CHAPTER 8

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2020: Contagion

8.1. Introduction

The writing of these conclusions is not what we expected. When we mapped out the shape of this book, we left ourselves a space here to sketch out some preliminary conclusions about our writing present: 2020. We had expected some degree of continuity. Instead, we found ourselves at what appeared to be a major point of rupture. As 2020 dawned, COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) hit, and the year began to take a catastrophic turn. On 31 January 2020, the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Europe were uncovered in Italy. Clusters of infections soon appeared in the north of the country, where the first hospitalizations and deaths were recorded. At first, just a few municipalities closed their doors, then, on 8 March 2020, all of Lombardy and fourteen additional provinces faced drastic measures to try to contain the spread. Meanwhile cases across Europe and elsewhere in the world escalated. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a pandemic. A week later, Italy made international headlines as chilling photographs of a military convoy carrying coffins from a hospital in Bergamo towards a crematorium out of town struck fear into the heart of the continent. By 21 March 2020, the Italian Government, under Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, had shut all non-essential industry and businesses across the peninsula, and radically restricted the movement of people. Italy was in what quickly became known as its first national lockdown.

The shutters came down on the culture industry. On 21 March 2020, those working in theatre, cinema, galleries, publishing houses, concert halls, music venues, and other parts of the culture industry shut their doors and went home. The creative and cultural industries, along with tourism, were the hardest hit sectors in Italy. Venue-based sectors, like museums, performative arts, festivals, and cinema were particularly battered, especially as many of the profits from re-distributed consumer demand went to huge global companies, such as Netflix and YouTube, rather than to local organizations. So, with a sudden suspension of normality and places of physical exhibition firmly shut, what happened to the intermingling of arts and media? Did the coronavirus pandemic signal a rupture in the intermedial journey we are mapping, or are there threads of continuity? Did COVID-19 create new opportunities for the arts, and has it inspired new forms of creative expression? And what will the future bring? While it is too early to answer these questions

definitely, we will endeavour to put together some preliminary thoughts about them here.

COVID-19 has been more than a virus; it is a global crisis that has caused immense human suffering. It is a vehicle of disruption, which has required each one of us to adapt to a radically changed political, institutional, technological, and social environment. It is, to quote philosopher Bruno Latour, a 'huge experiment'.[1] And, as Slavoj Žižek observes, it has had a massive effect on our behaviours:

> Avoid touching things which may be dirty, avoid embracing others or shaking hands [...] and be especially careful about how you control your own body and your spontaneous gestures: do not touch your nose or rub your eyes — in short, do not play with yourself [...] We should learn to control and discipline ourselves. Only virtual reality will be considered safe.[2]

Žižek's analysis points to one of the key reasons behind the massive move online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtuality provided a safe, clean, and accessible space. It served as a refuge and retreat from problems associated with physical contact: a 'safe' alternative to a material world that was revealed overnight as full of contaminated things. However, virtuality was not the only refuge during the pandemic. A second kind of retreat took place simultaneously: a retreat into domestic space, into the nuclear family, the life of a couple, or, for some, into solitude. At its worst, this second form of retreat brought terrible isolation, made harsher still by bereavement. At its best, it brought a pause and a moment for reflection. For many, the first lockdown even provided a stimulus for creativity: from baking to writing, painting, or singing.

Paradoxically, as people withdrew from public life and space, many also experienced a reinforced sense of interconnectedness, both virtually and at the local level. Walled into small pockets of their neighbourhoods, Italians saw an opportunity to re-connect with their immediate surroundings. After decades of commuting and international travel, the world's sailors (to use Walter Benjamin's analogy) became tillers of the earth: collecting local lore from the world directly around themselves, with all its minute interconnections.[3] Lockdown revealed the importance of local habitats, but also the numerous ways in which these habitats remained reliant on national and transnational chains of economic, political, technological, and cultural exchange, from primary goods to healthcare, information, and entertainment. At this level, the experience of the pandemic triggered an extraordinary expansion of what Michael Cronin has called microspective knowledge: attention to the material foundations of everyday life *and* to the patterns of global connectivity that underpin local attachments and responsibilities.[4] Bruno Latour, who is fascinated by interconnections, has suggested that COVID-19 gave us a model of contamination, showing us how something can go global 'just by going from one mouth to another [...], an incredible demonstration of network theory'.[5]He reads the pandemic as highly networked, and capable of 'link[ing] "all humans" by passing by way of our apparently inoffensive droplets from coughing'.[6] Germs, for Latour, enable us 'to see associations between many actors, most of whom do not have human forms'. Latour therefore sees COVID-19 as an opportunity to 'put a question mark over each [...]

indispensable connection', re-examining 'what is desirable and what has ceased to be, what chains to reconstruct, and which to interrupt'.[7]

In his last monograph, *After Lockdown: A Metamorphosis*, Latour further elaborates on this idea. The experience of the pandemic, he suggests, has broken down the illusion of 'boundary line[s] that would distinguish an organism from what surrounds it. Strictly speaking, nothing surrounds us, everything conspires in our breathing'.[8] In this way, COVID-19 marks an epistemological challenge to those self-styled 'moderns', who — in the words of an earlier book by Latour — saw man as a 'being par excellence capable of extricating itself from nature [...] thanks to its soul, its culture, or its intelligence'.[9] The pandemic, according to the French philosopher, has shattered anthropocentric illusions of human exceptionalism and has made humans aware of the stark limits of our humble, earthbound existence: we are, for Latour, termite-like in our attachment to place. Other environmental thinkers have echoed this insight, and Latour's demands for a re-thinking of political and existential priorities. According to human geographer Andreas Malm, the coronavirus pandemic, the climate emergency, and the escalating inequalities between and within nations are inextricable. They appear, at a superficial level, like different crises but 'are, on closer inspection, exactly one and the same'.[10] The new coronavirus has emerged from human interactions with non-human animals, whose habitats were ravaged by pollution, deforestation, animal trading, and urban sprawl. COVID-19 then spread through networks of globalized trade and transportation that have long threatened the survival of many non-human species. Similarly, North American journalist David Wallace-Wells has called the pandemic a 'dry run or dress rehearsal for climate change', which made people aware of the existential risks that derive from economic, social, and ecological entanglement:

> In part because of the severity of the disease and the lockdowns it produced, I do think the experience has been eye-opening. In ways that climate change hasn't really managed, COVID-19 has taught us all that we live within nature, no matter how superior we may feel to it or protected against its forces.[11]

How have artists reacted to this new, collective awareness of material entanglement, during the early months of the pandemic? How did they respond to unprecedented tensions between ancient rituals (baking, painting, writing) and new digital realms, between isolation and the experience of a digitally networked and interconnected society, between the rediscovery of the local and the constant awareness of global risks and opportunities?

In this concluding chapter, we map some of the tensions and creative strategies that have emerged across the course of 2020, and which have affected the ways that art is made, across different media. In the next part of the chapter, we pay specific attention to a new fascination with materiality, which we explore through examples from contemporary Italian literature and photography. The third part sheds further light on artistic engagement with virtuality, which has widened and become more intensive, creative, and diverse as a result of the pandemic. Here, we focus on practices of virtual art exhibitions and on the making and distribution of films during lockdown. Finally, we reflect on some key findings of this book and outline

the wider challenges and questions that these pose for academic practice in our field. Our findings raise profound questions for Italian Studies, the academic field in which we, as authors of this book, are positioned, as well as for Modern Languages and area studies more widely. We reflect on how practices of intermediality have developed as a result of the numerous, important changes that have been described in the six preceding chapters. Like any set of concluding remarks, this section leaves ample room for open-ended speculation. We are interested in raising questions that will inspire further analysis and research: an opening-up of debates rather than a closing down of critical inquiry. After all, the journey of intermedial art, in Italy and elsewhere in the world, continues to twist, coil, and mutate.

Our writing present, in 2020, is fluid and uncanonized. Any observations we make here will be in the spirit of a close-up. As we intimated at the beginning of our volume, the present, when seen at close quarters, explodes into a thousand fragments, rather like the enlarged, highly pixelated photographs in Michelangelo Antonioni's famous film, *Blow Up* (1996). It is hard to make out what we have in front of our very eyes. Our analysis of the cultural experience of the pandemic — like any account of the contemporary — is necessarily conditional, and has its origins and theoretical justification in our understanding of the artistic movements that preceded it. We are interested in the relations between lockdown art and the earlier cultural paradigms that were discussed in the previous chapters of this book. How are these earlier orientations (revolution, *Gesamtkunstwerk*, experiment, collapse, hybridity, convergence) re-enforced, transformed, or replaced by contemporary trends? Explaining the present is an arduous, perhaps impossible task, as literary theorist Peter Boxall has indicated. The contemporary is nothing but a lateral blur, which resolves itself into a picture only when we have left it behind, as it fades into distance. Looking around us, we may point with some confidence at what we take to be towering figures. But, as Boxall writes, 'these flickering shapes and quavering points of light have yet to settle into a pattern, and it will take time before we can see them clearly, in relation to each other and according to a shared perspective'.[12] What looks important to us now may not look so to our readers in some years' time. COVID-19 seems, at the time of this writing, to have marked a permanent turning point in how art is produced and consumed, but only time will tell how significant COVID-19 really was.

