# Countercultural Images and Technological Visions in the Italian Alternative Press Around 1977

Sara Molho
Università degli Studi di Bologna – Alma Mater Studiorum, Italia

**Abstract**    The contribution provides an overview of the speculations on cybernetics, automation, and politics in the Italian alternative press around 1977, focusing on the Italian alternative press that linked these topics. On the one hand, the relationship with mass media and the notion of 'general intellect' of the magazine *A/traverso* was concretised in the opening of a free radio station, Radio Alice, and in its graphic solutions and texts. On the other hand, the article focuses on *Un'Ambigua Utopia*, whose editors were interested in science fiction and technological imagery from a political perspective.

**Keywords**    Technology. Alternative press. General intellect. A/traverso. Un'Ambigua Utopia.

**Summary**    1 Introduction. – 2 Trajectories about Commonality and Technologies from the Italian Leftist Press in the Sixties. – 3 Technological Visions in the Seventies. – 4 Desire, Communication and Airwaves: *A/traverso*. – 5 Utopia and Science Fiction, in Practice: *Un'Ambigua Utopia*. – 6 Conclusion.

## 1    Introduction

During the Seventies, in Italy, several antagonist groups appropriated, through a range of tactics, various mass media, starting with radio and the press. This came as no surprise, as between 1974 and

1976 a series of judgments declared the state monopoly of telecommunications by wire or over the air unconstitutional (Judgments of the Constitutional Court No. 226/1974 and No. 202/1976), paving the way to free radio and local televisions (Fleischner 1976, 2-3). On the other hand, the production of periodicals remained subject to State control, as stipulated in Article 5 of Law No. 47/1948, whereby "Nessun giornale o periodico può essere pubblicato se non sia staa to registrato presso la cancelleria del tribunale, nella cui circoscrizione la pubblicazione deve effettuarsi" (no newspaper or periodie cal may be published unless it has been registered with the clerk of the court). This constraint could easily be circumvented through the wording "numero singolo in attesa di autorizzazione" (single issue awaiting authorization) or by publishing it as a supplement to another regularly registered periodical. The copious production of political periodicals – whose format could span from underground zines to voluminous journals – investigated strategies of overthrowing and reappropriation from below. Moreover, the blossoming of alternative press was early ratified by several authors (Alfierj, Mazzone 1979; Balestrini, Moroni 1988). The appropriation of media by countercultural and subcultural movements hence characterized the national landscape and followed the techno-scientific innovations of the Information Age (cf. Uva 2015). The entanglement of printed matter and technology was confirmed by the rise of magazines such as *Altrimedia*, founded in 1976 and regularly registered, which published several lists of free radio stations and advertised tools for 'Do It Yourself' communication technologies, addressing radio, television and videotape with the contribution of prominent scholars (Baldelli 1976, 9-10; Eco 1976, 4-6). Giving an overview of the intertwinement between political and cultural aspects of the debate upon technological tools in Italian alternative periodicals, this essay questions whether it is possible to recognize an interpretation of technology as a shared tool, rather than an apparatus of capitalist exploitation. Without the ambition of comprehensiveness, it finally traces the stories of two alternative magazines, *A/traverso* and *Un'Ambigua Utopia*, that around 1977 established different discourses on technology and information technology as common ground.

## 2 Trajectories about Commonality and Technologies from the Italian Leftist Press in the Sixties

The fascination for calculators and their aesthetical potential recurred throughout the Sixties. It is important to highlight the establishment of numerous artists' groups that developed kinetic research, such as Gruppo T and Gruppo N, that were supported by scholars like Umberto Eco, and, to some extent, by the Italian leading producer of calculators and computers Olivetti (Morando 1961; Alicata 2022; Caplan 2022). Although some of these groups had strong political beliefs, most of their operations did not have a precise perspective on the appropriation of technology, but rather had an interest in interactivity. Other examples of the speculation about technology during the 1960s include the linguistic experimentations conducted by visual poets, among others the Florentine Gruppo 70 (1963-68) (Saccà 2000). Even though any determinism should be avoided when referring to leftist thought on technology (Marx 1964; Tomba, Bellofiore 2014; MacKenzie 1984), information systems, calculators, and telecommunications undoubtedly informed the design and contents of the artistical and political alternative press. Moreover, if the printed production informed any alternative use of technology is yet to be clarified. The far-left current of *Operaismo* (workerism) (cf. Galimberti 2022), that emerged in Italy in the early Sixties, informed several journals and magazines; among them, *Quaderni Rossi* had a specific political theoretical cut. Involved in the theorization of autonomist Marxism, the periodical published the Italian translation of the *Fragment on Machines* by Karl Marx (1964) and promoted an extensive discussion upon machines. As an excerpt from the *Grundrisse* (*Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*), the *Fragment* outlined the fortunate notion of 'general intellect' as the "social general knowledge" (Marx 1964, 300) related to intellectual and technical knowledge, and produced by the industrial development as part of social vital processes. Later on, this concept underpinned the multimedia expressions of the 'creative wing' (cf. Salaris 1997) of the Movement of 1977 (cf. Mariscalco 2014, 22-3). In recent years, Pasquinelli (2014) investigated *Operaismo* and information machines through the work of Romano Alquati on *Quaderni Rossi* (1962; 1963) and outlined the relationships between Alquati's theories and the subsequent concept of 'machinic' by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1972; 1980), derived from *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Consisting of the two volumes *L'Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, first published in French in 1972 and 1980, and then in Italian in 1975 and 1980 (the texts of *A Thousand Plateaus* were already partly published in 1976 under the title *Rhizome*, followed by several Italian editions, cf. Dogheria 2018, 26-7), the *oeuvre* was one of the fundamental points of reference for many experiences related to the Movement of 1977. According to

Echaurren and Salaris, Deleuze and Guattari's thought has been a catalyser for a generation devoted to an hyperproduction of ephemera, that soon became a political practice which embodied the utopia of collective writing (Echaurren, Salaris 1999, 208).

