

"Interdisciplinary Postmodernism: Re-Thinking the Sixties"  
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**EXPERIMENT/EXPERIENCE**

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I would start with a general historical premise that might be of some use also to frame our general discussion. For scholars like me, who have been working on an interdisciplinary subject like the relationship between literature, philosophy and science, the 60s in Italy represent an interesting case study, for a variety of reasons. The 60s are in fact a crucial turning point from a cultural and generational perspective, in a way that 'ripples' caused by that decade are still detectable, at some levels, in contemporary Italy. It is a decade marked by a variety of shifts in the literary and philosophical fields, as well as in the general cultural and political climate.

In *Contro il materialismo*, I recently argued that in the long 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been a generational dialectics in the cultural sphere, which produced an alternation between periods in which the dominant paradigm was marked by a stronger interest in the self-referential aspects of literary and philosophical discourses, with processes of theoretical idealization and/or of strong ideologization; and periods in which intellectuals and artist were seeking a closer engagement with "reality", both in epistemological and mimetic terms. The latter periods were also marked by a surge of interest in science and scientific

questions across the fields. The oscillation is also between, on the one hand, ideological forms of 'purification' and epistemological 'dualism', to use Bruno Latour's terminology; and, on the other, cultural pushes towards 'contamination', and epistemological monism.

As you can see from this chart, in the 60s Italian culture find itself in the chasm or a cusp of a 'reactive' moment in respect to the previous generation which dominated the years immediately after WWII.

For instance, the realist or neorealist imperatives that were dominant in the previous decades began to be somehow questioned, seen as outdated, and therefore either rejected, or radically reshaped, both in literature and cinema; cases in point are for instance Pasolini's mythological phase or Fellini's oneiric postmodern masterpiece *8 1/2*, which much owes to his experience with Jungian analysis.

A new widespread interest for disciplines like anthropology, mythology, and psychoanalysis started in fact to emerge. This may be one of the most tangible effects produced by the so-called Collana Viola, aka "Collezione di studi religiosi, etnologici e psicologici", one of the most interesting book series published in the post-WWII period. Established in 1948 and edited by Cesare Pavese and Ernesto De Martino for Einaudi, it introduced for the first time to the wider Italian

public the works of thinkers like Jung, Eliade, Frazer, Kerényi, Malinowski, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The series started to have an impact after it was dismissed by Einaudi and taken up by Boringhieri in 1957, and when the general cultural and ideological climate was more favourable for the reception of these disciplines and discourses, which also led to the constitution in 1962 of Adelphi.

The increasing interest in these thinkers and disciplines, that were generally labeled as “irrationalists”, above all by Marxist culture, was paralleled in the philosophical field by the progressive and very rapid marginalization of the so called neo-rationalist or neo-positivist tendency that was dominant in the 50s with thinkers like Nicola Abbagnano, Enzo Paci, Galvano Della Volpe, Cesare Luporini, Ludovico Geymonat, Norberto Bobbio, or writers and intellectuals like Elio Vittorini.

The kind of experimental cross-pollination that was a sort of *mot d'ordre* in the 50s started to wain, with a stronger suspicion of any form of disciplinary transgressions. The 60s were in fact marked by the the so-called ‘two cultures’ debate, after the translation into Italian by Feltrinelli in 1964 of the pamphlet by C.P. Snow, “The Two Cultures”. With the exception of Giulio Preti and Ugo Spirito, who produced a couple of philosophical reflections on the subject, trying to complexify in theoretical terms the succinct and polemical perspective put

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<sup>1</sup> Croce’s historicism and Marxist culture, dominant in the first half of the century, were in fact quite hostile to disciplines like anthropology, ethnography, psychoanalysis and the likes.

forward by Snow, the general reaction of the Italian *intelligenza* — either dismissing the argument or simply shrugging it off — was somehow symptomatic of the gap that was in fact deliberately and strategically widened between the exact sciences and the humanities, particularly from the 60s onwards.

An exemplary case was the reception of structuralism in Italy, which at first experienced a quite prompt and open reception in the early 60s, particularly in the literary field, which, according to Cesare Segre, was characterized by a series of ‘*degustazioni episodiche*’,<sup>2</sup> and lacked any objective and analytical methodology. However, the experience of this reception was short lived, and it was basically sealed off in 1967 by Umberto Eco’s *La struttura assente*.