8.2. Materialities

As we have seen, the collective experience of mass lockdown during the early months of 2020 gave shape to an important re-thinking of the relation between the global and the local, the virtual and the materially embodied, the digital and the domestic. In this context, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a new, heightened awareness of the intimate, physical surroundings of writers and artists, and a focus on the material conditions and contexts of everyday lives: homes, streets, neighbourhoods, gardens, and parks. Many Italian novelists and photographers turned their attention to seemingly ordinary domestic and communal settings, which they had, until now, taken for granted, but which suddenly came to appear

strange and unfamiliar. Plotlines of obligation, opportunity, and desire were brutally interrupted by the pandemic. As a result, familiar spaces that had been trivially associated with everyday life were abandoned, or transformed by new uses. As literary scholar Filippo Milani and cultural geographer Davide Papotti have argued in an illuminating study of lockdown *flânerie*, all urban environments are intimately shaped by quotidian human interactions and, without such interactions, acquire an uncanny appearance: 'il territorio *desertificato*, liberato dall'utilizzo sociale, trasforma anche gli spazi che per definizione sono *pubblici* in spazi che perdono questa funzione di apertura alla società, ma non la loro struttura fisica (che proprio per essi è stata però pensata e costruita)' [*deserted* and stripped of all social functions, even spaces that are by definition *public* lose their purpose and their openness to society, but not their physical structure (which was conceived and shaped precisely to achieve this openness)]. Stripped of their habitual functions, public and domestic spaces came to feature in lockdown art as eerie memorials to a human social world that had ceased to exist: 'lo spazio circostante, infatti, acquisisce una componente *perturbante*' [in this way, the surrounding space acquires an *uncanny* dimension].[13]

If we expand the scope of Milani's and Papotti's perceptive analysis from *flânerie* to other forms of verbal and visual first-person testimony, we can observe the emergence, in spring 2020, of two apparently antithetical tropes that are in fact closely related and mutually dependent: the city-without-us, and the home as a space of solitary confinement. Consider, for example, a collaborative project carried out by photographer Giovanni Cocco and novelist and filmmaker Caterina Serra, which led to the creation of a co-authored photographic and poetic portrait of lockdown Venice, *Displacement: a che ora chiude Venezia?* [*Displacement: When Does Venice Close?*]. Authored in early spring 2020 and published in 2021, this intermedia text is arranged as a triptych. It consists of ten photographs of Venice, taken by Cocco in 2015–16 and divided here into two groups of five. Collectively, these images provide the visual frame for a short, creative-critical essay, 'Corpo città' [City Body], in which Serra conjures a sense of loss and existential dismay. For Cocco and Serra, fear, grief, and despair have become near-universal experiences. They are shared by all human witnesses of the pandemic, not only in the *Serenissima*:

> Come stiamo? Senza il flusso beota che ora rimpiangiamo, mentre chiudiamo, bar, fabbriche, negozi, scuole e città, e ci perdiamo i riti collettivi, quelli funebri, che la vita non vale per chiunque allo stesso modo, e quelli in cui i corpi si appassionano alla vita, teatri, cinema, musei, gallerie, stanze di un qualche sapere condiviso. Rinchiusi, impauriti, mascherati, disinfettati [...] Stiamo male, stiamo dentro, ci manca il nostro stare fuori che ora non possiamo, liberi prima di ridere come prima delle cose che prima maledicevamo [...]. Ci manca qualcosa che ci aveva già stancati.[14]
>
> [How are we? Without the mindless flow that we now miss and yearn for, as we shut down bars, factories, shops, schools, and cities. We miss our collective ceremonies. The funerary rites that remind us that not all lives have the same worth, and those other rituals, where bodies exult with life: theatres, cinemas, museums, dwellings of a shared knowledge. We are locked up, frightened, masked, disinfected [...] We are unwell. We are inside. We miss being outside,

> now that we can no longer be outside. We want be free to laugh at things, as we did before, at things which annoyed us before [...]. We miss the things that used to make us feel worn out.]

In explicit contrast with the choral, collective 'we' of 'Corpo città', Cocco's photographs of lockdown Venice offer glimpses of an empty city, where *calli* and canals no longer form the predictable vistas of tourist pamphlets and holiday snapshots, but are instead portrayed in a state of almost sinister solitude. Without humans, the contemporary city reveals an unexpected resemblance with the uncanny, cerebral settings of Carlo Carrà's and Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical paintings, as discussed in the second chapter of this book. Communal life appears to have come to a standstill, and the absence of humans conjures confused intimations of unfolding apocalypse. Cultural theorist Mark Fisher has invoked the category of the eerie to describe this evocative power of unexpected, disturbing absences: 'The eerie concerns the most fundamental metaphysical questions one could pose, questions to do with existence and non-existence: Why is there something here when there should be nothing? Why is there nothing here when there should be something?'[15]

Cocco's visual representation of Venice as an eerie city captures the mood of the early months of the pandemic, in Northern Italy, where escalating spirals of contagion and lockdown momentarily appeared to exceed the human ability to imagine. Unprecedented security and safety measures put an abrupt end to social routines and collective obligations that had governed the interactions between individuals and institutions for years, or even decades. Within weeks, the health crisis inspired new practices of care and fresh modes of wakefulness, but also exposed troubling hierarchies of power and stark social inequalities.[16] People who until then had been accustomed to the privileges of peace, affluence, and unrestricted mobility suddenly found themselves exposed to insecurity, fear, and the coercive power of new safety measures, which, according to some, violated basic principles of human dignity.[17] The creative industries, in particular, were hard hit. Furloughs and loss of revenue meant that theatres, galleries, and artists' residencies struggled, even where institutions received public support. In areas with thriving creative economies, such as Venice, the cancellations or postponements of performances, exhibitions, and cultural events were a significant blow to the livelihood of many artists, gallerists, actors, directors, choreographers, and dancers. A cultural talent drain seemed inevitable.[18]

Cocco's and Serra's project must be understood in the context of this experience. Without any contextual awareness, their images of Venice-without-us might appear predictable, or even clichéd. After all, photographic representations of empty cities have a long and distinguished history, which reaches back to the black-and-white images of Paris taken by pioneering documentary photographer Eugène Atget during the early decades of the twentieth century.[19]

As Fredric Jameson has pointed out, visual and filmic representations of the empty city are politically ambivalent. They have been employed by environmental activists and in genre cinema to conjure a sense of existential dread, but, for Jameson, they amount to little more than deliberately anti-historical visions of

Fig. 8.1. Giovanni Cocco, *A che ora chiude Venezia* (2015–16), courtesy Giovanni Cocco.

Fig. 8.2. Eugène Atget, *Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève* (1924), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

urban life. According to the American literary scholar, the utopian imagination is most effective when it is motivated in response to a particular social situation: 'it must respond to specific dilemmas and offer to solve fundamental social problems to which the Utopian writer believes himself to hold the key'.[20] Conventional representations of the city-without-us, by contrast, achieve their extraordinary aesthetic coherence only by ignoring the complexity of actual social life and therefore leave no room for our daily experiences of society as a bewildering chaos of multiple, contradictory and indiscernible forces.[21]

It is important to note that this analysis does not apply to Serra's and Cocco's co-authored portrait of lockdown Venice, where familiar apocalyptic images of the empty city are juxtaposed, across media, with the urgently pleading, collective voice of its unseen inhabitants: the choral monologue 'Corpo città'.

> Oggi Antigone non seppellirebbe più nessuno, forse si stenderebbe per terra, gli occhi al Cielo come fosse anche lei città a guardare da sotto e farsi attraversare, [...] di sicuro occuperebbe qualche spazio precluso, o forse, depressa e frustrata, se ne starebbe mascherata appena fuori da un bar facendo finta che vada bene così.[22]
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> [Today Antigone would no longer bury anybody. Maybe she would lie down on the ground, her eyes raised to Heaven, as if she too were a city, looking from

> below and being crossed. [...] Surely, she would occupy a precluded space. Or perhaps, depressed and frustrated, she would simply sit outside, next to a bar, wearing a mask, pretending that all was well.]

Serra's reference to Sophocles is not coincidental. Like the chorus in ancient Greek tragedy, the co-authors of *Displacement: a che ora chiuse Venezia?*, explore the dramatic tension between scenic exposure and unseen dread. They create a deliberate tension between the city's overexposed, material presence and the uncanny invisibility of its dismayed, awestruck inhabitants. Serra's and Cocco's use of visual and verbal narrative further exacerbates this tension. Photographic images of the empty city point towards episodes of violence, death, and grief that remain invisible and that can only be described and imagined 'offstage', as it were. Serra's verbal narrative mirrors and inverts this strategy by giving voice to an anonymous, collective 'we', the body politic, which remains abstract and therefore absent from the visual narrative. Where the photographs highlight material singularity without agency (the *palazzo*, the square, the canal), 'Corpo città' evokes a collective agency that cannot be represented by any single human member of the community. In this way, Antigone, the city-without-us, serves as an uncanny, symbolic marker of the unseen victims of the pandemic, rendered anonymous by lockdown and mass death.

As Beniamino Della Gala and Lavinia Torti have explained, visual representations of the empty city, in lockdown, invariably evoke and expose the gaze of a confined spectator:

> Durante il confinamento forzato, lo spazio in sé è stato il vero protagonista di questo racconto fotografico. [...] E le gallerie dei quotidiani non cessavano di mostrarcelo: fuori non c'era praticamente nulla, le strade erano deserte, le grandi città finalmente ritrovavano la possibilità di essere *osservate* dalle persone.[23]
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> [During forced confinement, space itself was the real protagonist of every photographic story. [...] And the newspapers, with their galleries of images, showed us what we wanted: outside, there was practically nothing, the streets were deserted, the large cities had finally found a way of letting themselves *be observed* by the people.]