## 3 Technological Visions in the Seventies

During the Seventies, characterized by the rise of autonomist political currents in the extra parliamentary left rows (the so-called *Autonomia*) (cf. Lotringer, Marazzi 1980; Galimberti 2022), information and telecommunication technologies became key themes in the 'movement' press. Pio Baldelli (1972) theorized the explicit connection between new technologies, such as videotape and radio, and counter-information. The scholar defined counter-information by underlining its multiplicity – a trait that will be inherited by the Movement of 1977:

> La controinformazione e i suoi circuiti vengono caratterizzati [...] dalla polivalenza di tattica e strategia. Quindi [...] la controinformazione opera in formule clandestine, irregolari o 'regolarmente' incuneate nelle strutture: insomma, un lavoro che sappia moltiplicare e concentrare elasticamente azioni nel sistema e fuori del sistema. (Baldelli 1972, 14)

> Counterinformation and its circuits are characterized [...] by the polyvalence of tactics and strategy. So [...] counterinformation operates in clandestine, irregular, or 'regularly' wedged formulas in structures: in short, a work that knows how to multiply and elastically concentrate actions in the system and outside the system.

Concerning magazines, journals, and newspapers run by the far-left movement, arguments on technology mostly involved workers and industrial production. On this matter, *Controinformazione*, founded in 1973, recalled problems of media communication starting from its title, and explicitly addressed technology when related to workers' conditions. Designed by leading figures in Milan's politically engaged art scene, such as the painter Paolo Baratella and the photographer and graphic designer Rino Del Prete, the covers fully interpreted contemporary visual culture.

Another example is the periodical publication of *I Volsci* by Autonomia Operaia in Rome, where a long text called *La ristrutturazione dello sfruttamento* (The Restoration of Exploitation) (1978, 5-9) was illustrated by several images of robots (among the others, there was an image taken from the American series *Lost in Space*), ironically highlighting the Fiat factory's automatization and the use of technology in information control.

Moving forward from the concept of counter-information, groups related to the creative wing and to the subcultural phenomenon of the *indiani metropolitani* (metropolitan Indians) (Eco 1977, 34-5) reinterpreted the Avantgarde lesson (Calvesi 1978, 55-94) and systemically involved a critical discourse on technologies. Furthermore, they abandoned the concise language of counter investigation (crucial, for example, for *Controinformazione*), that somehow recalled an institutional lexicon, to introduce a principle of liberation of bodies and desire, appropriation of the surplus, right to party, through ironic, estranged writing, and collective practices related to Situationist *détournement*. One of the most significant experiences is the Bologna-based *A/traverso*, whose interest in communication strategies

**Figure 2**  Enrico Scuro, *Controinformazione in Piazza Verdi, Bologna*. 25 March 1977. Courtesy Enrico Scuro

concretised in the opening of a free radio station, Radio Alice, in graphic solutions close to the punk circuit, and in texts that anticipated many issues related to the electronics of the following decade. This experience may be related to another periodical, the Milan-based *Un'Ambigua Utopia*, which approached the theme of the technological imagery from the literary field of radical science fiction. *Un'Ambigua Utopia* carried out the reflection on new media and politics from the literary sphere and, similarly to *A/traverso*, organised some urban happenings, claiming for the freeing of bodies and desires in the urban space.

## 4 Desire, Communication and Airwaves: *A/traverso*

The recomposition of the working class from the connection of desire, language, and political activity was one of the prerogatives of the cross-media experimentation of *A/traverso*. Created in 1975 by a "piccolo gruppo in moltiplicazione" (small collective in multiplication) ("Piccolo gruppo in moltiplicazione" 1975) based in Bologna, the non-periodical magazine was initially published as *Rosso* supplement. The collective – initially composed by Potere operaio (Workers' Power) militants Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, Maurizio Torrealta, Stefano Saviotti, Luciano Capelli, Claudio Cappi, Paolo Ricci, Matteo Guerrino and Marzia Bisognin (Chiurchiù 2017, 54) – published more than twenty issues and five numbered *quaderni* (notebooks) between 1975 and 1981 (44-5). The masthead of the magazine was composed of the typographic characters of various leftist magazines of the same period, declaring at the same time its transversality and its network. As Galimberti summarizes, the title of the magazine

> referred to *transversalité* (transversality), a concept coined by Guattari. For Guattari, 'transversalité' coded an attempt to seek new ways to understand subjectivity, moving beyond the duality between hierarchical groups and ineffective horizontal forms of self-organisation. (Galimberti 2022, 311)