On the one hand Eco’s criticism conformed with the deep-seated idealism which was still pervasive within the Italian cultural elite and that rejected the idea of grounding the aesthetic and cultural experience of any form of permanent, ontological or naturalized “structure”; on the other it was dismissed on ideological ground. An example on this score is the response that came from the philosophical quarters: Massimo Cacciari and Francesco Del Co, for instance, wrote a quite polemic article on the subject: *Lévi Strauss: strutturalismo e ideologia*, «*Angelus Novus*», (1966), 9-10. For them structuralism brings in fact a set of problems and issues that *any* scientific methodology would pose to the political action. The “naturalization” of structuralism in particular —or of any

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<sup>2</sup> Cesare Segre, *Du structuralisme à la sémiologie en Italie*, in *Le champ sémiologique*, a cura di André Helbo, Bruxelles, Complexe, 1979, p. L10. A proposito si veda anche Teresa De Lauretis, *Semiotics in Italy*, in *The Sign. Semiotics around the world*, a cura di Richard Bailey e Ladislav Matejka, Ann Arbor, Michigan University Press, 1980, pp. 248-257.

theory for that matter—would imply the “emptying” of the main tenets of Marxist theory. For Cacciari and Del Co, in fact, there was a strict identification between scientific methodology and the dominant capitalistic ideology. Therefore one needs to sacrifice any scientific underpinning or coherence even in Marxist thought in order to foster revolutionary action.<sup>3</sup>

This is roughly speaking the kind of background against which I will put my argument forward.

### *Esperimento*

However, cultures and periods cannot be defined in strictly homogeneous terms, for they always present syncretic forms and gestures — which are the most interesting ones to investigate. Within the general climate of the 60s there were writers and intellectuals who stood out as outliers in respect to these alleged dominant trends, artists who throughout their careers maintained a rationalistic approach to the understanding of reality and its representation, always informed by scientific paradigms and methods. I am referring here in particular to Italo Calvino and Primo Levi. I will make reference to a cluster of texts published between mid-60s and mid-70s like *Cosmicomiche* (1965), *Ti con zero* (1967), *Storie Naturali* (1966), but also *Il Castello dei destini incrociati* (1969 - 1972), and *Il sistema periodico* (1975).

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<sup>3</sup> «non solo il modello marxiano non è socialmente oggettivo ma non lo è neppure “scientificamente”: alla scientificità capitalistica, logica, socialmente comprensiva, Marx contrappone una scientificità “settaria”, che rappresenta oggettivamente una finalità rivoluzionaria, quindi “alogica” dal punto di vista del sistema»; Cacciari – Del Co, p. 88.

Levi and Calvino were never referred as a straight-forward experimental writers; a definition that has tangentially touched the latter, but which was totally ignored in relation to the former, despite the fact that the notion of experiment, and experimentation is ubiquitous in Levi's writing. Levi, in fact, with his ethical imperative of *claritas* and positive, direct, testimonial communication was consciously standing on the opposite pole of the spectrum on which much of the so-called *neoavanguardia* and its linguistic experimentalism was standing. He later wrote a polemical note against the positions extolled for instance by Giorgio Manganelli, one of the most prominent, albeit a bit idiosyncratic, representatives of the Gruppo 63, against the latter's praising of 'obscure writing'.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of experiment and experimentalism in the literary field in those years was practically monopolized by the *neoavanguardia*, who were re-proposing a modern perspective, borrowed from the historic *avangarde*, of experimentation as *superamento*, as radical and dialectical challenge within the history of specific artistic forms and literary institutions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Primo Levi, 'Dello scrivere oscuro' in *L'altrui mestiere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1985), pp. 49-55 (pp. 51-52).

<sup>5</sup> We can adopt here Eco's definition: "Experimentalism tends to an internal provocation within the history of a given literary institution (novel as anti-novel, poetry as non-poetry), while the avant-garde tends to an external provocation. It wants that society as a whole recognizes its proposal as an outrageous method of understanding artistic and literary cultural institutions. [...] Avant-garde regards the relations between the authors and the empirical readers, experimentalism regards the relation between the Author and the Ideal Reader." [*Lo sperimentalismo tende a una provocazione interna alla storia di una data istituzione letteraria (romanzo come anti-romanzo, poesia come non poesia), mentre l'avanguardia tende a una provocazione esterna, vuole cioè che la società nel proprio complesso riconosca la sua proposta come un metodo oltraggioso di intendere le istituzioni culturali artistiche e letterarie [...]*]