For some Italian photographers, the conditions of the pandemic felt like a challenge and an opportunity. As journalist Michele Smargiassi recalls, many of his colleagues defied lockdown legislation in order to take spectacular pictures of empty cities:

> *I fotografi, anche loro costretti a casa*, prigionieri quarantenici, cosa che per loro è una prigionia doppia, del corpo e dello sguardo. Nei primi giorni ricevevo da alcuni di loro messaggi scalpitanti come cavalli in Scuderia: ma io voglio uscire, questa cosa deve essere documentata, devo fotografarla! *E altri invece a dire: no, ma chi sei tu?*, che privilegi pensi di avere?, il fotografo è forse un uomo speciale, meno contagioso degli altri? Stai a casa come tutti! Ma loro no, i fotografi sono usciti lo stesso, magari col pretesto di andare a fare la spesa, i più attrezzati riparandosi dietro un tesserino professionale, e io dicevo be', siate prudenti, ma fate bene, perché questo tempo d'eccezione non potrà restare senza immagini.[24]
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> [*The photographers were also housebound.* They were quarantine prisoners, which for them is a dual imprisonment, of the body and of the gaze. During the first days, I received messages from some, who were desperate to leave their flats,

> like racehorses in a stable: I want to go outside, this thing must be documented, I have to take pictures! *And others would say: no, who do you think you are?* What privileges do you think you have? Is the photographer a special kind of human being, less contagious than others? Stay at home like everybody else! But the photographers did not stay at home. They went outside anyway, perhaps they pretended to go shopping, and others used their press passes. And I said, be careful, but it is good that you are doing this, because this is an exceptional time and it must not remain without images.]

However, not all writers and artists shared this spirit of optimism and adventure. Whereas Smargiassi described lockdown photography as a heroic duty to posterity, and depicted the journalist as an intrepid explorer in unfamiliar, dangerous territory, the novelist and literary scholar Antonio Scurati played with similar (masculinist) tropes of danger and audacity — the pouncing lion — but reached a more pessimistic conclusion. According to Scurati, COVID-19 came as a shock to a generation of Italians who had only encountered tragedy and existential crisis in mediated forms. For more than thirty years, Scurati writes, affluent citizens of the Global North had grown accustomed to more and more sophisticated forms of televised news coverage. Continuously exposed to images of violence, death, and grief, these spectators paradoxically came to consider collective tragedy as 'unreal', revocable, and reversible. Over a period of three decades, television and social media had progressively transformed war and disaster into one more mediated event among many others. This *banalization* of violence, according to Scurati, had its historical origins in the heavily televised military campaigns of the Gulf War of 1991:

> Certo, avevamo vent'anni la notte del 17 gennaio del 1991 quando gli aerei della coalizione anti-Saddam bombardarono Baghdad in nome nostro in diretta televisiva. Ma si trattò, per l'appunto, di una 'inesperienza', cioè di un'esperienza deprivata dei tratti caratteristici dell'esperienza vissuta: la continuità, l'irreversibilità, la fatidicità. Dopo aver assistito allo spettacolo di morte e distruzione, si poteva spegnere la tv e andarsene a letto...[25]
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> [Yes, we were twenty years old on the night of 17 January 1991, when the fighter jets of the anti-Saddam coalition dropped bombs on Baghdad, in our name, on live television. But that was in fact an 'inexperience'. I mean to say, it was an experience that had been deprived of all the important attributes of lived experience: continuity, irreversibility, fatefulness. After watching the spectacle of death and destruction, we switched off the TV and went to bed.]

The Gulf War was just the beginning, according to Scurati. In 2001, mass media transformed the 9/11 terrorist attacks from a human tragedy into a 'piag[a] dell'immaginario collettivo' [scourge of the collective imagination].[26] More recently, the same strategies were employed to create an artificial distance between the experiences of migrants and the lives of Italians, who enjoyed their summer holidays on the same beaches that had become synonymous with Europe's brutal border regime in the Mediterranean and with the suffering and violent death of innumerable refugees:

> Noi siamo stati guerrieri da salotto, bagnanti sulle spiagge dei migranti, i nostri

> drammi hanno assunto la forma di psicodrammi, la sindrome da attacchi di panico è stata la patologia tipica della nostra psiche collettiva. [...] Una reazione utile se s'incontra un leone nella savana. Solo che, nel caso del panico, il leone non c'è. Adesso purtroppo, il leone c'è. E come in una sorta di beffarda nemesi storica, ha assunto la forma impalpabile, microscopica, quasi fantasmatica, ma terribilmente reale, e potenzialmente ubiqua, dell'epidemia.[27]
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> [We were living-room-warriors; bathing tourists on the beaches of migrants. Our dramas were psychodramas. Panic attacks were the typical pathology of our collective psyche. [...] A useful reaction if you meet a lion in the savannah. Except that, in the case of our panic attacks, there was no lion. Now unfortunately, the lion is here. And, in a gesture of antagonistic historical mockery, it has taken a form that is impalpable, microscopic, almost ghostly, but nevertheless terribly real, and potentially ubiquitous: the form of the pandemic.]

Scurati's argument can be summarized as follows: unlike previous experiences of catastrophe, the coronavirus pandemic has shaken the foundations of our collective imagination, for two reasons. First, the virus marks a potential threat to every person, across differences of class, gender, and citizenship. Secondly, it cannot be *pictured* and therefore resists the dominant logic of the society of the spectacle. On this point, Scurati's argument runs directly counter to the analysis of distinguished media theorist Michele Cometa, who, in his recent book, *Cultura visuale* [*Visual Culture*] has described the COVID-19 pandemic as a new *pictorial turn*, following the age of terrorism. According to Cometa, the experience of the pandemic has shifted public attention away from complex written arguments. In their place, charts and graphs have been awarded an almost totemic status:

> [Si tratta] in realtà [di] una serie di immagini, che in un certo senso chiudono l'era del terrore e ne aprono un'altra, ancora più inquietante e certamente foriera di un ulteriore *pictorial turn*, non può che essere legata alla contingente pandemia. È sicuro che le immagini della pandemia continueranno a ossessionarci per molto tempo.[28]
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> [They are in fact a series of images, and in a certain sense they mark the end of the age of terror and the beginning of another, even more disturbing age. They are certainly indicative of a further pictorial turn, which is undoubtedly linked to the ongoing pandemic. It is certain that these images of the pandemic will continue to haunt us for a long time.]

Scurati, by contrast, insists that the experience of the pandemic remains essentially and fundamentally unrepresentable.

Literary testimonies of the lockdown of 2020 offer further, interesting evidence of this tension between visibility and invisibility. Like Cocco's and Serra's hybrid narrative, they also exemplify the emergence of a new, collective attention to the materiality of everyday life. Consider, for instance, novelist Paolo Giordano, who decided in February 2020 to keep a record of his experiences, so that the new insights triggered by this unexpected, unfolding catastrophe would not be lost:

> Ho deciso d'impiegare questo vuoto scrivendo. Per tenere a bada i presagi, e per trovare un modo migliore di pensare tutto questo. [...] [N]on voglio perdere ciò che l'epidemia ci sta svelando di noi stessi. Superata la paura, ogni

> consapevolezza volatile svanirà in un instante — succede sempre così con le malattie.[29]
>
> [I have decided to write, to fill that void. To keep my fears at bay and to find a better way of thinking about all this. [...] I don't want to miss out on what the epidemic is revealing about us. Once we have overcome our fears, this volatile awareness will vanish in an instant. That is what always happens when one is ill.]

Published by Einaudi in March 2020, Giordano's brutally intimate account narrates the earliest phase of the coronavirus pandemic in Italy as a paradoxical catastrophe that can be described in precise mathematical terms, but which resists conventional means of artistic expression: 'La parola "caos" ci dà l'idea di qualcosa che sfugge alla presa della matematica, della razionalità stessa. E invece no. Esistono tecniche raffinate ed efficienti per governare anche la confusione' [The word 'chaos' implies that something escapes the grasp of mathematics, of rationality itself. But no. We have refined and efficient techniques, which manage even confusion].[30] While epidemiologists can rely on sophisticated techniques of representation, according to Giordano, writers and visual artists have struggled to give meaningful form to the complex experience of the pandemic. It is hard to find the right words: 'Molto in questa crisi ha a che fare con il tempo', writes Giordano. 'Ci ritroviamo compressi e rabbiosi, come imbottigliati nel traffico, ma senza nessuno intorno' [In this crisis, a lot has to do with time. We find ourselves compressed and angry, as if we were stuck in a traffic jam, but there is nobody around].[31]

In Giordano's diary, anxieties over the limits of literary representation find expression in a deliberately rudimentary form of autobiographical first-person writing. The coronavirus pandemic, for Giordano, is a story so new that it can only be told at the level of intimate, lived experience. Consequently, his account of the pandemic unfolds like a series of snapshots from a new, unfamiliar world: a logbook, a meticulous record of emotions, rumination, and very little action. A strikingly similar approach can be found in the lockdown diary of Triestine writer Paolo Rumiz, who compares his experiences of spring 2020 to the highly regulated life of the inhabitants of a monastic charterhouse. Like a monk, Rumiz believes in the importance of self-imposed strictures which, for him, serve to elevate both the individual spirit and the wellbeing of the collective.