Its points of references can be recalled starting from Klemens Gruber's *L'Avanguardia inaudita* (1997) and, of course, from the book edited by the collective itself (1976). It is useful to linger on an article published in September 1975, and entitled *Soggetto collettivo emette A/traverso* (Collective subject emits A/traverso), in which the collective recorded its desire to build a movement radio, emphasising the fact that it aimed to

> trasformare il modo della comunicazione/informazione, ma anche la forma stessa del linguaggio specifico (il linguaggio radiofonico in questo caso; ma il discorso varrebbe anche per il linguaggio teatrale, il linguaggio grafico) partendo da una situazione e dalle caratteristiche specifiche che questo linguaggio ha. ("Soggetto collettivo emette A/traverso" 1975)

> transform the mode of communication/information, but also the very form of the specific language [radio language in this case; but the same would apply to theatrical language, graphic language] starting from a situation and the specific characteristics that this language has.

The group's objectives were further elucidated by the technical means it deployed:

> La scelta del mezzo implica una intenzione politica [...] presuppone una disponibilità degli strumenti tecnici (l'elettronica) ad esser piegati alle necessità del movimento; presuppone l'individuazione di un quadro sociale proletarizzato [...] capace di appropriarsi del mezzo elettronico e di mutarne la funzione. ("Soggetto collettivo emette A/traverso" 1975)

> The choice of medium implies a political intention [...] it presupposes an availability of the technical tools [electronics] to be bent to the needs of the movement; it presupposes the identification of a proletarianized social framework [...] capable of appropriating the electronic medium and changing its function.

Alluding to the proletarianization of intellectual labour and diffuse knowledge that echoed Marxian definition of 'general intellect', but also to the relationship that McLuhan pointed out between medium and message, the collective wrote that the medium is already a message (see "Soggetto collettivo emette A/traverso" 1975; Fiore, McLuhan 1967). Marx was still the starting point for reasoning about capitalist abstraction and the computerisation of labour, which concerned, at one time, the intellectual and industrial proletariat ("Informazione e appropriazione" 1976, 11). Technical-scientific intelligence remained a junction of recomposition and a terrain of struggle for the collective, and Franco 'Bifo' Berardi exposed its contradiction and complexity. For the philosopher, it was precisely knowledge that had to be freed from its capitalist function in favour of creativity (see Berardi 1977a, 10).

The shift from counter-information to a different communication struggle became evident when the collective wrote that it refused to build structures of service to the movement but rather to "determinare terreni di pratica" (determine terrains of practice) ("Soggetto collettivo emette A/traverso" 1975) even in the airways. The proletarianization of intellectual labour, a fundamental axis around which the reasoning on the collective intellect moves, was also addressed in *Quaderno 1* (notebook 1), that presented the principles of Mao-dadaism, and linked the Chinese revolution and the European Avant-garde, passing through the examples of Majakovsky, Artaud, and the collective writing experiences of the 1920s (Berardi 1975, 21-9). If intellectual labour was then fully inscribed in capitalist production, the new proletarian subject, according to *A/traverso*, could find an original terrain of struggle in the appropriation of the instruments of its activity: information (cf. "Informazione e appropriazione" 1976, 11). Consequently, the opening of Radio Alice, "più grande

**Figure 3**   Giuliano Spagnul, *Fantascienza e realtà: Il caso del nucleare*. Milan, Centro Puecher. 10 February 1979. Courtesy Giuliano Spagnul

marxista-leninista della nostra epoca" (Quaderno 3 1976, 10) (the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our time), was announced as follows:

> Informare non basta. Ki emette ki riceve? [...] non si tratta di informazione più vera sui medesimi fatti [...] si tratta di informazione diversa. ("Assolutamente virgolette" 1976, 12)

> Informing is not enough. Who issues, who receives? [...] it is not about truer information about the same facts [...] it is about different information.

Again, in the same notebook, page twenty-four opens with the title *Radio Alice is as obscene as the class struggle*. In the radio, desire and body were given voice:

> Diamo una voce al nostro desiderio
> ogni collettivo un microfono
> trasmettiamoci addosso. ("Radio Alice è oscena come la lotta di classe" 1976, 24)