However, it is interesting to see a telling transition, in which a modern or modernist perspective is combined with a postmodernist one. The idea of experimentation brought forward by the neoavanguardia was mainly conceived in linguistic terms. The neo-avanguardist experimentalism aimed basically to ‘sabotage’ conventional language, as a challenge of dominant bourgeoisie ideology (the modern position). At the theoretical level, however — as they themselves acknowledged at a later stage — their position was very close to — and somehow it made them the forerunners of — the so-called “linguistic turn”, around which we normally cluster a series of theoretical positions (deconstruction, poststructuralism) that are broadly defined as postmodern.

By looking at Calvino’s and Levi’s works of the period, my intention is to take into account other forms of ‘experimentalism’ that were made available in those years, and which received less critical attention. Calvino e Levi put forward and proposed forms of experiments and experimentation, which are closer to the scientific connotation these concepts have and that complicate our common understanding of experimentalism in art: on the one hand through a form of experimentalism which is not strictly formal or linguistic, but it is mainly conceptual, epistemological, and structural; on the other hand, by stressing the idea of experiment as cognate to the notion of experience. As you are all aware, the two terms share the same etymology: “a trial, a test, proof” but also “practical

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*l'avanguardia riguarda i rapporti tra autori e lettori empirici, lo sperimentalismo quello fra Autore e Lettore modello. (98).]*

knowledge”, ‘knowledge gained by repeated trials’; by experimenting, by experiencing, one becomes *ex-peritus*, expert, which defines the “state of having done something and gotten handy at it”. Experimentation is then not seen as transgressive but as cumulative; stressing not as much novelty as permanence.

Both Calvino and Levi proposed an idea of experiment that is not concerned with the modern or modernist idea of challenging and overcoming any given form, but is linked to the idea of the re-use of a repertoire of images, ideas, tropes -- without emphasizing any parodic or ironic element as one would in a straightforward postmodernist fashion —, also stressing the notion of a convergent, shared knowledge. This will also be true in relation to another interesting and quite important Italian artist who theorized at length in the period, Bruno Munari.

### *Thought experiments*

Both Massimo Piattelli Palmarini and Paolo Fabbri suggested that Calvino’s *Cosmicomics* could be read as a form of *Gedankenexperimente*, of thought experiment<sup>6</sup>. As you know, thought experiments are those conceptual

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<sup>6</sup> Cfr. B. COTTAFAVI — M. MAGRI (a cura di), *Narratori dell’invisibile. Simposio in memoria di Italo Calvino*. Sassuolo 21-23 febbraio 1986, Modena, Mucchi, 1987, p. 27. Giuliano Toraldo di Francia aveva proposto la stessa ipotesi a Calvino nel corso della discussione generale raccolta in appendice al volume, curato da Piattelli Palmarini, *Livelli di realtà*: «un esperimento di pensiero, vale a dire un esperimento che non viene eseguito realmente. Qualche volta non lo si può fare, è assolutamente impossibile. Ma i fisici lo descrivono e dicono: Se ponete una tale entità fisica in queste condizioni, accadrà questo. È in fondo quanto faceva anche il Boccaccio. Egli dice: Se prendete degli esseri umani e li ponete in una certa situazione, accadrà questo. In un certo senso, dunque, la sua storia diventa un *Gedankenexperiment* e qui sta l’intersezione con



experiments in science or philosophy which are logically possible, but often physically or technologically unfeasible. They consider hypotheses, theories, or principles for the purpose of thinking through their consequences. Famous examples are Schrodinger's cat in quantum physics, or the brain-in-a-vat in philosophy of mind. They have an intermediate epistemological status, in the sense that they are micro-representations. Katherin Hayles defines them as 'heuristic fiction'. This could be seen as one of the points of intersection between scientific and literary discourses.

In different ways, both Calvino's and Levi's science-fiction narratives work at this level; in Calvino's privileging the iconic and visual aspects intrinsic to scientific theories; in Levi the ethical and moral ones.

Thought experiments play a crucial role in moments of paradigmatic changes, and become one of the analytic instruments employed during the so-called descriptive crises as they solve a fundamental problem of visualization.