> Regola non è regolamento, formulario prestampato, imposizione. È autoregolamentazione intima, convinta, in un quadro condiviso di società civile. L'esatto contrario dell'ubbidienza cieca e della rinuncia della libertà. Qualcosa che riabilita persino la mascherina antivirus, ne fa un simbolo di rispetto verso il prossimo e le impedisce di diventare, come qualcuno vorrebbe, museruola.[32]
>
> [A rule is not a regulation, a pre-printed form, or an imposition. It is a form of self-regulation that stems from an intimate conviction, and that exists in the shared framework of civil society. It is the exact opposite of blind obedience or the denial of freedom. It even rehabilitates the antiviral facemask, and makes it a symbol of respect for others. It prevents the mask from becoming a muzzle, as some would claim.]

Firmly rooted in the present, Rumiz's diary ponders the interlocking temporalities of the emotions: nostalgia, regret, anxiety, and fear. His writing is rich in quotidian settings and in intimately personal detail. It features the study, the view from the window, the personal library, the kitchen with its limited stocks, and so on. From this minimal place of safety, Rumiz describes the pandemic as a condition of dwindling possibilities. The claustrophobic security of the writer's home is contrasted with the force of the pandemic, which appears like an unpredictable and intimately threatening force: a hostile ocean. Unlike Giordano or Scurati, Rumiz has no doubt about the social importance of literature. Reaching back in time, beyond the crisis of cultural institutions of the late 1960s and early 1970s — as discussed in Chapter 5 — he insists that writers can bestow symbolic meaning on the experience of lockdown by relating it metaphorically to earlier existential struggles in human history. This conviction is expressed in the title of Rumiz's diary, *Il veliero sul tetto: appunti per una clausura* [*The Sailing Ship on the Roof: Notes for an Enclosure*] and is also echoed in an emblematic passage, where the writer's home is imagined as a ship. 'Siamo barricati, con vista sul deserto della terra, del mare e dell'aria, e la casa miagola, geme come una barca e talvolta rimbomba come un pianoforte pieno di vento' [We are barricaded. We look out across the desert of the land, the sea, and the air. And the house meows and moans like a ship, and sometimes it rumbles like a piano full of wind].[33] The same peculiar, seemingly anachronistic insistence on the timelessness of human experience is echoed in Rumiz's deliberate choice of a single artistic medium: the written word. In the context of a momentous, collective shift towards intermedial and virtual creativity — which will be more fully described in the next section of this chapter — Rumiz's insistence on the social relevance of literature seems almost a provocation. Like the monks or the seafaring captains of bygone eras, the solitary writer, for Rumiz, is a figure of the past, whose experience continues to hold unexpected relevance for our tumultuous present.

A comprehensive study of Italian literary and visual lockdown diaries would serve to reveal further similarities and shared concerns. During the early months of 2020, Rumiz, Giordano, Serra, and Cocco were joined in their endeavours by writer-diarists Francesco Cataluccio, Chiara Gamberale, and Antonio Moresco, by photographer Giulio Di Meo, cartoonist Zerocalcare, and many others.[34] Collectively, their recollections of spring 2020 provide a powerful record of an unprecedented, communal experience of shock and disorientation. As in previous periods discussed in this volume, we note a strong connection between artistic creativity and experiences of crisis. In the second half of the twentieth century, this relation could be observed, for instance, at the turn of the 1970s, as noted in Chapter 5. Earlier still, it emerged powerfully after major military conflicts, as we saw with Italian Futurism and the Fascist reappropriation of the trauma of the Great War. Similarly, many lockdown diarists of the early 2020s shared a sense that modes of artistic representation had been put to an extreme test by the singular experience of the pandemic.

8.3. The View from the Sofa: Glimpsing the Future?

Exploring COVID-19 forces us to take stock of the transformation that occurred in Italy towards the end of the 1990s, one which the sudden, massive move online, created by lockdown, radically accelerated. The pandemic requires us to ask again some fundamental questions about the nature of art. During lockdown, most forms of art, for their very survival, were compelled to abandon the materiality that still largely defined them ten or fifteen years ago. In the previous chapter, we mentioned how, back in 2007, *Global Stage* threw the status of theatre into question, as its materiality was gradually challenged and eroded through its evolving proximity to cinema screens. Peggy Phelan's claim that theatre is defined by its 'ontological' privilege of being live in the present and therefore not reproducible,[35] and Lars Elleström's subsequent claim that 'theatre cannot be stored',[36] were further challenged by what happened during lockdown. Suddenly, theatre could only be experienced through a screen.

Where media theorists of the 1990s postulated performance as a natural limit to virtual creativity, the closure of venues under lockdown revealed the possibility of new forms of creative innovation, at the intersection of digital and performance art. An interesting example is offered by *Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe*, a cooperation project among theatres, festivals, and cultural organizations from ten EU countries, co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme, and managed from Rome by co-directors Claudia Di Giacomo and Roberta Scaglione.[37] In direct response to the restrictions of 21 March 2020, Scaglione and Di Giacomo decided to produce a film, 'Theatre Insights: Stories from Fabulamundi', which collates and presents some of the projects that were scheduled to take place over the following months and which had to be abandoned in their initially envisaged form because of the pandemic. The film, which is freely available online, serves as a record of the transition of theatre from stage to screen — or, for the public, from the shared space of the auditorium to the claustrophobic intimacy of private homes. Like many of the examples that we discuss in this chapter, 'Theatre Insights' defied categorizations and definitions that yoke specific art forms to their materiality.

With COVID-19, categorizations of media, we contend, require further consideration, especially as virtual experiences of 2020 have accelerated a growing interest in extended realities — what Mark Zuckerberg in 2021 would define as the 'metaverse'.[38] With the first lockdown of March 2020, the trend of ever more collaborative, complex, and intermedial art — art that challenged historic categorizations and delineations — accelerated almost overnight. Institutions and individuals that had previously paid little attention to the opportunities and dynamics of virtual exchange found themselves unexpectedly dependent on sometimes unfamiliar technologies and new forms of communication. While some found themselves struggling for visibility and attention, others appeared to relish the challenges of the new. Where technology had not already been fully embraced, those involved in the creation and dissemination of art had, at the very least, to seriously consider that embrace.[39]

As Italians, and many others across the world, sat at home in March 2020 to

consume culture almost exclusively through available domestic screens (TV, laptop, tablet, PC, phone) or radio, few may have thought how significant the change was for a medium's modality. However, Christian Caliandro, writing in Italian magazine *Art Tribune*, claimed that COVID-19 had thrown into crisis the very model of art consumption, as globalized, art-related travel suddenly halted.[40] Galleries, art fairs, fashion shows, and museums, none of which had been first created on technological platforms, rapidly needed to find ways of inhabiting virtual three-dimensional space if they were to continue their activity at all. Responding to the government's call *#IoRestoACasa, la cultura non si ferma* [*#ImStayingAtHome: Culture won't stop*] virtual viewing rooms and virtual environments were rapidly established across the peninsula. While this did little to attenuate the financial losses of museums, theatres or other venues, it meant that in seconds a global audience could be 'inside' certain spaces, such as the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, through platforms like Google 360°. Such platforms, through the use of 360° photographs of internal spaces, encouraged us to enjoy a private viewing of the paintings in a gallery's hyperreal, if rather sterile, seemingly three-dimensional rooms, without even jostling with other visitors for a view.

The substitution of virtual space for the real was for many artists simply an emergency solution. Mario Gerosa from the Brera Academy Virtual Lab referred to it as 'un virtuale necessario, da assumere come una medicina amara (per tanti) ma inevitabile' [a necessary virtual, that for many is to be taken like a bitter, but necessary pill].[41] However, with the high costs of hiring gallery space, the vast number of artworks in storage which are never seen, and the ever greater improvements in technology, it is clear that these virtual showcases set up during COVID-19 are likely to remain with us, and develop further, as alternative exposition spaces. Until 2020, websites provided little more than a virtual sidecar to the 'real' exhibition. By contrast, the future will see a more integrated partnership of real and virtual, as can already be seen with major exhibitions in Italy and elsewhere.[42] We expect that many three-dimensional exhibitions will be made available to a global public in virtual space, while also continuing to welcome perhaps smaller numbers of visitors in person. Around the corner, there is the computer-generated, extended reality (XR), which in 2021 gained significant media interest, as Facebook announced its name change to Meta. This signalled an interest in the 'metaverse', an imagined immersive space, blending virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR). Heralded as the future of the internet, the metaverse could have significant consequences for the ongoing dismantling of boundaries between art forms. After all, advances in technology and digitalization have repeatedly led to increased intermediality, as we have argued elsewhere in this book.[43]

While large, mainstream online galleries like the Uffizi have fundamentally just exported their physical collection into 360° platforms online, creating a realistic virtual copy, more experimental developments can be found on the fringes of COVID-19-related digitalization. Going beyond the bitter, if necessary, medicine of the virtual, these new expressions of intermediality sought to overcome some of the evident limitations of current 360° platforms. Let us look at the example of Bruno Cerboni's *Virtual Dante*, which uses 360° technology, but takes it a couple

of steps further. On the 700th anniversary of Dante's death, Cerboni remediated Dante's *Divina commedia* (1308–20) and Gustave Doré's illustrations (1861) in a virtual gallery which showcases Cerboni's own virtual, psychedelic paintings. These paintings are themselves 'un condensato di tutto: gli arazzi medievali, i mosaici ravennati, i gobelins, i videogiochi, la realtà virtuale, Gustave Doré' [a condensation of everything: medieval hangings, mosaics from Ravenna, tapestries, videogames, virtual reality, Gustave Doré].[44] Cerboni had previously exhibited his art in *Second Life* so, unsurprisingly, his virtual gallery blends a range of audiovisual elements (including the readings from Dante's *Divina commedia* which accompany the paintings).