> Let us give a voice to our desire / Each collective a microphone / Let us broadcast on ourselves.
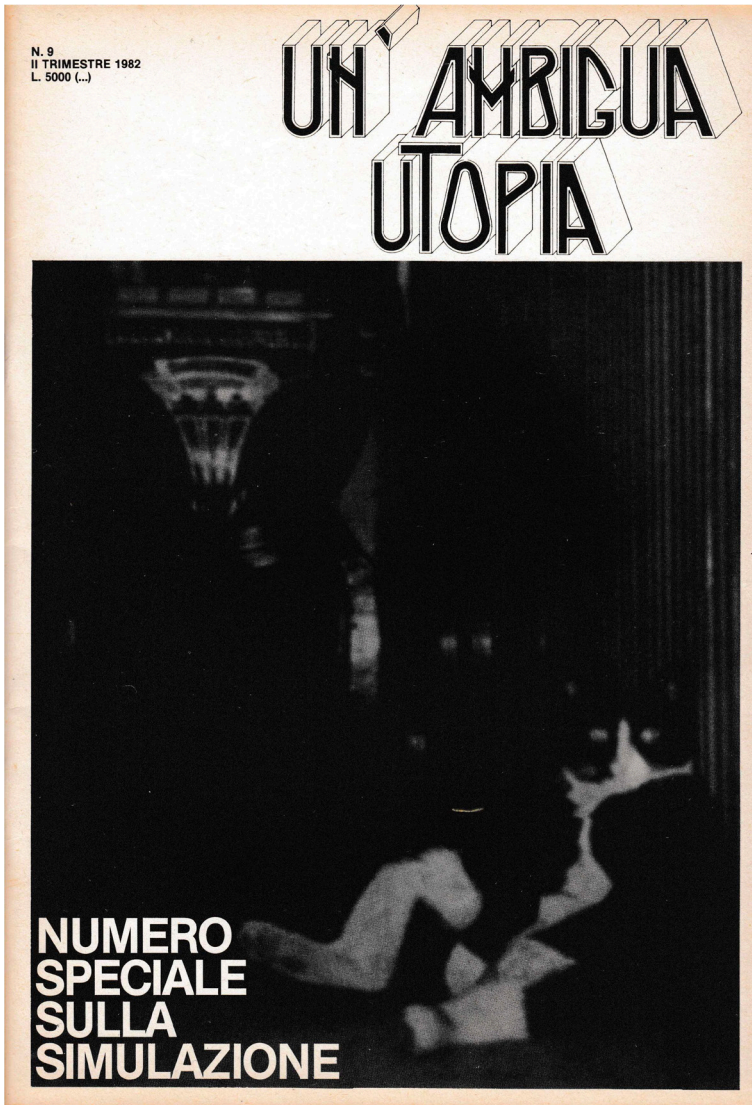
Figure 4    Gianni Sassi, illustration on the cover of *Un'Ambigua Utopia* no. 9. 1982.

The flows of the spoken and written word begun to blur: *Alice* did not circumscribe the uninterrupted stream of events and sought full adherence to them. The chronicle made by *Alice*'s multiple voices in *Alice è il diavolo* (Alice is the Devil) (1976) thus recorded that flow: part of the texts of *A/traverso* were republished, with transcripts of tapes, communiqués, photographs. The paradox was that, in the meantime, *Alice* was always elsewhere: she coincided with the instants of life, trying to dissolve any distance between representation and represented event (see Collettivo A/traverso 1976, 92).

On the radio, anyone could call in and receive an immediate, live feedback; *Alice* walked the line between communicative practice and existence. In doing so, it passed from the space of written and spoken words to the urban space: on 28 March 1976, in Piazza Maggiore in Bologna, the group organised a *Party for repression*, embracing the 'weapon' of irony and joke. Cross-dressing and happenings proved that the phenomenon of 'carnivalization' (Gruber 1997, 134) had spanned throughout the decade. The urban manifestation was thus incorporated in the recomposition, as a real desecrating and liberating, hence political, practice. According to the same hyperbolic procedure, linked to what Eco has called "Semiological Guerrilla Warfare" (Eco 1973, 290-9; Gruber 1997, 44), false information could reverberate into true events (*A/traverso* 1976).

Therefore, on the threshold of the tragic March 1977, *A/traverso* laid bare the delirium of power by issuing false signs "con la voce e il tono del potere" (with the voice and tone of power):

> Quando il potere dice la verità e pretende sia Naturale va denunciato quanto disumano ed assurdo sia l'ordine di realtà che l'ordine del discorso (il discorso d'ordine) riflette e riproduce: consolida. ("Informazioni false che producano eventi veri" 1977)

> When power speaks the truth and claims to be Natural, it must be denounced how inhuman and absurd is the order of reality that the order of discourse (the discourse of order) reflects and reproduces: it consolidates.

The information short-circuit at the basis of this homeopathic procedure, of uncovering falsification through falsehood, would find "una sua verifica nella risposta bestiale del potere" (its verification in the bestial response of power) ("Alice scrive per l'autonomia" 1977). After the riots that followed the death of Francesco Lorusso, on the evening of Saturday 12 March 1977 the police burst into the editorial office of Radio Alice, in via del Pratello 41. The transcript of the last minutes of the broadcast was then published in the pages of *A/traverso*. Its animators were imprisoned or wanted, Bifo arrived in France. The pages of the newspapers on Bifo and the closure of Radio

Alice followed one another: by way of example, the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* wrote that the radio had overseen the urban guerrilla warfare that erupted in Bologna ("La voce di Radio Alice a Parigi ultimo atto della 'vicenda Bifo'" 1977, 7). In France, several intellectuals signed a manifesto against repression; from 22 to 24 September, the Conference against Repression was held in Bologna (see Autori Molti Compagni 1977; Berardi 1987). Meanwhile, a joint issue of *A/traverso* and *Zut* – a Roman periodical – came out and, responding to the above strategy, closed with these words:

> Questo foglio esce come supplemento al Corriere della Sera. Non lo chiediamo al direttore resp. P. Ottone perché, certi come siamo della sua vocazione democratica, non dubitiamo che sia contrario alle leggi corporative sulla stampa. Non lo avevamo chiesto neppure ai compagni di Stampa Alternativa, per i fogli di aprile, e di questo con loro ci scusiamo come anticipatamente con Ottone. (*Zut A/traverso*, April May 1977)

> This paper is published as a supplement to the Corriere della Sera. We did not ask the editor-in-chief P. Ottone because, certain as we are of his democratic vocation, we do not doubt that he is against the corporative laws on the press. Nor did we ask the comrades of Stampa Alternativa, for the April sheets, and for this we apologise to them as we do to Ottone in advance.