*Cosmicomics* is a quite epistemologically aware text because it confronts a problem which science itself has constantly to resolve for theoretical, pedagogical and popularizing purposes: how to render its theories *visible* and *imaginable* (and therefore *transferable* and recountable). Calvino takes to the extreme the iconic and imaginative potentiality of a given theory, by giving them a human voice, a form of comical visualization. In this way, his work resonates

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la vera realtà, per così dire, non con la realtà scritta»; M. PIATTELLI PALMARINI (a cura di), *Livelli di realtà*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1984, p. 521.

with, and it's parallel to, a whole series of epistemological studies that were published in those years at the international level, like Max Black and Mary Hesse's fundamental theorization on the role of metaphors and models in science,<sup>7</sup> or Thomas Kuhn's celebrated study of paradigmatic changes in the history of science.

In a similar fashion we can extend Paolo Fabbri's definition to Primo Levi's short stories in *Storie naturali* and *Vizio di forma*, which are hypothetical narratives starting from the premises of a specific scientific theory, or a technological device. A straightforward example is *Ottima è l'acqua*, in which Levi fantastically elaborates on how the slight modification of a common thing like water's viscosity, could cause an apocalyptic scenario. In *Trattamento di quiescenza*, Levi offers a different version of the famous *experience machine* devised by Robert Nozick in *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, a machine that could reproduce in the brain the experience of reality, an idea that was later popularized by films like *Strange Days* by Katherine Bigelow, or *The Matrix*, by the Wachowski brothers, and which Levi uses to investigate and question the self-destructive tendencies of mankind. Unfortunately I don't have time to dwell on the stories in much detail.

The interesting and poignant complication in Levi's case is that the notion of experiment resonates deeply with the key experience of his life: the camp. Both

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<sup>7</sup> Cfr. M. BLACK, *Models and Metaphors*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1962; trad. it., *Modelli Archetipi e Metafore*, Parma, Pratiche Editrice, 1983. M. B. HESSE, *Models and analogies in science*, London, Sheed & Ward, 1967; trad. it., *Modelli e analogie nella scienza*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1980.

in *Se questo è un uomo* and in *I sommersi e i salvati*, Levi addresses the reader by asking “to carry out upon himself, with sincerity, a conceptual experiment” [*«su se stesso, con sincerità, un esperimento concettuale»* (OI 1036)]: to imagine oneself in the unbelievable condition of deportation and the Lager.

*«Si immagini ora un uomo a cui, insieme con le persone amate, vengano tolti la sua casa, le sue abitudini... sarà un uomo vuoto ridotto a sofferenza e bisogno»* (OI 21);

*«Si rinchiudano tra i fili spinati migliaia di individui diversi per età, condizione, origine, lingua, cultura e costumi e siano quivi sottoposti a un regime di vita costante, controllabile, identico per tutti e inferiore a tutti i bisogni: è quanto di più rigoroso uno sperimentatore avrebbe potuto istituire per stabilire cosa sia essenziale e che cosa acquisito nel comportamento dell'animale-uomo di fronte alla lotta per la vita». (OI 83)*

To be the subject of an experiment is somehow an unexpected and odd condition, seen from a contemporary perspective, but as a matter of fact it was performed on millions of people, not only in the Nazi camps, but in the long history of modernity. Modernity is in fact marked by this epistemological short-circuit: in the Cartesian separation between subject and object, in the avoidance of any implication between these two polarities, it is eventually the human who becomes the object of experimentation and manipulation in top-down forms of social engineering, being these racially, ideologically, or otherwise motivated. This resonates with Bruno Latour's position in *We have never been modern*, on the (hidden) hybrid constitution of modern epistemology.

The slash that I inserted between experiment and experience therefore marks

the subjective implication in the polarization that a modern epistemological perspective managed to insert between the two terms.

Experiment becomes experience, it goes back to its etimological roots, as soon the subjective dimension is considered. This resonates with two of Levi's other books: the biographical narratives of *Il sistema periodico* — the autobiography of a chemist —, and *La chiave a stella* — the confession of a master rigger. In both texts, experience is the form of that particular trial or test that reality poses to the subject. It is not nature on trial to see if it experimentally conforms to specific theoretical expectations by standard scientific protocol, but the individual. The experimentation we find in *Il sistema periodico* is not the lab practice of an inorganic chemist, but the way in which this experimentation becomes a trial and a test for the author; the way in which the experience of the experiment becomes transformative and existentially charged. We can also find here the particular brand of Levi's epistemological "realism". His realism is not a problem of representation or mimetism, but the effects of the stubbornness of physical reality on the human —the "material consciousness" Richard Sennett talks about in his book *The Craftman* — and which increase one's fitness, one's capacity to understand the complexity of the real, and to manipulate it and control it (which of course has ambivalent implications).

