scritti*. What Rosselli does in her juvenilia is not simply a poetical trial with each one of her three languages to establish which one of these could have carried at its best the weight of her writing, but rather she tries to let the codes gradually react together mixing them in such a way that they finally lead to a single language.

All of this could not have happened without that linguistic mixture that express itself at its best in the *Diario in tre lingue*. For this reason, the role of this work as a turning point of Rosselli's production is expressed several times during the research. Before the writing of the *Diario in tre lingue* each code seems to go ahead in itself with its own evolution while starting from this trilingual work it is clear that no language will play a role more important than another because what emerges from the *Diario* is something more than just the sum of each code used in the work, it is a sort of an "all embracing-language", that only nominally we can call Italian. The paradox of Rosselli's writing lies here: her trilingualism acts as a single language and such as a single language it behaves in the poetic practice, while when her poetry will no longer be plurilingual, its monolingualism will remain just an illusion that conceals a mixture of codes.

Only when all the three codes of Rosselli's poetry had reached the same degree of maturity could have been opened the space to that "plurilingual monolingualism" which represents the core of her writing. Precisely in this sense, the compositional experience of the *Diario in tre lingue* stands as a fundamental prerequisite for writing "in Italian": its language mixture is a prelude to a choice that is monolingual just in its appearance because it hides under its surface of "one single language" something that will remain trilingual for the rest of its existence.

Therefore, rather than the assertion of a clear prevalence of the Italian code over the other two ones, it seems to be more appropriate to talk about a "re-meaning" of the linguistic code itself, whatever is the specific language of writing. That "plurilingual monolingualism" which will be at the

core of all the future Rosselli's poetry could have originated only from the mixture of the *Diario*, in which all the codes are capable of generating meanings that go beyond the specificity of every single language.

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