No longer certain of the function of recomposing the real through its theoretical-operational proposal, and aware of the problems in the autonomous political area, the October issue of *Zut & A/traverso* claimed: "La rivoluzione è finita. Abbiamo vinto" (*Zut A/traverso* October [s.d.]) (the revolution is over. We won). A year after the Bologna convention, the September 1978 issue published *Requiem per Alice*, accompanied by illustrations by poet and artist Corrado Costa, taken from *William Blake in Beulah*, published in 1977 by Squilibri – a Milan-based publishing house that had also published *Chi ha ucciso Majakovskij* (Berardi 1977b) and *Finalmente il cielo è caduto sulla terra* (Berardi 1978), both by Bifo.

The two issues opening the following decade, once again anticipated the times: from the small collective in multiplication of the first issue of the magazine, to the video-electronic tribes foreshadowed by Marshall McLuhan ("Tribù videoelettroniche" 1980-81). The collective wrote that it was interested in forms of retribalisations, which "presentano i caratteri mostruosi di una mutazione che occorre però saper rendere esplicita" ("Tribù videoelettroniche" 1980-81) (present the monstrous features of a mutation that we must however be able to make explicit). The planetary nomadic mobility characterizing the new tribes seemed to discuss again the complete subsumption

of the real by the capitalist system and allowed the belief in a "rete di sopravvivenza" (survival network) ("Tribù videoelettroniche" 1980-81) that had to be rhizomatic, mobile and temporary: the terrain of struggle seemed then to move beyond *Alice*'s voices. The following issue, in the summer of 1981, picked up on a new electronic psychedelia in its graphic solutions, going beyond the previous results, which were close to punk stylistic features, often determined by the overlapping of sheets and cuttings, by the union of typographic and manuscript characters. While the Burroughsian cut up had always been a point of reference, it was only made explicit in this issue, where a text by the writer was published (see Capriolo 2020, 114). Anti-artistic dadaist experimentation, which the collective had been inspired by since 1975, was now to be reconnected to the 'general intellect', as it unfolded, according to Bifo, "le possibilità liberatorie dell'intelligenza tecnico scientifica" (Berardi 1981) (the libereating possibilities of technical-scientific intelligence). From musical to multimedia experimentation, the perception of an 'animistic' infosphere, in which "ogni oggetto è segnale e fonte di informazione" (Berardi 1981) (every object is a signal and source of information), heralded the advent of electronic culture.

## 5 Utopia and Science Fiction, in Practice: *Un'Ambigua Utopia*

The dimension of syncopated, oral storytelling, characterised by a language defined as "dirty" (Enzensberger in Collettivo A/traverso 1976, 106; Gruber 1997, 89-106), informed *A/traverso* and the first steps of several other magazines, which proliferated around the crucial year 1977. One of the most relevant Italian expressions of the interweaving between leftist political groups and science fiction utopia, around 1977, was the experience of the Milan-based periodical *Un'Ambigua Utopia* (An Ambiguous Utopia). Various themes that reflected more general trends found space in the magazine, first and foremost the growing interest in fiction in militant leftist circles – determined by the same need to release the desire underlying *A/traverso*.

The magazine acquired considerable importance when compared with the developments of a culture of the fantastic that would have resulted in ideologically committed outcomes in the following decade. Its story was fully embedded in the network of political and human relations woven daily by members of the group, and developed in close relationship with free radio stations, such as Radio Montevecchia and Radio Popolare, as well as social centers, that hosted and promoted its initiatives. Among others, the Centro Sociale Santa Marta, from which came some of the graphic designers with whom

the group collaborated, the Circolo La Comune in Via Festa del Perdono, where the first meetings were held, the La Fornace farmhouse (on Via Ludovico il Moro 127, had hosted the 'Martian Invasion' of September 1978), the Isola Social Center, which had housed the editorial staff for some times, and which was very active at the level of theatrical experimentation.