The De Carlo Virtual Space is another such example, born not of necessity but certainly benefiting from the traffic of COVID-19's many sofa surfers.[45] It was created by a Milanese start-up in 2017, and resulted in this private Milan gallery becoming the first real-time virtual art gallery in Italy. While visitors can get into it from a laptop, it is its use of immersive VR, on the Oculus platform, which is especially interesting from our perspective. The Oculus technology, which requires viewers to wear a helmet and gloves to interact with the digital world, takes the gallery well beyond a Google 360° experience, which was already familiar to most through Google Streetview. A 360° gallery visit is firmly grounded in photography, and ultimately entails navigating 3D hyperreal photographs. It somewhat clumsily allows visitors to navigate a space, homing in on art works by means of zooming. Oculus technology, by contrast, positions the De Carlo Virtual Space as a complexly intermedial 3D experience. Its first frame of reference is videogaming, but this is fused with film, photography, and art, as well as drawing in user interaction and performativity through the embodied nature of the VR experience.

Only time will tell what becomes of virtual galleries, with their ability to showcase all forms of art — whether created digitally (Cerboni) or in the material world (the Uffizi gallery). For now, we can observe how virtual environments such as *Second Life*, which had their golden age in 2007–08, are suddenly snatched from obscurity and propelled into new life. Meanwhile, the rapid rise of the NFT (non-fungible token) during 2020 has enabled artists to create online art, which is unique and collectible, and cannot to be transferred between people. This new, digitally produced intermedial art has given shape to a thriving art market, which is likely to grow in the future, especially if artists expand into the metaverse. Digital art is already big business.[46]

However, the transformation of artistic media during the pandemic was not just about accessing galleries from the sofa, which ultimately remained a minority pursuit. One of the cultural forms to undergo the most significant transformation during COVID-19 lockdowns was cinema, an industry which was temporarily put on pause. Here, again, the changes that occurred during the pandemic largely accelerated trends that were already in place, rather than marking a new departure.

In 2020, filmmaker Daniele Vicari made a film that brought the COVID-19 experience to our screens, albeit allegorically. Unlike a second film on COVID-19 made in 2020 — a rather predictable comedy entitled *Lockdown all'italiana*

[*Lockdown, Italian Style*] (dir. Enrico Vanzina) — Vicari's *Il giorno e una notte* [*A Day and a Night*] was made *during* one of Italy's lockdowns. It describes the lives of four couples during an imaginary chemical terrorist attack on Rome which forces everyone indoors for twenty-four hours. Three of the couples are thrown suddenly and awkwardly together during COVID-19. The fourth couple is separated by the attack. Before looking at the film itself, it is worth pausing to consider the way it was made and then distributed, as it signals the radical transformation that cinema is undergoing as well as the forging of new relationships across the arts and media. COVID-19 is inscribed both on the film's subject matter and into the very texture of its making.

Let us start at the end, with the film's distribution, as this raises important questions. With Italy's cinemas either shut or at constant risk of closure, it made good business sense to use a streaming platform, the only guaranteed way of reaching an audience. Vicari chose one of Italy's national platforms, *RaiPlay*, to distribute the film online. Born in 2016 from the longer-standing web portal Rai.tv, *RaiPlay* took charge of the lion's share of distribution; the idea was that if the film were released in cinemas, it would be for a short additional run only. This seemingly innocent switch of platform from cinema to streaming catapulted Vicari into the galaxy of post-cinema, about which there has recently been renewed discussion.[47] His film has been viewed not on a large cinema screen in a darkened movie theatre, but on a variety of electronic devices, from smartphones and tablets to domestic television screens. In so doing, Vicari has surrendered any control over how the film will be viewed — the quality of sound, size of the image, the way that his film may jostle for the spectators' attention with news websites, social media messages, and other audiovisual material on their devices, are all out of his hands. While some viewers may turn off the lights and try to regain the cinema experience in their own homes, others have presumably watched his film distractedly, 'transitory spectators [...] localis[ing] transitory images'.[48]

Film critic Darren Paul Fisher contends that it is unlikely, after COVID-19, that things will return to normal. For Fisher, we are entering a period of hybrid distribution, where streaming and cinema releases will have to find new ways of co-existing, as films are likely to be released simultaneously at home and in the cinema.[49] This has enormous consequences for two media that were once well-differentiated: television and cinema. The old, hierarchical view of their relationship was recently expressed by the director of the 2018 Cannes Film Festival, Thierry Frémaux, who ruled out giving awards to films that would be distributed solely on streaming platforms like Netflix. In this way, Frémaux divided cinema and streaming into well-sheared sheep and noisy goats: cinema was art and television was 'media'; television series were industrial, but films were poetry.[50] The polemics at Cannes, triggered by Frémaux's position, shone a spotlight on a process already in place. In Italy, the boundaries between television and cinema had already been blurred by works like Paolo Sorrentino's high-profile and highly 'cinematic' series, *The Young Pope* (2016) and *The New Pope* (2020), both made for Sky Atlantic's streaming service. While Sorrentino himself described the projects as 'a long film',[51]

they were consumed by many, if not most, as a series, and they sit in the peculiar in-between space that streaming represents: an ambiguity most marked by Netflix, whose very name embodies cinema, even as it screens what would once have been categorized as television series.[52]

Any discussion of *Il giorno e la notte*, however, must go beyond the argument over the ever-diminishing boundaries between cinema and television. The content of the film itself draws in a larger and more fluid constellation of the post-cinema galaxy, as we can see from the video messages sent between the young couple in the film, Ida (Isabella Rangonese) and Luca (Matteo Martari), whose flirtation is brutally interrupted by the lockdown. Ida's story is simple and dramatic: she has just met a young university researcher, Luca. While she is separated from him during the terrorist attack, she discovers that she is pregnant. To communicate with Luca across a material divide, she sends him sensual creations made on her mobile phone, like a short video showing an intense close-up of a flower blossoming between her lips. These creations, which have all the poetry and abstraction of amateur videoart, are Isabella Rangonese's own, made prior to shooting. So, Rangonese emerges as an amateur artist in her own right, having, like many, turned to filming (and watercolours, which also feature in the film) to kill the boredom of lockdown. Her appropriation of her mobile phone's camera as an artistic device makes her a co-creator in the film.

In one film segment, we see the neo-couple exchanging video messages almost like love gifts: Ida's are artistic and poetic; Luca's comedic and naturalistic. He takes his mobile phone and pans across the rural Veneto landscape, videoing a braying donkey, which seems to give voice to a kind of wordless howl, an expression of what so many felt during the isolation of lockdown. That these two young people communicate so naturally through amateur filmmaking is testimony to the rapid technological journey which has taken us from the birth of the Super8 film cameras (used in the early 1970s by UFO, as discussed in Chapter 5) to the first digital videocameras at the end of the 1990s, through the birth of YouTube (2005), and to today's powerful mobile phones and attendant editing programmes with their advanced videomaking capacity. In just a few decades, digital filmmaking has been democratized, emerging as a mainstream creative pursuit. This has made amateur filmmakers or photographers of almost everyone.

A little later in the film, we see a series of still photographs of Luca, presumably also (supposedly) on his mobile phone, as well as split screens, emulating Zoom, which show both Ida and Luca concurrently. This play with diverse parts of the post-cinema galaxy — from home video to photography to videoart and filmmaking — is made self-consciously explicit from the outset of the film when Luca approaches a camera positioned in front of him. His first words are 'registrazione audio partita' [sound recording on], as he holds up a slate in front of the camera. He begins the film as both actor and filmmaker. Like every actor in the film, he must set up his set, camera, and lighting himself, with Vicari present only to direct via Zoom. Italy's social distancing requirements at the time of filming meant that the actors had to assume various aspects of the filmmaking process normally assigned to designated members of a troupe. The actors effectively become artists and are

credited with their work in the film's titles. The heightened importance of the artist as polymath is obvious here. The polymath is a figure which has emerged at various points in this book already (Edoardo Sanguineti, Mario Ricci, Carlo Lizzani, to name just a few), and draws together into a single person multiple modes of art, often becoming a catalyst for the creation of multimedial and intermedial art. As such, the polymath is an important part of our story in this book. It is a story that began with the mediatic and interdisciplinary versatility of the Futurists, with their heady mix of craft, fine arts, design, and technology, including the much-revered designer-architects of post-war Italy, and now encompasses design as a practice that touches all aspects of the everyday.[53]

Vicari's film reveals a slice of the post-cinema landscape in which images are ubiquitous — on mobile phones (both moving images and still photographs), on computers (Zoom calls), and on the television, where the news of the imagined attack unfolds. It is a highly screen-orientated ecosystem, and as such it is flexible, mobile, and easy to use. When we looked at the expansion of cinema in our discussion of Carlo Lizzani's *Global Stage* (Chapter 7), cinema, which is a highly intermedial form, was already interweaving itself into various media — satellite, DVD, multimedia, television, and videogames — and an infrastructure to support this was developing. Fast-forwarding to 2020, what we are seeing is a further dissolution of the boundaries, as well as a confirmation that if, in 2007, it was still uncertain whether the digital would really turn out to be more democratizing or elitist, it has now, on many levels, become user-friendly and easily accessible. Rangonese can try her hand at home with watercolours or videoart equally. While we may already take this flexibility for granted, it is a result of very recent digital transformation.