I would like to go back now to Calvino, to complicate the standard view of him being a straightforward example of postmodernist writer. The critics have spoken

of experimentalism in Calvino particularly in reference to his combinatorial narratives, starting from *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, which is the most relevant production which emerged from his association with the *Ou.li.po.* As you know, the *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*, the "workshop of potential literature", was a group of literati and mathematicians, founded in 1960 in Paris by Raymond Quenau and François Le Lionnais, who sought to create literary works using constrained writing techniques. Calvino came in contact with the *Ou.li.po.* in 1967, when he moved to Paris and thanks to his acquaintance with Quenau (coincidentally, in the same year Einaudi published Calvino's translation of Quenau's *Les fleurs bleues*). The group was born as a subcommittee of the *Collège de Pataphysique* and it was initially titled *Séminaire de littérature expérimentale*. At their second meeting, the group changed its name to *Oulipo*. The intention was to distance themselves from any explicit association with the avanguardist tradition, by embracing the idea of experiment mostly in scientific term. The literary activity was also seen as a craft, rather than a form of self-expression. The word *Ouvroir*, workshop, was chosen in fact because "it titillated our moderate taste for the heroic period of the industrial revolution"; and because it did not wish to innovate at all cost. The first discussions were about classic texts seen as our antecedents".<sup>8</sup> "The *Littérature potentielle* is an apology of the *homo faber*"<sup>9</sup>. In a similar fashion, in a letter to Guido Fink, Calvino underscored the fact that in respect to the relationship between his work and the experimentalism of the avant-garde: "I remain basically an artisan, I like to make

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<sup>8</sup> J. LESCURE, *Piccola storia dell'oplepo*, in R. CAMPAGNOLI — Y. HERSANT (a cura di), *Oulipo. La letteratura potenziale (Creazioni Ri-creazioni Ricreazioni)*, Bologna, CLUEB, 1986, pp. 30-31.

<sup>9</sup> R. CAMPAGNOLI — Y. HERSANT, *Tre parole per cominciare...*, *ivi*, p. 5.

constructions which hold well [...] I'm an artisan in a epoch in which the avantgarde does a bit of everything; and even though our fields don't overlap, they influence each other"<sup>10</sup>.

Another key element of the *ou.li.po.* was its ludic dimension, its playfulness, which was a fundamental element in the idea behind the constitution of the group. However, this is not to be understood neither as the recuperation of an avangardist gesture, in a sort of dadaistic fashion with all their carnivalesque pranks, nor in a purely parodic, postmodern ones, but it was informed by an anthropological and scientific understanding of the link between play, games, and art, that may be more in tune with the pre-modern or a-modern perspective, illustrated, again, by Latour in *We have never been modern*.<sup>11</sup> (Anna Botta argues about this in one of her articles on Calvino). On the one hand, in their background there was the reading of books such as Rogers Callois's *Les Jeux et les hommes* (1958), Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1939 – 1946), or Levi-Strauss's theorization of the bricolage —; all dealing with the role of both play and games as fundamental heuristic and cognitive activities; on the other, their concerns were linked with the development of modern science. As Michel Serres suggested, it's not by chance that “the experimental method emerged at the same time that the theory of large numbers, of chance and games”.<sup>12</sup> Elliott M.

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<sup>10</sup> «io resto uno scrittore di impianto artigiano, mi piace fare delle costruzioni che chiudono bene [...] io faccio l'artigiano ma in un'epoca in cui l'avanguardia fa questo e quest'altro; e i campi anche se non si toccano si influenzano» (LL 1003)

<sup>11</sup> See Anna Botta, “Calvino and the Oulipo: An Italian Ghost in the Combinatory Machine?” *MLN* 112.1, 1997, 81-89; and Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes. Essai d'anthropologie symétrique*. Paris: La Découverte, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> M. SERRES, *Le système de Leibniz...*, cit., p. 173.

Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith in *The Study of Games*, also underscore the proximity of the notion of play with experimentation/experience in the sense of Levi: play is preadaptive almost in biological sense, by increasing the combinatorial capacities of the player and her ability to respond to new configurations of elements or events. (Avedon – Sutton-Smith, 1971: 5-6).

This allows me to link Levi and Calvino — and I conclude here — to another key artist, for whom the idea of craft and play were fundamental elements of his art: Bruno Munari. *Asobi* is a word of Japanese origin very much loved by Bruno Munari. It means both art and play; playing to fill a void; it is an artistic experience that takes shape through the same gratuitousness we experience in games and play.

Munari's activity in visual art, industrial and graphic design, children literature, pedagogical labs, spanned the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, but he published his most important books between 1966 and 1971, which had a wide circulation mostly among lay people (*Arte come mestiere*, 1966; *Design e comunicazione visiva*, 1968; *Artista e designer*, 1971; *Codice ovvio*, 1971). The most well-known is *Arte come mestiere*, the only of Munari's theoretical books translated into English. The title itself conveys again this idea of art as craft, as a fundamental process to produce a democratization in both the understanding and the production of art, against any modern, romantic notion of the artist as a genius or as a vedette:

*We ought to demolish the myth of the artist as a star, who only makes*

*masterpieces for intelligent people [...] It is necessary that the artist abandons any romantic aspects to become an active man among other men. Someone who is informed on present technologies, materials and working methods. Someone who, without abandoning his instinctive aesthetic sensitivity, would respond with humbleness and competence to the questions that his fellow human beings will ask him.*

*Si rende oggi necessaria un'opera di demolizione del mito dell'artista-divo che produce solo capolavori per le persone intelligenti. [...] è necessario che l'artista abbandoni ogni aspetto romantico e diventi un uomo attivo fra gli altri uomini, informato sulle tecniche attuali, sui materiali e sui metodi di lavoro e, senza abbandonare il suo innato senso estetico, risponda con umiltà e competenza alle domande che il prossimo gli può rivolgere. (B. Munari, Arte come mestiere: 19)*

The terminology he uses to describe the creative process owe more to techno-science than to art: *progettazione, ricerca, competenza, metodo*, bridging his intention with a pre-modern understanding of artistic endeavour, recuperating again the Greek etymology of *techné* as art. The idea of experiment and of experimentation for Munari is also germane to the one expressed by Levi and Calvino. For Munari to experiment meant essentially to try things out, all sorts of things, both in the material and in the technical sense. The various materials made available by contemporary techno-science, as well as by nature, were interesting to work with to test their 'structural grammar', the type of 'resistance' intrinsic to them, which is a way to explore their formal potentiality, and that bring us back to Levi and Sennet's perspectives on the "material consciousness". Also, at the beginning of his career, in late 20s –early 30s, Munari was borrowing ideas and methods from all sort of experimental and avanguardist movements of the time — futurism, surrealism, dada, abstractionism, rationalism, constructivism, the bauhaus, without being much concerned to belong to any trend or to brand and to regiment himself in any constrictive manner. As he said in an interview, for



him “it was a matter of ‘trying things out’, of wanting to know as much as possible” (Quintavalle 2008: 243).

It is also interesting to see how many times he went back to old ideas to reinvent them. He proposed a dialectic in the evolution of art forms which does not progress in a linear fashion, through incremental steps, but laterally, by re-using hints, clues, ideas, from various sources. Good ideas in art and design never go out of fashion, so to speak, but they are always available for the artist. In front of any interesting work of art, the first question for him was ‘*how could it be done differently?*’. The tradition is neither rejected nor revisited through simple citationism or parody: it is further explored in its potential ramifications and possibilities.

### *Conclusion*

As a tentative conclusion, what I could suggest is that first of all if you keep techno-science in the critical and theoretical equation, the considerations about the transition between modernity and postmodernity that occurred in Italy during the 60s would be slightly tilted, with different epistemological and aesthetical implications. My second point would address some of the issues put forward by the organizers of this workshops. Given all these premisses, I would say that interdisciplinary work is elicited, facilitated, encouraged when we remove any dualistic perspective, or rather any form of ideological and epistemological ‘purification’ or categorial distinction: paraphrasing Latour, when we don’t

separate art and society, nature and culture, technology and art, subject and object, then interdisciplinary work is not only possible, but it is the only approach that could make sense and that would respect the complexity of the objects of our inquiry.