The activities of the collective and the magazine had developed under the banner of a liberation of the "principio di piacere" (pleasure principle), whereas "la fantascienza era segno di rivolta contro la realtà impostaci sia dalla società che dal maschio" (Ambigue 1978, 14) (science fiction was a sign of revolt against the reality imposed on us both by society and by the male). In the group's happenings – such as the aforementioned 'Martian Invasion' throughout the streets of Milan – prevailed the idea of cross-dressing, of lively and kitschy processions, of *détournement*, of destabilising both the practice of political protest and that of literary criticism. Such events had a much wider response than the narrow circle of fandom: the most significant public occasions had been the September 1978 party, which started at the occupied La Fornace farmhouse in Milan, the participation in the Piacenza conference *The Mental Work. Production and Market*, in late October 1978, the nuclear-related non-sensical debate entitled *Science Fiction and Reality: the case of the nuclear power*, held on February 10, 1979 at the Puecher center in Milan, the conference *Marx/z/iana* at the Ciak theater, also in Milan, in March 1979. The conference was followed by the publication, in November 1979, of the anthology *Nei labirinti della fantascienza* (*Nei labirinti della fantascienza. Guida critica a cura del collettivo Un'Ambigua Utopia*, Milano, Feltrinelli 1979) born on the inspiration of Goffredo Fofi and reviewed by Oreste Del Buono in *Linus*, followed by a regular space in the magazine directed by Del Buono. Moreover, the group organised a contestation at the science fiction convention *Eurocon* in Stresa in 1980, and finally the exhibition *Il Gatto del Cheshire. Rassegna di teorie e pratiche della simulazione* (The Cheshire Cat. Review of Simulation Theories and Practices). The title of the magazine was an explicit homage to *The Dispossessed*, a novel by American writer Ursula K. Le Guin first published in Italy by the Milan-based publisher Nord in 1976, whose subtitle was *An Ambiguous Utopia*.

The first issue was published in December 1977 thanks to Giancarlo Bulgarelli, Gerardo Frizzati, Danilo Marzorati, Marco Abate, Giuliano Spagnul and Michelangelo Miani, who also was the illustrator. This collected heterogeneous contributions, and the group conceived the subsequent issues as monographic ones, for a total of nine releases (see Caronia Spagnul 2009).

The first issue of 1980 significantly introduced themes and debates around the notion of *simulacrum*. In this issue, French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's contribution at the 1978 conference *La*

*fantascienza e la critica* (Science Fiction and Critique) in Palermo was published before its first 'institutional' translation in 1980 by Feltrinelli (Baudrillard 1980b). The text, translated by Antonio Caronia – who begun to collaborate with *Un'Ambigua Utopia* in September 1978 (Caronia 1999, 26) – emphasised the connections between the sociological speculations of texts such as *Symbolic Exchange and Death* and *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, Or, the End of the Social*, translated from French into Italian between 1978 and 1979, and science fiction literature, indicating three orders of simulacra. The first was that of positive simulacra, of "natura a immagine di Dio" (nature in the image of God) (Baudrillard 1980a, 25). The second was that of the tendency towards expansion, the release of energy and the drive of desire, while the third order was that of "simulacri di simulazione, fondati sull'informazione, il modello, il gioco cibernetico" (Baudrillard 1980a, 25) (simulacra, based on information, the model, the cybernetic game) and therefore on the notion of the 'hyperreal'. Each order was related respectively to utopia, science fiction and a genre yet to come, which concerned both literary fiction and non-fiction, and which was the order of simulacra to which Baudrillard, like his translator Caronia, paid most attention.

The only issue of 1982 was dedicated to simulation and constituted the catalogue of the exhibition *Il Gatto del Cheshire. Rassegna di teorie e pratiche della simulazione*, held in the cloisters of the Società Umanitaria in Milan from 20 to 23 May 1982. With this release, the economic collapse and the division of the group put an end to *Un'Ambigua Utopia*, marking with the same exhibition the relationship between intermedial practices, science fiction and militancy. The exhibition was conceived as an extensive overview, which included visual arts, theatre, and music, as well as a series of literary contributions. The cover image was conceived by Gianni Sassi and depicted a drunk cat in front of a jukebox, inviting the viewer and reader to immerse themselves, like Lewis Carroll's Alice, in a hyperreal and paradoxical universe of simulation. Sassi was probably involved by Caronia himself, who, together with Patrizia Brambilla (who oversaw general coordination) and Daniela Brambilla (who was in charge of the visual arts section), was the main promoter of the initiative. The exhibition was organised by the Cooperativa Un'Ambigua Utopia together with Gianni Sassi's Cooperativa Intrapresa, which involved the editorial staff of *Alfabeta*, with whom Caronia was in contact, having published a text for the magazine the year before (Caronia 1981). Among the participants in the organisation of the exhibition, several had approached the collective only a short time before, while many members of the initial group had already left. The chosen theme – simulation – anticipated digital culture (Caronia 2014) and was influenced by the Italian reception of Baudrillard's theories.

As far as concerns the visual arts section, the collective had made a considerable effort by inviting several artists, all resident in Milan, some of whom were already well known; in addition to the visual arts, a section was dedicated to theatre and one to three-dimensional photography and holography – in the catalogue there was also a section on music. This breadth well represented the pioneering and encyclopaedic character of the initiative.

In 1983, the bookshop previously opened by the collective closed, marking the conclusion of *Un'Ambigua Utopia*. The Movement of 1977, within which the magazine was created, had been, according to Caronia, a key moment of affirmation of creativity as both an individual and collective practice. However, it was also the triggering of the capitalist restauration process, which starting from those practices was leading to a new valorisation device, the creation of a new proletariat of creativity and its expropriation.