The critic Francesco Casetti draws on the galaxy metaphor in Marshall McLuhan's renowned *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) when he entitles his book on post-cinema *The Lumière Galaxy* (2015). This is how he expresses what has happened to cinema:

> I was interested in retrieving the idea of 'galaxy'. It synthesizes perfectly the image of an experience no longer localized in a single point, ready to assume different forms, at the crossroads with other kinds of experience and yet still characterized by its own identity. Along the full arc of the twentieth century, cinema has been a brilliant and immediately recognizable star shining over our heads. This is no longer the case. A cosmic deflagration has taken place, and that star has exploded into a thousand suns, which in turn have attracted new celestial material and formed new systems: These new suns govern new planets. The stuff cinema is made of is still present in these heavenly spheres, but what we now face is a configuration of a vast and differentiated array of celestial bodies.[54]

With these words as a guide, we can step into another part of that post-deflagration galaxy. During the 2020 lockdowns, we saw an explosion of video-mapping across Italian towns and cities. On many occasions, it was used to express public gratitude towards hospital workers for their extraordinary efforts in combatting COVID-19. It was also used by individuals sitting in their rooms, just to break the boredom and to project themselves beyond their four walls. Alessio Chinni, for instance, a

young man from Foggia living in Barcelona, lit up the buildings surrounding his home with a light and music show that attracted a curious audience in the streets below. With museums and galleries shut, some galleries, like Palazzo Biscaccioni in Jesi, projected their artworks on the outside of the buildings, for all to see. Video-mapping, which is closely tied to street art and VJ-ing, has long been linked to cinema, as we see in Giuseppe Tornatore's *Nuovo cinema paradiso* (1988), where in one scene the projectionist turns a lens around so that the people gathered in the square can, to their delight, see a film projected onto the houses of the piazza. Through its animation of architecture, video-mapping plays with the interface between two-dimensional art (the film) and three-dimensional volume (architecture), reshaping them both into new forms, and providing a new form of public storytelling — whether that is telling the Christian nativity story, as we see in many Italian towns in December, or thanking people for their sacrifices during COVID-19.

Daniele Vicari's film and Palazzo Biscaccioni form part of a new galaxy of intermedial dialogues that has been highlighted by digital technology. *Il giorno e la notte* points to the dismantling of boundaries of television and cinema, photography, and videoart, as well as revealing the diminishing barriers between professional and amateur filmmaking on mobile phones. The video-mapping by Palazzo Biscaccioni and others, which accelerated during COVID-19, on the other hand, plays with the interface of moving images and silent, unmoving (but textured) architecture. Both demonstrate that moving images have long left the cinema frame, which held them during the interwar period, and are roaming across wide canvases like castle walls, as well as tiny mobile phone rectangles. This roaming opens an ever-changing, fluid world of artistic inter-play.

Marshall McLuhan sees the genesis of a medium as critical — a genesis is forged in its DNA. He believes that cinema's DNA is the big screen, big actions, huge human images. While his claims ring true for both cinema in the early and mid-twentieth century and for contemporary video-mapping, Grusin's alternative understanding of the genesis of cinema — born not on the big screen but in a myriad of often privately viewed, pre-cinematic modes — is perhaps more accurate for the galaxy of screens we have been discussing here. If cinema on the big screen was a paradigmatic medium for the first half of the twentieth century — the most important intermedial medium of that time — it no longer stands on that pedestal in the collective imaginary. The so-called 'death of cinema' 'goes hand in hand with the proliferation of the filmic image'.[55] We are inside 'a post-cinematic landscape where film can no longer be disconnected from other art forms and media'.[56] When we look at cinema in 2020, it emerges that there is no longer an 'in-between' at play, a term that implies the space between two solid disciplines. Instead, we are firmly in the world of the post medium, where the filmic image moves fluidly from vast projections on castle walls to intimate and personal videoart.

8.4. Thinking Forward

COVID-19 has acted as an accelerant in a constantly mutating process of virtualization and intermedial connection that was already well established before 2020. Even where artworks remained material and local, this mixing can be clearly seen. From our current position, there is almost no sense of a medium or art form 'that exists in itself', but rather only media that exist 'in relation to or in collaboration with other media'.[57] This loss of art and media boundaries might appear on the surface to be swift, recent, and radical, but its roots are complex and intriguing, and stretch back a long way, as we have shown in this book. In our introduction, we looked to a chart created by Fluxus artist and critic Dick Higgins (1995, Fig. 1.1), in which he visualizes the overlapping of various artistic media. Each medium is bounded by a neat line, even where media intersect with others and are overlapped by them. This approach is rooted in patterns of thinking that we considered in Chapter 4, in our discussion of Gruppo 63. From the perspective of 2020, however, Higgins's approach appears limited and dated. Contemporary experiences of aesthetic encounter and art practice are no longer adequately captured by his territorially 'grounded' metaphors. Where Higgins invites us to think of zones of influence and places of encounter and transgression that are imagined to be as stable and reliable as pastures, many contemporary artists imagine their engagement with different artistic media in terms of currents and flow. Instead of situating their intermedia practice at the intersection of clearly circumscribed fields of creative expression, they move offshore to disorient and re-orient critical thinking. As literary critic Steve Mentz points out, we might conceive of this new attitude as a shift towards oceanic thinking: 'Rethinking movement as flows and circuits rather than progress or retreat can revivify intellectual communities. Thinking in terms of cyclical flows rather than linear progress makes historical narratives messier, more confusing, and less familiar. These are good things'.[58]

Mentz's interest in messiness is apt for a book like ours. What we have presented in this volume does not amount to a neat, or complete, story of intermedial practice in Italy since 1900. Our narrative is full of gaps, and it could never have been otherwise. This is not to say, however, that our approach has been eclectic. When shining our critical spotlight on specific years — and on arts and artists, institutions, and theoretical approaches — we have kept our focus firmly on those zones where multiple arts and media meet and overlap. We kept a watchful eye on the emergence of new forms, observed contradictions between theory and practice, and remained alert to the fact that, if we were to focus away from these superimposed areas, we would still encounter arts and media with no ostensible intersection with one another. The danger for any large, ambitious project, we suggest, lies in the pull of a single, unifying progressive narrative. The work of the literary and cultural critic is often said to consist in the systematic pursuit of specialist expertise and comprehensive knowledge. Specialism is imagined, from the critic's perspective, as a gradual homing in on an object of study: a progressive approximation that is ultimately rewarded by complete and definitive understanding. In our book, we have sought to disrupt this approach through our engagement with the fragment,

and with what Rosalind Krauss sees as the decentring of physical spaces and interpretive frameworks, as discussed in Chapter 6. In other words, our volume wants to strike a difficult balance between creative speculation and sustained critique. It both maps and complicates cartographies of knowledge practice and creative expression. We find the same tension between progressive and disruptive practice in many of our case studies. Here, the breaking down of traditional barriers between arts and media is linked to processes of re-thinking the arts, both from within and in relation to one another. Often, this has resulted in the creation of new artistic media and new art forms. At times, creative innovations were spurred on by major technological turns which also impacted on and transformed the way we access, interact with, and consume arts and media. At other times — for example in the early 1970s — the re-thinking of media boundaries took place in the context of a critique of technology and complex systems.

The contemporary, post-medium condition that we face at the end of our intermedial journey can be understood through Richard Grusin's work on 'networks or systems of technologies, practices, and social formations that are generally stable for the most part, but that in the process of circulation and exchange tend to fluctuate or perhaps overlap at various nodes or crossings'.[59] Grusin's image of the rhizomatic network somewhat resembles the metaphor of the galaxy, which McLuhan and Casetti have favoured, but it urges us to think beyond the idea of closed, axiomatized cultural systems. In fact, the problem with the metaphor of the galaxy is that it brings to mind shards of material bobbing in dark skies. In reality, this material is constantly finding new ways of merging, new networks, and points of contact. In our book, we have sought to convey this by conjuring heterogeneous assemblages of diverse voices and practices, across time. We have also argued that the rhizomatic nature of cultural exchanges has become more evident during the period mapped in our volume: from art which still had recognizable disciplinary and technical boundaries, at the start of the twentieth century, to something that is networked and interlinked, fluid, and perhaps even oceanic, both in terms of media boundaries and in terms of geographies.

Our findings pose numerous questions, not only for the arts but also for the academic field in which we, the authors of this book, are positioned: Italian Studies. How will accelerating intermediality impact on research in Italian Studies? To put this question in perspective, Dudley Andrew (who, like McLuhan, enjoys cosmic metaphors) notes that 'post-Galileo we realize we are hurtling through the heavens ourselves, unable to quite locate a fixed star, as we observe everything visibly shifting — and we do so from our own continuously shifting positions'.[60] In an era of 'permanent transition', most cultural critics in our field have become sensitive to the intermediality of their objects of study.[61] Younger scholars, in particular, are incorporating intermedial methodologies into their work to deal better with the ontological complexity of artistic products. But how will greater intermediality change research into the novel or into cinematic film? This is a question that filmmaker Peter Greenaway raised when he said that 'we are forced to confront this new medium [interactive cinema] that will make Star Wars look like candlelight reading in the sixteenth century'.[62] More recently, Dudley Andrew, when

discussing post-cinema, has built on Greenaway's comment to ask 'has interpreting and historicizing films become quaint?'[63] Can we still find the 'organized ways', that Andrew mentions, of studying, say, a novel or a poem — cultural products which continue to provide the backbone of Italian Studies research at the start of the twenty-first century? Or do we need orientations and new ways of organizing our research?