> *Un'Ambigua Utopia* [...] oscillò sempre fra il riconoscimento di un cambio di passo epocale delle condizioni del conflitto sociale e della lotta politica, e l'attaccamento disperato al mantenimento di una agibilità immediata del conflitto, all'illusione di una possibilità di incasso immediato dell'ipoteca contenuta in quel 'abbiamo vinto' proclamato da A/traverso. Senza accorgerci che non eravamo noi i beneficiari di quella cambiale, che la rivolta del *general intellect* si stava interrompendo a metà del cammino, che il gioco stava passando di mano. (Caronia 2014)

> And so *Un'Ambigua Utopia* [...] always oscillated between the recognition of an epochal change of pace in the conditions of social conflict and political struggle, and the desperate attachment to the maintenance of an immediate viability of the conflict, to the illusion of a possibility of immediate collection of the mortgage contained in that 'we won' proclaimed by A/traverso. Without realising that we were not the beneficiaries of that promissory note, that the revolt of the general intellect was breaking down midway, that the game was changing hands.

## 6 Conclusion

The two magazines reinterpreted many of the founding aspects of the Seventies movement, foreshadowing new technological possibilities. In the case of *A/traverso*, in the Eighties there have been other issues, and a number of small volumes, which were among the first to collect and republish in Italian some cyberpunk texts (Berardi 1989; 1992). Many other 'fake stories' would have made real events happen: this subversive communication strategy would be systematically adopted by *Il Male*. Antonio Caronia would devote himself to science fiction, but also to media and electronic culture, as well as the multifaceted panorama of cyberpunk. Le Guin's model of *fabula speculativa* as political strategy, fundamental to *Un'Ambigua Utopia*, opened new horizons, not only for fiction, once recovered by Donna Haraway and other leading theorists. Thus, certain experiences of the time certainly paved the way to the subsumption of the real in the hyperreal, but also to other multiplying groups, to other networks.

## Bibliography

"Alcune tesi" (1975). *A/traverso*, Quaderno 1, 3-10.

*A/traverso* (1976). Quaderno 3, giugno.

"Alice scrive per l'autonomia" (1977). *A/traverso*, marzo-aprile.

Alfierj, P.; Mazzone, G. (a cura di) (1979). *I fiori di Gutenberg, Analisi e prospettive dell'editoria alternativa, marginale, pirata in Italia e Europa*. Roma: Arcana.

Alicata, M. (2022). "Olivetti ispira i giovani. Le ragioni della mostra Arte Programmata. Arte cinetica, opere moltiplicate, opera aperta, Milano 1962". *Piano B. Arti E Culture Visive*, 7(2), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2531-9876/16340.

Alquati, R. (1962). "Composizione organica del capitale e forza-lavoro alla Olivetti". *Quaderni Rossi*, 2, 63-98.

Alquati, R. (1963). "Composizione del capitale e forza lavoro alla Olivetti". *Quaderni Rossi*, 3, 119-85.

Ambigue (1978). *Un'Ambigua Utopia*, 3, 14.

"Assolutamente virgolette" (1976). *A/traverso*, Quaderno 2, 12.

*A/traverso* (1976a). Febbraio.

*A/traverso* (1978). Gennaio.

Autori Molti Compagni (1977). *Bologna marzo 1977… fatti nostri…*. Verona: Bertani.

Baldelli, P. (1972). *Informazione e controinformazione*. Milano: Mazzotta.

Baldelli, P. (1976). "Intervista a Pio Baldelli: riprendiamoci la radio, la televisione e il cinema". *Altrimedia*, 1(2), 9-10.

Balestrini, N.; Moroni, P. (1988). *L'orda d'oro*. Milano: SugarCo.

Baudrillard, J. (1976). *L'échange symbolique et la mort*. Paris: Gallimard.

Baudrillard, J. (1978). *A l'ombre des majorités silencieuses ou La fin du social*. Fontenay-sous-Bois: Imprimerie Quotidienne.

Baudrillard, J. (1980a). "Simulacri e science fiction". *Un'Ambigua Utopia*, 4(1), 25-8.

Baudrillard, J. (1980b). "Simulacri e fantascienza". Russo, L. (a cura di), *La fantascienza e la critica = Testi del Convegno internazionale di Palermo* (Grand Hotel et des Palmes, Palermo, 18 ottobre 1978). Milano: Feltrinelli, 52-7.

Berardi, F. (1975). "Mao-dadaismo Scrittura/pratica antiistituzionale". *A/traverso*, Quaderno 1, 21-9.

Berardi, F. (1977a). "Materialismo e trasversalità". *A/traverso*, Quaderno 5, maggio, 7-10.

Berardi, F. (1977b). *Chi ha ucciso Majakovskij*. Milano: Squilibri.

Berardi, F. (1978). *Finalmente il cielo è caduto sulla terra*. Milano: Squilibri.

Berardi, F. (1981). "Il movimento, la sperimentazione, l'arte?". *A/traverso*, estate.

Berardi, F. (1987). *Dell'innocenza. Interpretazione del '77*. Bologna: Agalev.

Berardi, F. (1989). *Cyberpunk. Testi di Ballard, Gibson, Sterling, Wright, Valmerx*. Bologna: A/traverso.

Berardi, F. (1992). *Cancel & Più cyber che punk*. Bologna: A/traverso.

Calvesi, M. (1978). *Avanguardia di massa*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Caplan, L.A. (2022). *Arte Programmata: Freedom, Control, and the Computer in 1960s Italy*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.

Capriolo, A. (2020). "Cut/up semantico creatore di spazio sociale: la rivista 'A/traverso' e la geourbanistica bolognese nei primi anni Ottanta". *Intrecci d'arte*, 9, 109-27.