We pose these questions especially for researchers who, like ourselves, work across intermedial borders and who attempt to fix in place this slippery fluidity. Are academic monographs (including this present book), with a few, still, unmoving illustrations, the best way of sharing our research findings? This question was raised in one of our early Advisory Board meetings by Leonardo Sangiorgi, the co-founder of the Milanese art collective, Studio Azzurro. He asked why our research website relied so heavily on words, with images just an illustrative add-on, and other media an afterthought. Our website <www.interdisciplinaryitaly.org> changed in the wake of Sangiorgi's provocation, but the challenge that he laid down remains. Sangiorgi asks if words are the best way to approach research on intermedia and whether we — as researchers who increasingly push back boundaries — need to question our own methodologies. What does it mean to research intermediality through the written word? What would it mean to research it, for instance, through music or photographs, virtual reality, or film? These are not simply rhetorical questions. They are questions that we have not foregrounded in this volume, but which we believe require greater, detailed attention. Happily, the debate in Italian Studies has begun to tackle them, as shown recently by fascinating and innovative work done by Massimo Riva, Emanuela Patti, Derek Duncan, Alan O'Leary, and Nicola Camerlenghi to mention just a few.[64]

Related to this is the question of teaching. What does the history we have sketched in this book mean for the teaching in our discipline (or rather multi-discipline)? Students who are entering Italian Studies programmes in the early 2020s were born after intermediality became normalized in the 1990s. They do not have any direct experience of a world in which the arts were *not* converging. As digital natives, they grew up with YouTube, tablets, and smartphones. To use Andrew's cosmic metaphors again, some of the brightest objects in the Italian Studies curriculum — novels, plays, poetry, cinema — may no longer be the most luminous and densest stars in their skies. How do we teach students for whom the traditional objects of our undergraduate curricula may be dimming, or might 'twinkle on many kinds of screens', 'shar[ing] time and space with other applications'?[65] Do we encourage them to speak a critical language that was designed for analogue and much less intermedial forms of art, or do we make an effort to re-invent this language? COVID-19 lockdowns have already modified our teaching: we record lectures, curate recorded talks, learn to produce high-quality video essays, and ensure that knowledge is easily accessible online. We expect to see more of this over the coming years.

The changes we have mapped in this book also raise questions for the gatekeepers of artistic disciplines (art fairs, galleries, cinema critics, literary critics) who risk losing their footing in the intermedial environment which is under such rapid

development. Indeed, the survival of art as a separate sphere is put into question by the digital proximity of everything. Eleni Timplalexi writes provocatively about traditional critics as mere tenants of the web. The internet, she claims, belongs instead to 'prosumers' (digital natives who produce and consume material of their own making, often collaboratively, on platforms).[66] Professional gatekeepers, in this context, may have no more say or prestige than these creative web users and their amateur content. So, what happens to these professionals, and if professional gatekeepers were to disappear, what difference would this make?

Intermedia in Italy offers no ready answer to these questions, but provides a solid basis for further exploration, for those who wish to embark on it. We close this book in full recognition that our project remains, in Umberto Eco's terms, an *opera aperta*.[67] Over many months, our collective writing sessions have been accompanied by vibrant exchanges with colleagues, doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, and creative artists. Our workshops, blogs, summer schools and conferences have given us a profound sense of the questions that our discipline must answer, well beyond the scope of this book. We do not emerge from this project with a single, definitive description of the relation between media. Despite our many, intensive discussions — and perhaps because of them — we continue to hold different views and our theoretical positions are not perfectly aligned. This diversity is important to our project. We consider it a bedrock for reasoned, open-ended, and respectful dialogue, in academic criticism and in wider cultural and political exchanges. In our book, nuanced attention to diversity has served to open up new spaces for thinking with and through the complex interplay between arts and media. A great deal remains to be said about how these relations develop, expand and contract, how they occur, and under what circumstances. Many exciting stories remain to be told. In this spirit, we invite our readers to amend and continue our work, with further reflections and spin-offs, keeping these important debates open and alive.

Notes to Chapter 8

1. Bruno Latour, quoted in Jonathan Watts, 'Bruno Latour: "This is a Global Catastrophe that Has Come from Within"', *The Observer*, 6 June 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/06/bruno-latour-coronavirus-gaia-hypothesis-climate-crisis> [accessed 20 September 2022].
2. Slavoj Žižek, *PANDEMIC! COVID-19 Shakes the World* (New York: OR Books, 2020), p. 43.
3. Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov' [1936], in his *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968).
4. See Michael Cronin, *The Expanding World: Towards a Politics of Microspection* (Winchester and Washington: Zero Books, 2012).
5. Latour in Watts.
6. Bruno Latour, 'Where to Land after the Pandemic? A Paper and Now a Platform', 29 March 2020, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/852.html> [accessed 20 September 2022].
7. Latour, 'Where to Land'.
8. Bruno Latour, *After Lockdown: A Metamorphosis*, trans. by Julie Rose (Cambridge: Polity, 2021), p. 13.
9. Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), pp. 85–86.
10. Andreas Malm, *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2020), p. 4.

11. Tassoula Ephtakili, 'David Wallace-Wells: It Is Worse, Much Worse, Than You Think', *Ekathimerini*, 28 September 2020 <https://www.ekathimerini.com/society/257409/david-wallace-wells-it-is-worse-much-worse-than-you-think/> [accessed 19 July 2022].
12. Peter Boxall, *Twenty-First Century Fiction: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 3.
13. Filippo Milani and Davide Papotti, 'Il pedone trasgressore: pratiche proibite del camminare durante il lockdown', in *Lasciate socchiuse le porte: mobilità, attraversamenti, sconfinamenti*, ed. by Beniamino Della Gala and others (Rome: Armando Editore, 2021), pp. 41–62 (p. 43); original emphasis.
14. Caterina Serra and Giovanni Cocco, '*Displacement*: a che ora chiude Venezia?', in *Lasciate socchiuse le porte*, pp. 100–16 (p. 110).
15. Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), p. 12.
16. See Rosi Braidotti, '"We" Are in *This* Together, But We Are Not One and the Same', *Bioethical Inquiry*, 17 (2020), 465–69 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673–020–10017–8>.
17. In Italy, the most articulate and controversial critique of these health and safety measures was expressed by philosopher Giorgio Agamben. See especially Giorgio Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2020), English translation by Valeria Dani, *Where Are We Now? The Epidemic as Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021). For a critique of Agamben's position, see Edoardo Acotto, *Contro Agamben: una polemica filosofico-politica ai tempi del COVID-19* (Rome: Scienze e Lettere, 2021).
18. A research collaboration between UCL and Res Artis, beginning in April 2020, has shed light on the global scale of the problem. This project was focused on two consecutive surveys of artists and art residency providers in more than fifty countries. It yielded alarming results about the financial and mental health impact of the pandemic, and the dearth of support available for arts organizations and individuals. As was revealed by the first survey, one in ten arts residency providers was forced to close indefinitely. 65% of artists surveyed between November 2020 and January 2021 said they had been forced to pursue work outside the arts sector to support themselves, and 68% said they had not been able to access emergency financial support. At the time of the second, most recent, survey, 12.2% of artists said they had considered leaving the arts sector permanently. See 'Analytical Report — September 2020 COVID-19: Impact Survey on the Arts Residencies Field', <https://resartis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Res-Artis_UCL_first-survey-report_COVID-19-impact-on-arts-residencies.pdf> [accessed 13 July 2022].
19. See Eugène Atget, *Paris*, intro. by Wilfried Wiegand, trans. by Anne Heritage (Krefeld: teNeues, 1998). Giorgio Agamben has described the eerie stillness of the first daguerreotypes as the symbolic birthplace of the modern apocalyptic imagination. See Giorgio Agamben, *Il Giorno del Giudizio* (Milan: Nottetempo, 2001).
20. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), p. 11.
21. On the poetics of the city-without-us, see Florian Mussgnug, 'La città senza di noi', in *Metropolis*, ed. by Anna Masecchia (Florence: Le Monnier, 2010), pp. 36–45.
22. Serra and Cocco, p. 110.
23. Beniamino Della Gala and Lavinia Torti, 'Ai margini della società, ai margini dell'inquadratura: i senzatetto nelle foto del lockdown di primavera,' in *Lasciate socchiuse le porte*, pp. 117–35 (p. 118); original emphasis.
24. Michele Smargiassi, 'Lo spiro di Dante dietro le nostre mascherine', *La repubblica*, 22 September 2020, <https://smargiassi-michele.blogautore.repubblica.it/2020/09/22/giampiero-corelli-data-mi-fu-soave-medicina-COVID-19-ravenna-fotografia/> [accessed 12 July 2022]; cited in Della Gala and Torti, p. 119; original emphasis.
25. Antonio Scurati, *La fuga di Enea: salvare la città in fiamme* (Milan: Solferino, 2021), p. 76.
26. Ibid., p. 75.
27. Scurati, pp. 76–77.
28. Michele Cometa, *Cultura visuale* (Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2020), p. 27.
29. Paolo Giordano, *Nel contagio* (Turin: Einaudi, 2020), p. 5.
30. Ibid., p. 36.

31. Giordano, p. 61.
32. Paolo Rumiz, *Il veliero sul tetto: appunti per una clausura* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2020), pp. 10–11.
33. Ibid., p. 46.
34. See Francesco M. Cataluccio, *In occasione dell'epidemia* (Bellinzona: Casagrande, 2020); Chiara Gamberale, *Come il mare in un bicchiere* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2020); Antonio Moresco, *Canto degli alberi* (Sansepolcro: Aboca, 2020); Giulio Di Meo, *Anticorpi bolognesi*, preface by Roberto Morgantini, afterword by Cristiano Capuano (Bologna: Pendragon, 2020); Zerocalcare, *Rebibbia Quarantine* (La7, 2020; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pybGuLoU13w> [accessed 21 September 2022]); *Strappare lungo i bordi*, Netflix, 19 November 2021. As novelist Igiaba Scego has pointed out, the large number of contributions reveals a disconcerting similarity between authors, in terms of class, age and citizenship. Very few autobiographical narratives of the pandemic, in Italy, give direct or indirect voice to the experiences of the homeless, or of migrants and refugees. See Igiaba Scego, 'Chi resta fuori dai diari degli scrittori in quarantena,' *Internazionale*, 5 April 2020 <https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2020/04/05/scrittori-quarantena-coronavirus> [accessed 5 July 2022].
35. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993).
36. According to theatre critic Eleni Timplalexi, Elleström's argument about stored theatre provides it with a very different modality, that of filmed theatre, and so it circulates in a different way, 'entering the commercial cyber-spatial terrain of influencers, youtubers, and social media'. Eleni Timplalexi, 'Theatre and Performance Go Massively Online During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications and Side Effects', *Homo Virtualis*, 3.2 (2020), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12681/homvir.25448>.
37. See 'Playwriting Europe: Fabula Mundi: Beyond Borders?' <http://www.fabulamundi.eu> [accessed 27 September 2022]. For further information, see Margherita Laera, *Playwriting in Europe: Mapping Ecosystems and Practices with Fabulamundi* (London: Routledge, 2022).
38. Mark Zuckerberg, 'Founder's Letter, 2021', *Meta* <https://about.fb.com/news/2021/10/founders-letter/> [accessed 1 November 2021].
39. On 23 April 2020, one of Italy's most time-honoured, traditionalist cultural organizations, Fondazione De Sanctis, teamed up with the Italian Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs, and International Cooperation, and with the Italian Court of Audit (*Corte dei Conti*) to celebrate World Book Day with a day-long online literary marathon, 'Capolavori della Letteratura', which saw the participation of more than one hundred writers, television personalities, actors, literary critics, and politicians, who read live from their homes.
40. Christian Caliandro, 'La crisi come opportunità: cosa ci sta indicando il coronavirus?', *Art Tribune*, 7 March 2020 <https://www.artribune.com/arti-visive/2020/03/crisi-coronavirus-opportunita/> [accessed 21 September 2022].
41. Mario Gerosa, 'Che fine ha fatto l'arte su Second Life?', *Art Tribune*, 26 March 2021 <https://www.artribune.com/progettazione/new-media/2021/03/mostra-arte-second-life/> [accessed 2 May 2021].
42. In the UK, for instance, there are already plenty of examples of virtual commercial exhibitions which aim to be immersive, such as exhibitions on Van Gogh, e.g. 'Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience' <https://vangoghexpo.com/london/> [accessed 21 September 2022] and on Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, e.g. 'Mexican Geniuses: A Frida & Diego Immersive Experience' <https://mexicangeniuses.com/london/> [accessed 21 September 2022].
43. A great deal has already been written about the metaverse. For an analysis of its possible evolution, see Janna Anderson and Lee Rainie, 'The Metaverse in 2040', *Pew Research Center*, 30 June 2022 <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/06/30/the-metaverse-in-2040/> [accessed 21 September 2022].
44. Mario Gerosa, 'La Divina Commedia ai tempi del COVID-19', *Wired*, 13 January 2021 <https://www.wired.it/play/cultura/2021/01/13/divina-commedia-dante-bruno-cerboni-covid/> [accessed 21 September 2022].
45. The De Carlo Virtual Space can be seen at <https://www.massimodecarlo.com/vspace/> [accessed 21 September 2022].
46. For example, American graphic designer Beeple's epic digital artwork, *Everydays: The First 5,000 Days*, sold in March 2021 for nearly 70 million dollars.

47. The first discussions of post-cinema coincide with the rise of digital cinema in the late 1990s. The seminal work is Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998; repr. 2011), which looks at cinema's relationships with DVD and video. Other key works include Jacques Aumont's short book, *Que rest-t-il du cinéma?* (Paris: Vrin: 2012); Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs: cinéma — installations, expositions* (Paris: POL, 2012); André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, *The End of Cinema: A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2015); Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film*, ed. by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda (Falmer: Reframe Books, 2016); *Post-Cinema: Cinema in the Post-Art Era*, ed. by Dominique Chateau and José Moure (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020). Dudley Andrew's 'Announcing the End of the Film Era', in *Post-Cinema: Cinema in the Post-Art Era*, pp. 45–66, provides an insightful critical overview of the post-cinema debate.
48. Casetti, p. 177.
49. Fisher envisages three possible scenarios post-COVID-19: (1) that there are day and date releases simultaneously at home (with a large premium) and in cinemas; (2) that, if cinema chains fail, they might be bought by the streaming companies, leading to the old studio system of vertical integration, where cinemas run at cost as loss leaders, to showcase film; (3) that there is a return to 'business as usual'. Fisher thinks that scenario 3 is very unlikely. See Darren Paul Fisher, 'Picture This: 3 Possible Endings for Cinema as COVID-19 Pushes it to the Brink', *The Conversation*, 5 October 2020 <https://theconversation.com/picture-this-3-possible-endings-for-cinema-as-COVID-19-pushes-it-to-the-brink-146917> [accessed 21 September 2022].
50. Francois Jost, 'What Kind of Art Is the Cinema of Interactions?', in *Post-Cinema: Cinema in the Post-Art Era*, pp. 159–74.
51. Jost corroborates Sorrentino on this when he notes that we can define television series as either post-television or post-cinema, given that a spectator can decide to space the viewing of episodes, remaining therefore 'within the logic of serial broadcasting' or binge watch a series, which results in a kind of feature film. For Jost, it is the viewer who is in charge, therefore, of defining whether something is post-television or post-cinema.
52. 'Flix' refers to 'flicks', a word which conjures the flickering images of early cinema. See André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, 'Cinema Hangs Tough', in *Post-Cinema: Cinema in the Post-Art Era*, pp. 67–84.
53. In 2020, architect Claudio Larcher and Valentina Dalla Costa played with the much-celebrated 1952 quote of Ernesto Nathan Rogers that design (or in his words 'progettazione architettonica') worked along a continuum 'dal cucchiaio alla città' [from the spoon to the city], in their volume *Disegnare un cucchiaio per cambiare la città* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2020). This continues to evidence the lure of the polymath and the centrality of an expanded conception of design as pertaining to the macro level of the city alongside the micro one of quotidian practices of the individual.
54. Casetti, p. 16.
55. Steven Jacobs, *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 151.
56. Raymond Bellour, cited in Jacobs, p. 10.
57. Richard Grusin, 'DVDs, Videogames and the Cinema of Interactions', in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film*, pp. 65–87.
58. Steve Mentz, *Ocean* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. xvii.
59. Grusin.
60. Dudley Andrew, 'Announcing the End of the Film Era', in *Post-cinema: Cinema in the Post-Art Era*, pp. 45–66.
61. Ibid.
62. Peter Greenaway, cited in Jost.
63. Andrew, p. 62.
64. Massimo Riva, *Shadow Plays: Virtual Realities in an Analogue World*, available at <https://shadow-plays.org/> [accessed 21 September 2022], is a highly original and challenging digital book which contains eight interactive and explorable simulations of VR, AR, and XR environments (for example, the Mondo Nuovo device and the magic lantern). Derek Duncan, with the

team of the AHRC-sponsored project, *Transnationalising Modern Languages*, has worked with photographer Mario Badagliacca on a co-created book, *Italy is Out* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), where photographs and texts are intertwined, and together explore issues of migration. See also Alan O'Leary and Dana Renga, 'Teaching Italian Film and Television and Videographic Criticism', *The Italianist*, 40.2 (2020), 296–309, and Emanuela Patti, 'Digital Literacy and Modern Languages: How to Make a Digital Video', *Modern Languages Open*, 1 (2020), 39. Nicola Camerlenghi's fascinating and multilayered historically accurate VR reconstruction of the Roman cathedral Saint Paul's Outside the Walls can be viewed at <https://rcweb.dartmouth.edu/CamerlenghiN/VirtualBasilica/> [accessed 27 September 2022].

65. Andrews, p. 52.
66. Eleni Timplalexi, 'Theatre and Performance Go Massively Online during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications and Side Effects', *Homo Virtualis*, 3.2 (2020), 43–54 (p. 45) <https://doi.org/10.12681/homvir.25448>.
67. This term is also used by our close colleague, Emanuela Patti, who has chosen it as the title of a recent monograph that was published as part of the Interdisciplinary Italy project: Emanuela Patti, *Opera aperta: Italian Electronic Literature from the 1960s to the Present* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022).