Caronia, A. (1981). "È naturale che sia artificiale". *Alfabeta*, 28, settembre, 10-11.

Caronia, A. (1999). "Un'Ambigua Utopia". *MIR*, 2, 26-8.

Caronia, A.; Spagnul, G. (a cura di) (2009). *Un'Ambigua Utopia. Fantascienza, ribellione e radicalità negli anni 70*. 2 voll. Milan; Udine: Mimesis.

Caronia, A. (2014). *Quando i marziani invadevano Milano*. http://un-ambi-gua-utopia.blogspot.com/2014/12/antonio-caronia-quan-do-i-marziani.html.

Chiurchiù, L. (2017). *La rivoluzione è finita abbiamo vinto. Storia della rivista "A/traverso"*. Rome: DeriveApprodi.

Collettivo A/traverso (1976). *Alice è il diavolo. Sulla strada di Majakovskij: testi per una pratica di comunicazione sovversiva*. Milano: L'Erba Voglio.

Deleuze, G.; Guattari, F. (1972). *L'Anti-Oedipe. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*. Paris: Minuit.

Deleuze, G.; Guattari, F. (1980). *Mille Plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*. Paris: Minuit.

Dogheria, D. (2018). *Pirati e falsi editoriali nell'Italia degli anni '70*. Pitigliano: Le Strade Bianche di Stampa Alternativa.

Echaurren, P.; Salaris, C. (1999). *Controcultura in Italia, 1966-1977: viaggio nell'underground*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.

Eco, U. (1973). "Per una guerriglia semiologica". *Il costume di casa*. Milano: Bompiani, 290-9.

Eco, U. (1976). "Radio locali: e il pubblico ora partecipa". A cura di L. Sacerdote. *Altrimedia*, 1(1), 4-6.

Eco, U. (1977). "C'è un'altra lingua, l'italo-indiano". *L'espresso*, 14, 34-5.

Fleischner, E. (1976). "Gli emarginati prendono microfono e antenna". *Altrimedia*, 1(1), 2-3.

Fiore, Q.; McLuhan, M. (1967). *The Medium is the Massage*. New York: Random House.

Galimberti, J. (2022). *Images of Class: Operaismo, Autonomia and the Visual Arts (1962-1988)*. New York: Verso.

Gruber, K. (1997). *L'avanguardia inaudita: comunicazione e strategia nei movimenti degli anni Settanta*. Milano: Costa & Nolan.

"Informazione e appropriazione" (1976). *A/traverso*, Quaderno 2, marzo, 11.

"Informazioni false che producano eventi veri" (1977). *A/traverso*, febbraio.

"La ristrutturazione dello sfruttamento" (1978). *I Volsci. Mensile per il Movimento dell'Autonomia Operaia*, novembre-dicembre, 5-9.

"La voce di Radio Alice a Parigi ultimo atto della 'vicenda Bifo'" (1977). *Corriere della Sera*, 14 luglio, 7.

Lotringer, S.; Marazzi, C. (eds) (1980). *Autonomia, post-political politics*. New York: Semiotext(e), Columbia University.

MacKenzie, D. (1984). "Marx and the Machine". *Technology and Culture*, 25(3), 473-502.

Mariscalco, D. (2014). "Autonomia e abolizione dell'arte. Emergenze maodadaiste nel movimento del Settantasette". *Palinsesti*, 4, 21-34. `http://www.palinsesti.net/index.php/Palinsesti/article/view/50/70`.

Marx, K. (1964). "Frammento sulle macchine". *Quaderni Rossi*, 4, luglio, 289-300.

Morando, S. (a cura di) (1961). *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1962*. Milano: Bompiani.

*Nei labirinti della fantascienza. Guida critica a cura del collettivo Un'Ambigua Utopia* (1979). Milano: Feltrinelli.

Pasquinelli, M. (2014). "Italian Operaismo and the Information Machine". *Theory, Culture & Society*, 32(3), 1-20. `https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276413514117`.

"Piccolo gruppo in moltiplicazione" (1975). *A/traverso*, aprile.

"Radio Alice è oscena come la lotta di classe" (1976). Quaderno 2, *A/traverso*, marzo, 24.

Saccà, L. (a cura di) (2000). *La parola come immagine e come segno. Firenze: storia di una rivoluzione colta (1960-1980)*. Pisa: Pacini Editore.

Salaris, C. (1997). *Il movimento del Settantasette: linguaggi e scritture dell'ala creativa*. Bertiolo: AAA.

"Soggetto collettivo emette A/traverso" (1975). *A/traverso*, settembre, n.n.

Tomba, M.; Bellofiore, R. (2014). *The 'Fragment on Machines' and the Grundrisse: The Workerist Reading in Question*. Van der Linden, M.; Roth, K.H. (eds) (2014). *Beyond Marx*. Leiden: Brill, 345-67.

"Tribù videoelettroniche" (1980-81). *A/traverso Random*, inverno.

*Un'Ambigua Utopia* (1982), 9.

Uva, C. (2015). *L'immagine politica. Forme del contropotere tra cinema, video e fotografia nell'Italia degli anni Settanta*. Milano; Udine: Mimesis.

*Zut A/traverso* (1977). Aprile-maggio.